



Buzzwords ...



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

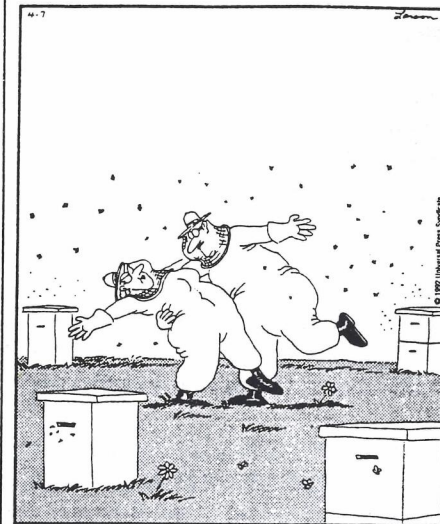
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THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



Dance of the Beekeepers



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The United States has now closed all its borders to the transshipment of package bees from Australia and New Zealand. This is having a very serious effect on those members of our industry exporting bees to Canada. The ban not only affects exporters; there are also a considerable number of beekeepers who supply bulk bees and/or queens to the larger shippers.

At the March executive meeting, the executive asked me to contact Associate Minister of Agriculture Mr. Denis Marshall and make him aware of the closure of transshipment points in the continental US and Hawaii. Mr. Jim Edwards of the Regulatory Authority and MAFQual's Murray Reid accompanied me on this visit, and as a result of our discussions a strong communique was sent to the US and Canadian authorities by our government. To date we have had no response from the US Department of Agriculture

and according to Mr. Edwards, who is well-versed in these matters as a result of his work in the live sheep trade, we soon may very well have to begin "knocking on doors."

We are also having troubles accessing the Korean market. A large market exists there for New Zealand package bees. However, the new health certificate which the Koreans now require MAF to sign is totally unacceptable. This is a matter that will have to be sorted out on a government-to-government basis.

In a season like this one we certainly could have used some positive news on this important supplement to our beekeeping income. Lets hope all the people working so hard to straighten out these problems can give us some good news before its too late.

Dudley Ward, President

BEE EXPORTS JEOPARDISED

This year's shipments of New Zealand queens and package bees to Canada could be at risk, thanks to actions recently taken by state and federal governments in the United States. The lucrative Canadian market, worth over \$1.5 million to New Zealand and Australian producers, is currently in limbo following a decision by the US Department of Agriculture to agree to a Hawaiian state government request to end transshipments of live bees through its borders. The move follows hard on the heels of a Canadian federal government decision to allow the import of queen bees produced in Hawaii for the 1993 production year.

The Hawaiians had tried unsuccessfully for several years to access the Canadian market which was closed to live bee shipments from the continental United States in 1987 in an effort to keep out the Varroa mite. The move resulted in losses to US queen producers estimated at NZ\$6.8 million per year (see *Buzzwords* 30).

The decision by Canadian authorities to allow Hawaii queens into their country is seen as a victory for elements in the Canadian industry who believe that the US border should no longer be closed. Varroa outbreaks have now been identified in several Canadian provinces and last year the Canadian federal government announced that it would no longer pay all the costs for varroa mite control programmes.

Unfortunately for the Canadians, however, if the Hawaiian ban remains in place, Canadians will be unable to obtain package bees from any outside source. The Canadian approval is only for queens from Hawaii, and even if the Hawaiians obtained export clearance for packages it is unlikely that they could supply more than a small portion of Canada's package needs. With those sorts of pressures on the Canadian industry, it's conceivable that the Canadians could call for a return to package imports from California, just so they can continue to restock their hives.

The Canadian authorities are requiring several strict export certification procedures for Hawaiian queens. These include the testing of 15% of the producer's colonies for varroa and one hive per apiary for tracheal mite. However, the procedures do not require area freedoms for American foulbrood, as required for New Zealand queens. Hawaii currently does not have an American foulbrood control programme and has no government register of beekeepers and apiaries.

