

Buzzwords ...

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MR N WALLINGFORD
55 WATLING STREET
TAURANGA

WALLING 21

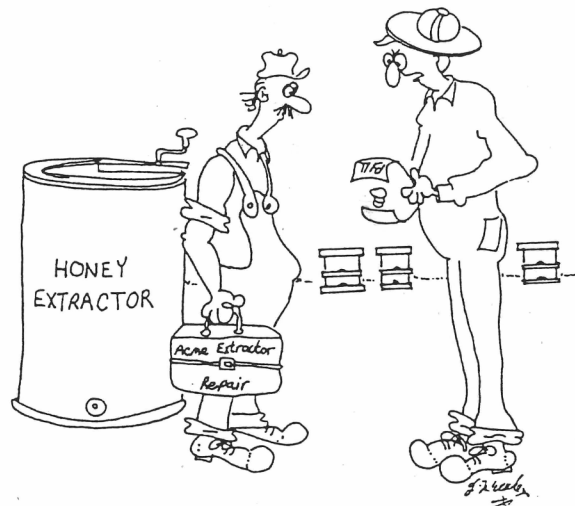
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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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Buzzwords No 42 June 1992



"A FUNNY NOISE IS A NOISE THAT COSTS LESS THAN \$10 TO FIX. A NOISE THAT COSTS OVER \$100 TO FIX CEASES TO BE A FUNNY NOISE."



FROM THE PRESIDENT

In the next few weeks branches around the country will be holding their remit meetings. Remits are an important part of the democratic process of our association. It is therefore important that everyone attending these meetings and voting consider the serious matters facing our industry. Do you want New Zealand beekeeping to maintain its present "clean, green image" in the rest of the world? Are you prepared to flag away the Apiaries Act which has served our industry so well since the beginning of the century? These are the critical questions all members of our association are responsible for answering at the present time.

Your executive is currently negotiating with MAF to maintain disease control services at the best possible price. I am sure our first effort will not be the "be all and end all" of such contracts. I have no doubt that fine tuning will be necessary to suit our whole industry. What is important, however, is

that we do not do away with the service for the short-term, with the expectation that we can re-activate it in the future. Keep in mind that in the present government climate once we loose such services it will be almost impossible to get them back.

I commend to you our executive officer's letter on the endemic disease programme. The questions Ted Roberts poses must be addressed constructively by this association. We must establish performance levels so that we know that the service is being carried out effectively.

(Note: The last sentence of the third paragraph of the covering letter should read This decision has had to be made before 31 March 1992 in order to enable the industry to advise MAF, in time for the 1992/93 budget round, that this would be required.)

All members have also been sent a letter written by Mr. Russell Berry. Please read his proposal carefully and ask yourself whether this is the way you would like to see your industry structured. In the next few months some very important decisions regarding our industry and its future must be made.

Dudley Ward, president

FROM THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

Plans are under way to have Bill Floyd of Floyd Marketing attend this year's Hastings Conference. We hope to have Bill make a report, in conjunction with the Marketing Committee focus group, outlining his various proposed activities for the coming year.

Recently, on behalf of the industry, Frances Trewby and I attended a conference entitled "Nutrition, Government and the Food Industry: Working Together". Topics covered included new food regulations, laws relating to food labelling, "Food Safety for the Future", and the desirability of harmonizing regulations with Australia. All these issues will have an impact on our industry. You can read more about them in a comprehensive report to be published in the winter issue of *The New Zealand Beekeeper*.

Dr. Peter Molan and Kerry Allen (Peter's hard-working technician) would like to thank all those beekeepers who have sent manuka honey samples and answered their recent questionnaire. They still require more samples to help them build up a comprehensive picture of antibacterial activity in manuka. Send your samples (50 grams will do), together with geographical details (location, soil type, physical features, climate) to: Dr. Peter Molan, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, HAMILTON, ph. (07) 856 2889

The Honey Marketing and Promotion fund has now reached \$10,000. Donations and pledges can still be sent to the Executive Secretary, PO Box 4048, WELLINGTON.

Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee

ORGANIC DRAFT AVAILABLE

A first draft of the certification scheme for organic honey production has now been prepared for the NBA by MAF Quality Management (see *Buzzwords 40*). The scheme is designed to meet the requirements of both the proposed EC and US federal organics legislation. It also follows the conformity certification type-framework used by an increasing number of New Zealand and overseas industries to maintain quality assurance at an internationally recognised (ISO) level. A conformity certification programme is currently used in the heat-treatment of export honey to Australia.

Your executive is seeking comment on this first draft by beekeepers interested in organic production. Provided sufficient interest is shown, it is possible that a certification scheme might be in place for next production season. The NBA will then be able to apply to an independent certifying authority in this country (yet to be appointed by the EC) to

have honey from the scheme exported officially as "organic" to the lucrative EC market. A similar certifying authority will need to be approved for the US by 1993.

For a copy of the draft NBA Certification Scheme for Organic Honey Production, write to the Executive Secretary, National Beekeepers Association, PO Box 4048, WELLINGTON. Comments should be directed back to the executive before the annual conference (July 20). Executive have plans to discuss the matter with interested parties at a special meeting during conference.

COMPENSATION BUCK-PASS?

The following article appeared in the *New Zealand Herald* on May 16:

"A Mapua beekeeper, Mr. Gerard Stephens, has had a raw deal from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, says the MP, Mr. Nick Smith.

The ministry has refused to pay compensation for income Mr. Stephens lost in November's European foulbrood scare. His hives were quarantined and he could not sell queen bees or rent his hives for pollination and lost a year's income.

Mr. Smith said yesterday that the ministry's refusal to compensate would create problems in the future. Beekeepers or others who suspected an outbreak of disease would hesitate to report it because they would be afraid of the effect it might have on their business.

He said that if the ministry's position was not to change, the best thing was for the industry to set up an insurance scheme. He urged the Beekeepers' Association to provide a scheme as soon as possible for both suspected and true outbreaks.

A letter from the Associate Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Marshall, said there was no provision in law for payment of compensation for losses associated with the investigation of the suspected disease.

Mr. Stephens said he was getting ready for the coming season. He was thankful to be on an emergency unemployment benefit and for donations from two other Beekeepers' Association branches."

Strong words from the MP for Nelson, but if Mr. Smith is going to make these comments to the press, he should remember that he was the one who promised compensation from the government in the first place. Compare his recent comments to those he made to the *Christchurch Press* last November (see *Buzzwords 37*):

"Government Ministers are sympathetic to the idea of compensating Nelson beekeepers affected by the outbreak of European foulbrood diseases, says Mr. Nick Smith (Nat, Tasman).

Mr. Smith said he had discussed compensation with the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Falloon, and the Associate Minister, Mr. Marshall, and had found them sympathetic. This was particularly because the outbreak was not in any



way the fault of the industry but had probably resulted from a failure of frontier checks and the illegal importation of honey.

Compensation would have to come from the supplementary estimates because there was no money available in the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Smith said he was looking for a level of compensation that provided for loss of income as well as for the destruction of infected hives."

When you compare the two articles it makes you wonder just who's to blame. Is it really MAF's fault, or is this another case of "when you can't blame your political colleagues, blame the bureaucrats"? We may never know. All you can say for certain is that there's at least one man in all of this whose integrity remains intact. Hopefully more branches will follow Canterbury's lead and make a donation to Ged Stephens in recognition of his courageous action on behalf of our industry.

