

So you are cruising the aisles of Atwoods or Southern Agriculture or one of the home improvement stores, and there it is – the beekeeping equipment display. Now, you’ve always thought that it would be cool and ecologically helpful to keep bees. Right there is all the stuff you need -- right there! There is even a book to tell you how to do it. You had a relative who used to keep bees several decades ago. And this inner urge is saying, “Do it!” Well, don’t! Not just yet, anyway. As president of the Northeast Oklahoma Beekeepers Association (NEOBA) for the last several years, I’ve met a lot of people who have wanted to start beekeeping. I’ve also taught some classes. I was a newbie beekeeper myself some while ago. I know a little bit about what it takes to become a beekeeper. Beekeeping used to be relatively easy. You got some bees, put them in boxes, checked on them once in a while, and harvested honey. That was before a pest known as the varroa mite appeared in the late 1980s and made beekeeping a lot more difficult. Nowadays, beekeepers lose an estimated 40% of their bee colonies each year to one honeybee enemy or another. If you want to be a beekeeper, please spend some money and take a beekeeping class. These classes usually start in January, and because of the demands of beekeeping, you’ll be lucky to find one later in the year. The information and contacts you get from the class will be more than worth the time and the money you spend. This isn’t to say that you can’t learn beekeeping by reading a few books and watching online videos. There are some who have done that successfully. But it is not as easy as it might seem. In classes, local beekeepers will show you what is truly important and applicable in our area. NEOBA is offering a class series at Wright Christian Academy in Tulsa starting at 8:30 a.m. Jan. 16. You can sign up online at <http://www.neoba.org/>. The Drumright Beekeepers are also having classes starting Jan. 16 at 9 a.m. at Central Tech in Drumright. You

can sign up for those classes by calling 918-352-4516. The classes cost \$75 for an individual and \$95 for a family. NEOBA meets on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at Wright Christian Academy in Tulsa. Drumright Beekeepers meet on the third Monday (school holidays excepted) at 6:30 p.m. at Central Tech in Drumright.