The Hawaiians, for their part, have used some very tenuous arguments in an effort to get the USDA to stop transshipments of our bees through their ports. Mr. Yukio Kitagawa, chairperson of the Hawaiian State Government Board of Agriculture, claims that bee shipments from Australia and New Zealand pose the threat of introducing foreign diseases and pests into Hawaii. As evidence for this, he quotes the articles written by Dr. Stephen Liu, from Agriculture Canada, which appeared in a number of bee publications in North America in the past several years. According to Mr. Kitagawa, Dr. Liu "detected two serious honey bee diseases, not present in Hawaii, in samples of package bees shipped

into Canada from New Zealand and Australia". The diseases mentioned are Kashmir bee virus and melanosis.

As Denis Anderson pointed out in his rebuttal in *The American Bee Journal* in 1991 (see *Buzzwords* 39), Dr. Liu's articles "omitted important published information about Kashmir bee virus and made claims that were not supported by scientific evidence." There is also much disagreement amongst scientists as to whether melanosis is even a disease. But the real point is that the Hawaiians don't even know whether they have these two problems (we're sure they do) because no one has really ever looked.

Dr. Liu made it clear last year that his comments about Kashmir and melanosis were directed at "academically informing" beekeepers and were not really scientific articles (see *Buzzwords* 45). Still, that hasn't stopped the Hawaiians from grasping this very inconsequential straw and holding the whole of Australasia's Canadian bee exports to ransom. We strongly believe it is about time someone in the North American bee science establishment took Dr. Liu to task for his lack of scientific ethics. Dr. Liu needs to apologise to US and Canadian officials for the errors in his articles Kashmir and melanosis and he needs to do it now.

*** STOP PRESS ***

Agriculture Canada has just approved several new transit/transshipment ports for this year's package bee exports to Canada. These include Singapore, Seoul, London, and Hong Kong. There is still a problem, however, of available space on aircraft. We understand that at this point only one air carrier has agreed to consider shipping packages through Hong Kong.

We have also just been informed that the US authorities will allow transshipments of live bees through LA for valid sales contracts made prior to March 19. Contact your local AAO for details.

MORE ON OZ CHALKBROOD

As we promised in last month's *Buzzwords*, here's an update on the chalkbrood situation in Australia:

- The outbreak was first notified by the Queensland state government on February 1. The initial, visual diagnosis was later confirmed by Dr. Denis Anderson, CSIRO, Canberra, on February 8.

- The outbreak was first reported by a commercial beekeeper from the Warwick area. The disease was noticed in 4 out of 120 nucleus hives.

- By February 12, fifteen apiaries in Queensland had been found with symptoms of the disease; 11 apiaries in the Warwick area and 4 near Brisbane. It is possible that the two outbreaks are unrelated.

- At this point no chalkbrood has been found in any other Australian state. NSW has closed its border with Queensland, on a temporary basis, to bees, bee hives, and apiary products. Exceptions include honey heart treated at 70°C for 2 hours, honey which has been tested as negative



for chalkbrood, sealed bee products destined for export, and steam-cleaned honey drums originating in NSW. Border inspectors are on the lookout for illegal movements of hives across the border and Australia Post has been advised to watch out for queen bees posted from Queensland.

- The NSW Department of Agriculture has sent a mailout to all 4500 registered beekeepers in the state, with information about the disease, and details on how to inspect for the disease and where to send suspect samples. Three NSW inspectors have been sent to Queensland to assist with the inspections.

- According to the NSW Department of Agriculture, if chalkbrood becomes established in NSW, "it could cost the industry AUS\$22 million per annum in lost production from honey, queen bees, packages and pollination."

Bee Briefs, February 1993; The Australasian Beekeeper, February 1993

HONEY NOT A HORT PRODUCT, MINISTER SAYS

At last year's NBA national conference, a remit was passed calling for the executive to investigate the forming of an export regulatory system. Executive then asked the NZ Honey Exporters' Organisation to investigate such a system on their behalf.

