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

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"That's the way this job is, mate - interminable periods of boredom and brief moments of intense excitement!"



FROM THE PRESIDENT

This autumn has certainly been a frustrating time for all those members involved in producing and exporting package bees and queens to Canada. When the USDA closed first Honolulu and then Los Angeles, our industry found out just how important those airports are to the live bee export trade.

Representatives of the NBA, MAF, and several private individuals have all been working very hard to get these transshipment ports open again. Our first success was in getting L.A. airport re-opened, but because of air freight availability and the difference in size of planes between Auckland-L.A. and L.A.-Canada, Honolulu proved to still be the vital crossroads.

All our faxes from NBA head office were ignored by the US officials, and to date your organisation has still not received

any official correspondence from the USDA. We decided, therefore, to try a more personal approach, and I made a person-to-person call to Mr. Yukio Kitagawa, chairperson of the Hawaii State Government Board of Agriculture, and the person whose name appeared on the original letter from the State of Hawaii asking for the transshipment ban to be put in place (see *Buzzwords* 51).

Mr. Kitagawa was involved with meetings of Hawaii's Legislative Council, but his secretary referred me to Mr. Lyall Wong, who was handling the bee issue in Mr. Kitagawa's stead. I found Mr. Wong a very reasonable person to deal with, and he told me that they were meeting with Canadian federal government officials the next day to hopefully sort out the problem. Mr. Wong believed the outcome would be very much in our favour, and this indeed was the case.

For me, what the whole episode highlights is the need for your national executive to make a strong case to the

Americans, through our government regulatory officials, to ensure that this problem doesn't occur again next season. When members of your executive met recently with Associate Minister of Agriculture Mr. Denis Marshall, he indicated that New Zealand was expecting a trade delegation from the US in early May. This would seem to be an excellent time to raise the problem and see if we can get some clarification.

* * * * *

We could expect, after such a poor production season, to see the price of honey on the domestic market move up to a more realistic figure. Honey prices could safely rise to something approaching the world price of honey, but it is important as well that the price does not go too far beyond that point. There is, after all, some surplus honey on the international market from the Southern Hemisphere, with the Australians having a good season after three poor ones. They expect to have 11,000 tonnes available for export this season. Domestic packers in New Zealand may also not be able to move prices up by too large an amount, but I nevertheless believe that there is at least some room for a price improvement.

Dudley Ward, President

HAWAII RE-OPENED

New Zealand and Australia's \$1.5 million export trade in live bees to Canada is back on track, thanks to a last-minute change of heart by the Hawaii State Board of Agriculture. The announcement came more than two weeks into the shipping season, but package and queen producers here are hopeful that a majority of the previously contracted exports will still get through to Canada on schedule. Timing of bee exports to Canada is critical because of that country's short build-up period prior to the honey flow (which begins at the end of June). If the Hawaiians had prolonged the transshipment ban any longer, it is likely that Canada's 1993 honey crop could have been seriously affected.

The announcement lifting the ban was contained in a fax from the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to the New Zealand embassy in Washington, D.C. The fax included a letter from Mr. Yukio Kitagawa, Chairperson of the Hawaii State Board of Agriculture to Mr. Glen Lee of APHIS.

The letter gives the state's permission to re-commence transshipment, but not because Hawaiian authorities no longer believe there is a disease risk (see *Buzzwords 51*). Far from it. They are simply making the "accommodation . . . because of the short time frame for honey bee shippers to find alternative routes to Canada for the 1993 season."

The Hawaiians continue to stand behind their state law, which prohibits the entry of any live or dead honey bees, and point out that the discovery of any escaped bees from bulk bee transshipments will result in the immediate revoking of the offending exporter's transit permit. They note that in the past bees have escaped from such transshipments. They are therefore insisting that extra precautions such as netting and double strapping are taken by all exporters. Hawaiian state agricultural inspectors will be meeting each consignment to ensure that no bee escapes take place.

So at least for the meantime, New Zealand live bee exports to Canada are once again under way. The transshipment problem, however, is far from solved. Reason and scientific ethics need to prevail if a long-term solution is to be found which doesn't unfairly disadvantage our exporters. New Zealand has some of the most disease-free honey bee stocks in the world. We should be allowed to not just transship Hawaii, but also export to the mainland US as well. We have no doubt that when a competent scientific study is conducted on US bee stocks, Kashmir bee virus will be found throughout the US, including Hawaii.

BILL SUBMISSION SOON

Parliament's Primary Production Select Committee has invited the NBA to make a verbal submission on the Bio-Security Bill. The submission is due to be made on April 28, when the NBA executive is in Wellington for its regular executive meeting. Executive members Michael Wraight and Nick Wallingford, together with Executive Officer Ted Roberts, will make the presentation on behalf of the association. Michael, Nick, and Ted made up the executive sub-committee which drafted the original, written NBA submission which was sent to Parliament at the beginning of February (see *Buzzwords 49*).

