Report from Tech Transfer Queen Rearing Course.

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By Peter Prodger

For the second year in a row the Ontario Beekeeper Association Tech Transfer Team came to Pilgrim Honey House near Maxville Ontario to deliver their Queen Rearing course. Pilgrim provides an excellent location as it is home to the Russian Queen Breeding program run by Francois Petit.

Seventeen eager beekeepers arrived at 8:30 am ready to begin. Two people had driven from southern Ontario, a four hour drive, to attend the course. The agenda included the standard queen and drone biology, equipment and regulation reviews. Class room sessions included descriptions of many protocols for rearing queens, record keeping and the all important timing. A full gamut of techniques were reviewed prior to the hands on sessions.

The hands-on sessions centered around all the necessary steps to raise queens using a cell grafting technique in a queenless and then queen right hive. We had hands-on sessions preparing cell bars and grafting frames, selecting donor frames and doing grafts, and preparing cell builders and mating nucs. Discussions were held on collecting, caging and tagging queens, plus care and transport of queen cells and mated queens.

We broke into two groups for the hands-on sessions. The yard was just across the road from the

meeting hall. Francois Petit had selected several donor hives he allowed us to manipulate. The weather was cloudy and cool and not the best for working the bees. However, everyone came prepared and ready to participate.

While one group went about setting up mating nucs the other group started moving frames and bees into a cell builder hive. Both groups needed to open up hives, locate and cage the queen then gather the appropriate bees or frames for each task.

Donor Colony

Describing a mating nuc setup

Filling a tub with nurse bees to go into the mating nucs - 2 cups per nuc

Loading the cell builder with bees. Lots of bees!

Grafting larva into cells. Good eyes, steady hand, and lots of light!

There were many opportunities to ask questions or listen in on other questions.

Francois with a frame of queen cells.