The Exporters' Organisation was formed at conference two years ago to represent the interests of honey exporters. The organisation is a branch of the NZ Honey Packers Association, and as such has no constitution of its own. The Exporters' Organisation uses telephone conference calls for most of its committee meetings, with conference being the venue for its AGM. Membership stands at 17 and is open to all NZ exporters of honey. Bryan Clements is the organisation's elected president. Barbara Bixley of Arataki Honey is executive secretary.

The Exporters' Organisation decided the best avenue of approach was to contact the Horticulture Export Authority (HEA). The Authority is set up under the Horticulture Export Authority Act and allows for the licensing of exporters and the setting of export standards. It does not, however, allow for single desk selling and export monopolies as existed under the old Honey Marketing Authority. A number of product groups have been formed under the act, including summer fruit, buttercup squash, and avocados.

The General Manager of the HEA, Mr. Brian Milne, was approached by the Honey Exporter's Organisation and asked to investigate the possibility of including honey as one of the products under the act. Mr. Milne was enthusiastic about the idea, and wrote to the Associate Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Denis Marshall, seeking support for the legislative changes necessary to include honey. Mr. Milne pointed out that sufficient precedent for the move already existed overseas. Honey is included as a horticultural product in similar legislation adopted in Australia.

Unfortunately, however, Mr. Marshall has decided that honey is a non-horticultural product, and so does not qualify for inclusion in the HEA. He claims that including honey would

create a precedent for other, "non-horticultural products" which would "be a major shift in focus for the legislation." Mr. Marshall suggests instead that the problems of quality control and standards setting for export honey could be handled by bringing honey under the umbrella of the pending Primary Products Act or the Commodity Levies Act.

Now we all know from our struggles over AFB funding how much use the Commodity Levies Act is in its current form (see "Commodity Levy Farce", *Buzzwords* 42), and the Primary Products Act is two to three years away from becoming law. According to Bryan Clements, the Exporters' Organisation president, the next step is therefore to make a strong case to government that honey is indeed a horticultural product (an unprocessed product of flowers) and that the Exporters' Organisation has the strong support of honey producers and exporters for the creation of a Recognised Product Group under the Horticulture Export Authority. The inclusion of honey as a product group would not necessarily mean that the beekeeping industry was endorsing a full-scale regulatory system. Approval would just make the way clear if such a system were needed in the future. As Bryan Clements says, "it's up to all beekeepers to cooperate on this for the best interests of our industry."

All NBA members are encouraged to make their views known on this issue to the Exporters' Organisation. Letters can be addressed to Barbara Bixley, PO Box 8016, Havelock North. The issue will no doubt also be discussed further at this year's annual conference in Gore.

STAND-BY ON OZ IMPORTS

On March 9, your executive, together with Dr. Mark Goodwin, met with Murray Reid and Stephen Ogden, representing the MAF Regulatory Authority, to discuss the proposed protocol for imports of honey from Australia. The discussions were open and frank, with several items of agreement. There were, however, a number of other areas of disagreement, as well as the identifying of a number of areas where more data was required. Based on those discussions, we can expect another version of the draft protocol from the Regulatory Authority's Sue Cotton in the next month or two. Branches should once again be ready to respond with submissions immediately, outlining their arguments regarding the proposed protocols. Specialty groups, including the exporters' associations and the marketing and disease control committees should also be ready to comment on how the proposed protocol could affect their areas of interest. Remember, we may have won the battle last time, but it takes many battles to win the war.

Richard Bensemman, NBA executive

CONFERENCE TRAVEL

To assist members who are making travel arrangements for this year's annual conference in Gore, the **Southland** branch has arranged transport between the Invercargill airport and Gore for the following flights (NZ=Air New Zealand; AN=Ansett):

Sunday 18 July - flights NZ539 (arr 7.20pm) and AN733 (arr 7.25pm)

Monday 19 July - flight NZ509 (arr 12.00 noon)



Transport will also be provide between Gore and the Invercargill airport for the following departures:

Thursday 22 July - flights AN876 (dep 4.25pm) and NZ548 (dep 4.35pm)

Friday 23 July - flights AN762 (dep 10.25am) and NZ530 (dep 12.30pm)

Members should advise the conference organisers of their travel arrangements when they register. A registration form, listing registration costs, will be included in the next issue of *The New Zealand Beekeeper*.