The NBA verbal submission follows by several weeks another, much-publicised submission made by Federated Farmers (see "A Danger Seen in Pest Bill", *Straight Furrow*, April, 1993). The Federation backed many of the criticisms of the bill made by the NBA, including the lack of government funding for public good activities relating to the agricultural sector (such as agricultural quarantine and EDPR) and the fact that a number of pests could be left uncontrolled if affected industries couldn't afford to pick up the tab.

According to Dick Davison, the Federation's meat and wool section chairperson, while the bill allows for pests to be controlled by agreed partnerships between farmers and central and local government, it also has its down side. "If even one of the necessary partners did not wish to take part in a programme, then a pest could go untackled. There is a danger some pests could fall through the cracks and develop into more serious problems."

FOOD AWARD ENTRIES SOUGHT

New Zealand's prestigious Print-Pac UEB Food Awards are now eight years old. Last year two of our industry's marketing leaders, Airborne Honey Ltd and Arataki Honey Ltd, received (respectively) a category winner award and a highly commended award for their honey products (see *Buzzwords 47*).

No doubt our industry will come up with a few more winners this year, so if you've got a good product to promote, make sure to enter. Closing date for entries is August 9, with judging on September 9-10, and the awards ceremony on October 13. Further information and entry forms are available from Jan Muir, Printpac UEB, Private Bag 92140, Auckland (phone 09 525 0960).

Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee



MANUKA POLLEN WANTED

Just when we thought manuka honey was special, along comes the suggestion that the antibacterial activity of that honey might actually come from the manuka pollen it contains. So Dr. Peter Molan, our ever-inquisitive honey scientist, has decided to check out this theory by testing manuka pollen for antibacterial properties.

To carry out the test he needs pollen which has been collected from any site where bees have harvested bio-active manuka honey. If anyone has stocks of such pollen available from this year's crop, Dr. Molan would like approximately 1 teaspoon per site for testing.

And if you plan to produce bio-active manuka next spring, why not make the extra effort to put on a few pollen traps and send in pollen samples, along with your honey, for testing. Obviously there will be no charge for testing these samples (it's research, not routine testing), and individual results will be provided back to the beekeeper.

For those of you who don't have his address, Dr. Molan can be reached at:

Department of Biological Sciences
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
HAMILTON
ph (07) 856 2889
fax (07) 838 4324

Remember - the continued success of Dr. Molan's research depends on beekeepers who take the time to do this sample collection work.

MARKETING PLAN UPDATE

Progress is being made on the development of a comprehensive marketing plan for the NBA. The plan is being developed by the marketing committee in conjunction with Floyd Marketing. A draft plan has now been submitted by Bill Floyd under a specific contract with the committee.

The marketing committee held an intensive one day meeting in Christchurch on April 15 to consider the draft plan. The meeting came to the conclusion that while there was still some work needed to complete this important document, the final result was not far away. Key marketing issues have been identified based on an analysis of our industry's present and future situation. Strategies and actions are being developed to address these issues, with the main emphasis on honey as a product. However, the plan will also include activities relating to as many of our industry's other products and services as possible.

The marketing committee intends to complete the final plan before the 1993 Conference in Gore. Hopefully a document summary will be prepared for widespread distribution so that members can all see the direction we are heading in our marketing efforts. The marketing committee will also make a presentation on the plan during the conference. The plan will be presented to the NBA executive for ratification and

a marketing budget will then be approved for the coming financial year.

Future issues of *Buzzwords* will include more detailed coverage of various aspects of the marketing plan, and we would obviously welcome any comments from NBA members along the way.

Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee

MAIN LETTER NEEDS BEE LESSON

The Main Agricultural Letter, a newsletter read by a large number of people throughout primary industry, decided to take a swing at the New Zealand beekeeping industry in its April 2 issue. According to the newsletter, "after a poor season for the (NZ) honey industry, it seems extraordinary that we are exporting 81 million bees to South Korea. Exporting bees seems akin to the practice a decade ago of sending kiwifruit rootstock to Chile."

The Main Letter says that a better option would be to ship Korea our honey instead. "There's a huge market in Korea for honey. Koreans drink hot lemon and honey beverages straight from dispenser machines in winter, and take the drink cold in summer."

Someone needs to tell the editors of *The Main Agricultural Letter* what the real story is - that the Koreans have had their own (very large) beekeeping industry for many years, but now need stocks of bees because the varroa mite problem is so bad there that a number of hives perish every year; that the bees are also necessary for crop pollination; and that bulk bees, and especially replacement queens, will always be required by the Koreans if we can get a secure foothold in the market.

