

Western SARE Mini-Grant: Final Report

Bee Curious:

School and Adventures in Beekeeping

Submitted by Tom Laca, CSU Extension- Pueblo County

Planning Committee:

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Marva Jolly- PCBA

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Sue Martinez- PCBA

Situation:

Tom Laca, Pueblo County Ag and Natural Resources Extension Agent has been instructing prospective beekeepers in best management practices of keeping bees for the past 5 years. This class has been met with high demand every year. As the popularity of this class and beekeeping in general has risen, the need for an organization to support local beekeepers came about. Tom, along with several class graduates, that went on to keep bees, formed the Pueblo County Beekeepers Association (PCBA.) The goal of this group is to educate the general public about bees as well as other beekeepers on all aspects of beekeeping. In keeping with the goals of the PCBA it was their desire to expand the Beginning Beekeeping class and provide more advanced educational opportunities for both club members and others.

Response:

In the summer of 2019 Tom Laca and the executive committee of the PCBA began meeting to plan a school for beginning beekeepers to be held in February of 2020. Topics for the school were discussed and assigned to committee members for presentation.

One of the main goals of the group was to produce a course book that participants would be able to reference as they started their beekeeping experience. In all eleven topics were chosen to be presented over a 16-hour course. The topics presented were: Honey Bee Biology, Locating Your Hives (and Other Considerations), Equipment, How to Obtain and Install Your Bees, Seasonal Management of Bees, Hive Inspections and Note Taking, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Diseases and Treatments, Making Honey, Gardening for Your Honey Bees and Pesticide Use and Your Bees. Committee members not only taught the courses, they also wrote a 95-page course book with in depth information on each topic.



Committee member, Dru Spinuzzi, presenting on beekeeping equipment.

The committee is currently in the process of having this course accredited through the Colorado State Beekeepers Association Master Beekeeper Program. This will be of great value, as this course will qualify participants to move up through the levels as they gain experience.

Participants learning to properly use a smoker.



Another goal of the group was to host an educational event for those that had experience keeping bees. This involved bringing in well-known beekeepers from across the state to discuss more advanced topics. Three speakers attended and presented on: “So You Want to be a Swarm Catcher,” “How I Built This,” “Diagnosing a Dead Hive,” “All About the Queen” and “How to Produce Your Own Bees.” This event also included vendors for participants to purchase equipment, supplies, bee related goods and educational booths.



A great crowd for “Bee Curious: Adventures in Beekeeping.”

With the help of Western SARE and Pueblo County Extension, PCBA was able to put on an outstanding set of educational opportunities. Funds were utilized to help with the production of the course book as well as advertise the events. In all 123 people from 2 states attended and learned more about the sustainable production of bees. The Bee Curious Bee School had 26 participants while the Bee Curious: Adventures in Beekeeping had 97 in attendance. The support of Western SARE and Extension made it possible to host a quality set of events at an affordable price.

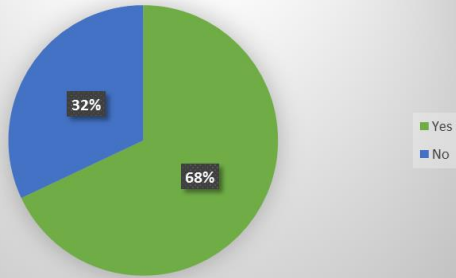
Participants and vendors interacting during a break.



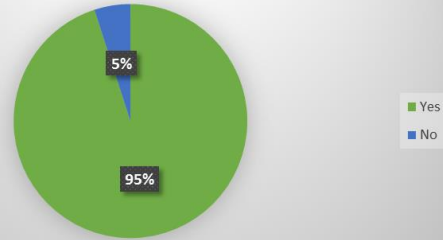
Evaluations:

Evaluations of the courses were made using an online platform that allowed participants to text their answers while the question was displayed on the screen. Questions were asked both before and after the courses to determine if changes would be made because of the education received. A paper survey was also presented to allow for short answer questions. The following are results from the survey that assessed current situation, knowledge gained and likelihood of change.

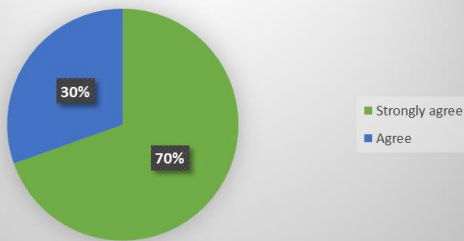
Do you currently have bees?



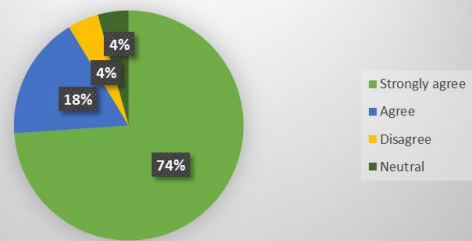
Do you plan to start/continue keeping bees?



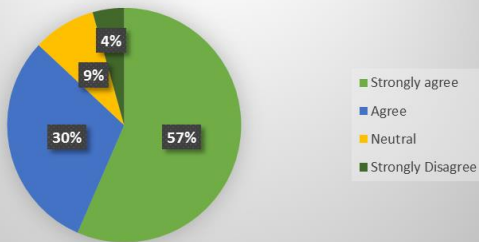
I have a better understanding of what it takes to keep bees.