For those who prefer to travel to Dunedin airport, public transport is available to Gore via Intercity and Mt. Cook Landline. Buses connect with the mid-afternoon flights. We suggest you contact your travel agent for details.

Further information about the conference arrangements can be obtained from the Conference Secretary, PO Box 5, Balfour, Southland.

Frances Trewby, NBA executive

FROM THE BRANCHES

It's AGM time for branches around the country. Here's a list of AGM dates we've received so far:

The **Auckland** branch will be holding their AGM on Thursday, April 29, beginning at 7.30 pm, at the Papakura Anglican Church Hall, 40 Coles Crescent, Papakura. Agenda includes election of officers, correspondence, and general business.

The **Waikato** branch AGM will be on Friday, April 16, in the Green Room, MAF Homestead, Ruakura, Hamilton. The meeting begins at 10 am.

The **Hawkes Bay** branch AGM will be held at 7.30 pm on April 5, at the Cruise Club Hall, Lee Road, Taradale. The secretary reminds members to bring a plate "for the noisy supper that will follow."

FROM THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

- Dale Bauer, Vice President of the National Honey Board in USA, was recently in NZ as part of the US beekeepers tour. During his visit Mr. Bauer met with Bill Floyd and discussed the possibility of developing a closer relationship with our own industry marketing programme. The discussions centred on the exchange of ideas and information which could be of benefit to both industries. The US Honey Board has developed an extremely successful programme centred on increasing honey use in the food ingredient industry. NZ, on the other hand, has produced some excellent research work on the therapeutic uses of honey, and on honey typing. It is hoped that a formal means of "information swapping" can be set up with the Americans.

- During the second week of February, Mr. Bauer and Allen McCaw, chairman of our marketing committee, were interviewed on *Rural Report*. The interview was so successful that it was broadcast on three separate occasions on the National Programme. This was an excellent opportunity for more free publicity which is so important in maintaining the positive media profile of our industry.

- The clinical trials using manuka honey in the treatment of stomach ulcers is about to get under way in Auckland. TV3 did an excellent job in covering the story, complete with an interview by Dr. Niaz Al Somaz. The publicity so far is only a hint of what may come should the trials prove to be successful. Dr. Molan says trial results are likely in about six months.

Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee

DISEASE INSPECTIONS ON TRACK

MAF Quality Management has so far completed 80% of its contracted work on AFB control, and the balance, if authorised by your executive, will be completed this autumn. As you will be aware from previous communications from executive, the programme in its entirety will cost levy payers \$120,000. It must be remembered, however, that the programme only pays for 4.2 of the 10% apiary inspection target set by the industry. The balance (5.8%) is done voluntarily by beekeepers, and in a lot of cases by the same ones each year. It is essential that all members take their turn, and if it is their turn, that they actually do the job.

When it comes to voluntary inspections, there have been grumbles from beekeepers that all they are doing is paying MAF \$120,000, and then having to do the work themselves. They obviously don't realise that the \$120,000 only pays for MAF to inspect 4.2% of the country's apiaries. If beekeepers wanted MAF to do the full job (10% of apiaries), it would cost the industry an additional \$55,000, which would raise the hive levy even further. Obviously no one would be happy at that prospect, so it is important that all NBA members also play their part.

Richard Bensemann, NBA executive

ROYAL JELLY FLIES HIGH

The Australasian Beekeeper reports that Japan Airlines has introduced a tonic drink on its flights to help passengers arrive refreshed at their destinations. "Sky Time" contains 3% Kiwifruit extract, which of course is high in vitamin C, and 100 mg of royal jelly.

With our beekeepers producing royal jelly, and surplus kiwifruit around, "Sky Time" sounds like just the sort of thing we could manufacture here in NZ. Tonic drinks are huge sellers in SE Asia. They usually contain a combination of vitamins and caffeine to give tired office workers in those booming economies a feeling of "energy and well-being."

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.