Someone also needs to tell the editors how difficult it is to get honey, or anything else for that matter, into Korea these days. The bureaucratic red tape is absolutely amazing!

That being the case, exporting bees to Korea should be seen as a New Zealand achievement, not a chance to knock another tall poppy. And who knows, if the trade continues to develop, we might even be able to export a bit more honey there in the future as well.

ECROYD IN ASIA

A Christchurch company hopes New Zealand honey will soon become a more common sight on Asian shop shelves. Bee Healthy, a Christchurch company run by managing director Mr. Stuart Ecroyd, was formed last year to market honeys both locally and overseas. Beekeeping and supplies for the beekeeping industry have been a part of the Ecroyd family since 1913, when Stuart's grandfather became involved in the business.

Bee Healthy's focus is export. Mr. Ecroyd was part of the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce and International Trade's mission to Singapore and Malaysia in August. Most of the honey in Singapore and Malaysia is Australian. While it is sometimes cheaper than New Zealand honey, Mr. Ecroyd says it is often considered to be less palatable and has fewer varieties.

The Press, October 1, 1992



HONEY INDUSTRY TRUST FUND

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

MARKETING BEE LEGAL

Beekeepers need to be aware of various legal requirements when marketing their products. These include:

- What we can and cannot say on a label, including the provisions of the Fair Trading Act and the Food Act;
- The misrepresentation of honey products (for instance, calling a product manuka honey when in fact it is a manuka-bush blend);
- The use of misleading information about our products, including the use of therapeutic claims not allowed under the Medicine Act;
- The quoting of Dr. Molan in advertising. This can only be done with his permission.

Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee

FROM THE BRANCHES

The **Waikato** branch will be holding its next meeting on Friday, May 28, in the Green Room, Homestead, Ruaukura Agricultural Centre. Starting time is 10 am.

The next meeting of the **Hawkes Bay** branch will be on Monday, May 10, at the Cruse (*is this spelled right? - ed.*) Club, Taradale, beginning at 7.30 pm. Main activity will be a brain storm (ie, planning for the coming year).

The **Poverty Bay** branch held a very successful diseaseathon on the weekend of April 3-4. Branch members were joined by a group of beekeepers and their wives from the **Bay of Plenty** branch. Besides inspecting some 55 apiaries and 570 hives, members of the two branches also managed to find time to sample the delights (both food and drink) of Harvest Wines, Matawhero, makers of all that mead being sent to Korea (see *Buzzwords* 48). A fine time was had by all (except, perhaps, for a certain AAO who looked more than a bit "under-the-weather" the next morning).

CONFERENCE FLIGHT DISCOUNTS

Both Air New Zealand Link and Ansett are offering substantial discounts to NBA members attending this year's conference in Gore (July 19-22). The discounts (and how to get them) are as follows:

Air New Zealand - 25% discount - quote DOM1825/3 when booking your flight. Discount is available between July 15 and 27 from all serviced New Zealand airports, to and from either Invercargill, Dunedin, or Queenstown.

Ansett - 30% discount - quote TA 53868 when booking your flight. Discount is available between July 17 and 25 from all serviced New Zealand airports, to and from either Invercargill, Dunedin, or Queenstown.

The current price war being waged between both air carriers may mean that NBA members can pick up even greater discounts by booking well in advance. The price war has meant that both airlines are offering generous discounts on all their return fares for travel between May and August. Check with your travel agent for details, and make sure to shop around.

Remember to include details of your travel arrangements when you send in your conference registration. A full conference programme, with registration form, will appear in the May issue of the *New Zealand Beekeeper*. Closing date for registrations is June 11.

GORE CONFERENCE MAKES PRESS

This year's conference in Gore has already made the papers, with a *Newslink* article which makes the quip that members of the NBA employ on average 50 million workers, the largest work force in New Zealand. The article says that the workers, being all bees, are still on collective (hive) contracts. That's a bit ironic, since one of the sessions planned for this year's seminar will be on the Employment Contracts Act.

The article also quotes Ross Ward, the Southland branch secretary, on the choice of Gore as the conference venue. According to Ross, "in the past when it was Southland's turn to host the conference it was held in Invercargill or Queenstown. However, Gore has all the facilities needed and the association decided a change of scene was in order."

BRANCH OFFICER CHANGE-OVER

Branch secretaries are reminded to advise the NBA Executive Secretary (PO Box 4048, Wellington) of changes to branch officers following the recent AGM's. Send head office the names, addresses, and phone/fax numbers of all new officers. Also include a branch fax contact number. This should be a fax number which head office can use to contact the branch secretary in cases of urgency.

And while you're putting pen to paper, make sure to advise your nearest MAF Apicultural Advisory Officer of these same changes of officers. The AAO's need this information to pass on to new beekeepers registering in the area covered by the branch (see clause 22 of the AFB Disease Control Contract).

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.