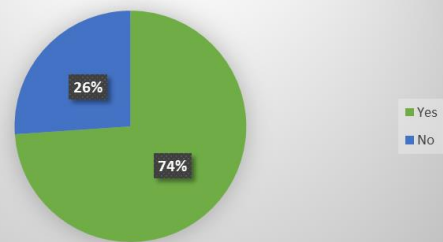
I will be a better steward of bees and pollinators.



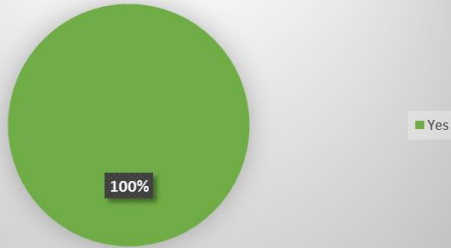
This class changed the way I view pollinators and pollinator issues.



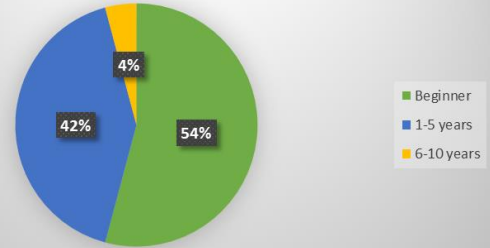
This class influenced my decision to keep bees.



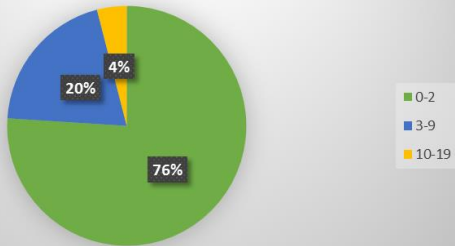
I would recommend this course to others.



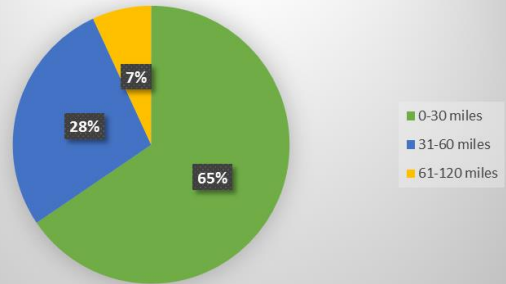
How long have you been keeping bees?



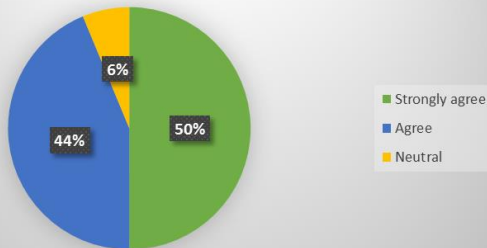
How many hives do you currently have?



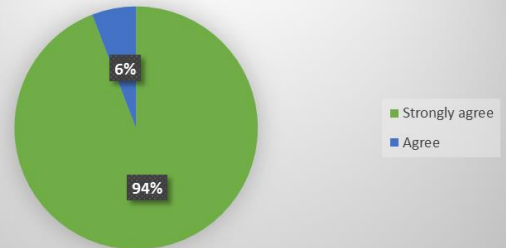
How far did you travel to get here?



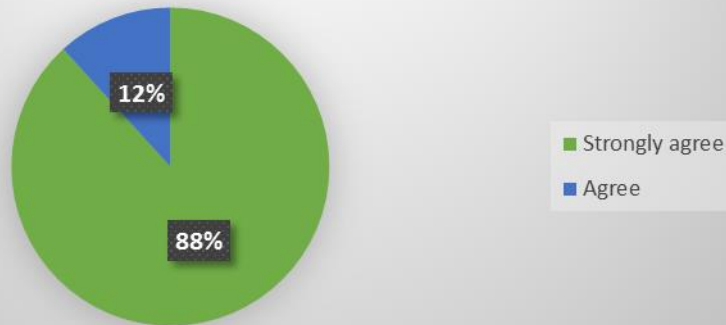
Because of this class I will change the way I manage my bees.



I have a better understanding of the topics covered today.



Knowledge gained today will make me a better more sustainable beekeeper.



Some comments made from the paper survey:

“Super class presentations, vendor booths great, food and lunch super. Thanks”

“Keep it up. Great event.”

“Did a great job. You can tell a lot of work went into pulling this off. Well done.”

“Informative event.”

The evaluation data shows that there was a good mix of beginning and experienced beekeepers in attendance. 100% of attendees reported that they had a better understanding of the topics that were covered. Even better than that, over 90% stated that they would change the way they take care of bees due to what they learned. Finally, 100% of the participants reported that what they learned would make them a better and more sustainable beekeeper.

Western SARE Funds Utilized.

The classes were awarded \$2000 in funding to cover speaker costs, advertising and the production of the course book. The total of these expenses was \$1,540.78. The remainder of the cost for food was paid for by registration fees and the PCBA. The planning committee is grateful for Western SARE and its support. We would not have been able to put on an event of this caliber without the financial assistance. This assistance has also made it possible to continue this program into the future. The committee is already making plans for next year.

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