ASIAN NOTES

Recently I attended the International Conference on the Asian Honey Bees and Bee Mites in Bangkok, Thailand, as part of an overseas consultancy contract. As it turned out, New Zealand was well represented, with Andrew Matheson, Gavin McKenzie, and Stuart and Kay Ecroyd all in attendance. A whole range of topics were covered, with speakers from a number of Asian countries, as well as Europe and North America. There was also an interesting Expo which concentrated on Asian bee products. What follows are some impressions:

- In Japan, honey drinks (honey with water/fruit juices) are reported to be outselling Coca-Cola!

- In Taiwan, honey produced by *Apis cerana* sells for between NZ\$45/kg (spring honey) and NZ\$90/kg (autumn honey). At least one enterprising beekeeper there is also using these honey bees to pollinate his kiwifruit. It would seem from his brochure, though, that he makes more money from showing city people around his orchard (the government subsidises such "educational programmes") than he does from selling his produce.

- Freeze-dried honey bee larvae in capsules is the latest product in Asian apitherapy. And in case you're wondering what the product is used for, the only English on the package at the conference display was the phrase "extra potency"!

- Thailand now has 100,000 *Apis mellifera* colonies, mostly in the north and northeast. The foundation stock for the current industry came from packages imported from Haines Bee Breeders in Northland some 25 years ago.

- The Austrians obviously don't follow label directions. They conducted a study on the effectiveness of the same Apistan strips used over and over again during a four year period to control varroa. The strips were still 99.6% effective at the end of the study, even though the packaging says you should discard them after only one use.

- "In the Yucatan (Mexico) they don't have a lot of what you would call bee 'keepers'. What they've got there is just a

number of feral nesting sites in boxes, maintained by human beings." - Dr. Tom Rinderer, US Department of Agriculture

- *Apis cerana* brood can be put into *Apis mellifera* hives to emerge. The *A. cerana* bees will be accepted by the hive and will act as "slaves" to groom the *A. mellifera* for external parasitic mites.

- In Israel, where fluvalinate has been used to control varroa since 1984, residues are not usually found in honey. The chemical does, however, build up in wax and propolis because fluvalinate doesn't break down well in wax. There is concern in Europe that prolonged use of fluvalinate will lead to foundation becoming contaminated to brood. Certified "organic" (no chemical residue wax) is therefore likely to become a big seller in Europe, especially amongst beekeepers worried about miticide toxicity in foundation.

- Bee bread (stored pollen) is the major source of chalkbrood infection in bee hives. At the same time, uncapping and removal behaviour may actually help to spread chalkbrood infections.

- In 1975-1977, a viral disease called Thai sacbrood is reported to have destroyed 90% of the *Apis cerana* hives in Vietnam.

Cliff Van Eaton, MAF Quality Management

COMMODITY LEVY FARCE

It seems the NBA isn't the only organisation that has had trouble using the new Commodity Levies Act. A recent article in *Horticulture Today* ("How to Make a New Act a Farce"), blames Minister of Agriculture John Falloon for setting criteria which few grower bodies can meet in seeking approval for compulsory levies. This is particularly worrying for federations in the fruit and vegetable sector, because they (like the NBA) have existing levy acts which will be "sunsetted" later this decade by the new act.

As our organisation found out last year, the Minister requires all affected producers (or in our case bee hive owners) who will be subject to the levy to be sent a ballot form. He requires a 75% response rate from the circulated ballot papers, and a 60% majority in favour of the levy from those who were sent a ballot (not just those who responded).

According to *Horticulture Today*, "the effect of this apparent attempt to make levy powers almost impossible to attain is that it nullifies the government's wish to have the industry make a sizeable contribution to its own research and development."

There is speculation that the government finds itself between a rock and a hard place with the act. On the one hand it is disbanding compulsory unionism and on the other could be seen to be supporting the establishment of compulsory producers' groups. The magazine says, however, "there is some reason to believe this is a piece of Falloon initiative which cannot be attributed to a concerted Cabinet move."

Steps are now being taken to challenge the Minister's decision. The so-called Land Users' Group has set up a



HONEY INDUSTRY TRUST FUND

Applications for funding close on 15 August and 15 February. Forms available from the NBA, PO Box 4048, Wellington.

committee, under the chairmanship of Fruitgrowers' Federation president Paul Heywood, to put forward an agriculture-wide response. The future existence of a whole host of producer associations (including the NBA) depends on the success of this committee.

AUSTRALIAN HONEY BOARD CHANGE

Many beekeepers may not be aware that Australia has a government-appointed honey board. The Australian Honey Board is funded by a levy on exports, and has a budget of approximately AUS\$500,000 per year. It was originally formed 28 years ago to bring price stability to the Australian beekeeping industry and has more or less achieved that goal by regulating the way Australian honey is sold on the export market (the minimum export price for top-grade Australian honey is currently set at NZ\$2.04-2.09/kg FOBNET).

Nevertheless, in 1991 the federal government decided that the board would not go beyond its "sunset clause" in the Honey Marketing Act and would cease to operate after 1994. At the same time the government is progressively deregulating honey export activity, doing away with export licensing and replacing minimum export prices with a recommended price range for various products and export markets.

Recently, beekeeping industry leaders met in Adelaide to sign an agreement which will transfer the activities of the board to the Australian Horticultural Corporation for a trial period of one and a half years. The corporation is a statutory marketing authority catering to the needs of a number of agricultural commodities. The beekeeping industry has asked it to conduct promotion activities on its behalf to 1) maximise domestic consumption of honey products, and 2) generate a demand for Australian product on the export market which marginally exceeds the industry's ability to supply. The goal is to produce stable and profitable returns for Australian beekeepers.

The corporation will create a dedicated honey desk within its current structure, to be known internationally as the Australian Honey Bureau. The bureau will have a budget of AUS\$250,000 specifically for market promotion.

For those of us in New Zealand, there are several interesting aspects to this change-over. To begin with, the Australian industry displayed commendable goodwill and commitment in managing to work through the whole process of determining the future direction of honey marketing in less than 10 months. As the *Australasian Beekeeper* points out in its April issue, "to finalise the matter in such a relatively short time says much for the maturity of our small but geographically widely dispersed industry."

The new organisation will also rely on a management system already in use in the New Zealand industry. Each year industry leaders will meet to develop an **industry strategic plan**, setting out clear priorities for implementation by the corporation.

And yes, believe it or not, Australian beekeepers are also proposing that the corporation "establish and maintain an image of quality supported by an integrated industry-wide quality assurance programme". The staged programme should see major packer exporters in a position to satisfy the internationally recognised ISO 9002 standards by July 1993.

BRANCH NEWS

The **Waikato** branch will be holding remit meetings on June 5 (remit formulation) and July 10 (remit voting). Both meetings will be held in the Green Room, Homestead, Ruakura Agricultural Centre, Hamilton, beginning at 10 am.

The next meeting of the **Auckland** branch will be held Friday, June 19 at 7:30 pm at the Anglican Church Hall, 4 Coles Crescent, Papakura (opposite 3 Guys food store). General business and remit suggestions will be discussed.

FOOD AWARD ENTRIES SOUGHT

Here's your chance to really achieve nationwide recognition for your new honey or bee product. Entries are now being accepted for the 7th annual Printpac-UEB Food Awards, to be held October 14 in Auckland. Major awards on offer include the Printpac-UEB Premier Award for New Zealand's most outstanding new or improved food product, the New Zealand Trade Development Board Award for the most successful development and launch of a new product onto the export market, and the Creativity Award for the most original food product of the year. There are also three specialist awards including one for the food product development showing exceptional enterprise and determination with limited resources. Entries close August 14, with judging to be held September 10-11. For further information contact Jan Muir at Printpac-UEB (ph. 09-525-0960, fax 09-579-6110).

BUZZWORDS IS ...

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The views expressed in *Buzzwords* are not necessarily those of the National Beekeepers' Association nor of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

