



# Buzzwords ...

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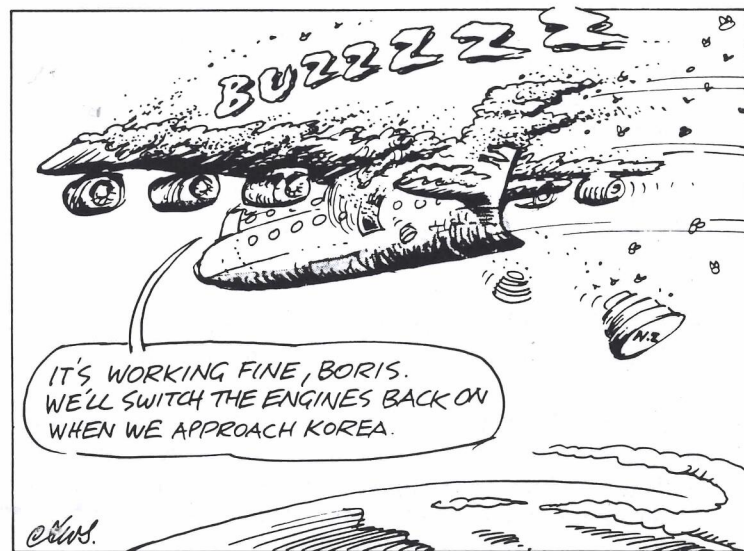
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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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## Buzzwords No 53 June 1993



### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Most of the honey is now off the hives and beekeepers throughout the country are in the midst of wintering down. This year's crop must surely be at the bottom end of NZ's production curve, and most of us will want to see that curve go over the top next season.

Your executive is very much aware of the difficulties being experienced by members as a result of this low production year coupled with the big jump in the hive levy. Unfortunately, we also have some beekeepers who are not paying their fair share, and this places an even greater burden on the rest of us.

The NBA is finding that to bring beekeepers to account who either under-declare or don't pay their hive levy, is a slow and difficult exercise. Nevertheless, your executive is determined to use all the legal and administrative powers at

his disposal to ensure that everyone meets this important obligation to their industry.

Branches and individual members can also help in this regard. If the branch is aware of beekeepers in their area who are "not playing the game", they should make local product buyers aware of the situation. Remember that Hive Levy violators need to sell their honey, queen bees, and other products in order to stay in business. And if you buy products from such people, remember that in the long-run you are doing yourself and your fellow beekeepers a real disservice.

I am arranging a meeting next month between industry representatives and Jim Edwards from MAF's Regulatory Authority, to identify existing market access and export certification problems. We hope Jim will be able to help resolve potential entry problems for honey into the EC as well as formalise future transshipment points for our markets

for package bees and queens. We need continued access through Hawaii since it is the most direct route for many of our bee exports. There is also a need for dialogue with Korea and several other importing countries so that we can achieve a more practical solution to many of our certification problems.

Dr. Niaz Al Somai, from the Auckland University School of Medicine, phoned me recently with a request for two drums each of high antibacterial activity and non-detectable activity manuka honey. He needed the honey, in 1 kg liquid packs, for the clinical trials on stomach ulcers. I am pleased to say that all this honey has now been sourced and is being supplied and packed free of charge. This kind of willing participation by beekeepers is one of the great sources of strength in our industry and is one in which we can all be justifiably proud.

Dudley Ward, President

## CROP AND MARKET UPDATE

The following information is provided to *Buzzwords* readers by the NZ Honey Packers Association, and is based on their conference call of 4 May 1993:

Crop Estimate - final crop estimates have tended slightly upward overall since the last conference call in late March. Nevertheless, the NZ crop is still below average. Some hives are reported to have shut down with very heavy stores, indicating a good late flow, while others have required heavy feeding because of a very poor autumn.

Honey Stocks - some packers have now bought in sufficient stocks to fill their expected needs until next season, while others are still looking for honey.

Packers Buy-In Prices (per kg) - manuka - \$3; lighter grades - \$2 to \$2.20, with payment spread over several months.

Wholesale Prices (NZ) - most packers have either already increased their prices or are expecting to increase them fairly soon. Increases appear to be around the 10% mark for all grades and packs of honey, with the biggest increases likely to be for manuka. The price increase should give beekeepers a much needed financial boost and return some confidence to our industry after several years of depressed prices and falling incomes.

Export Markets - several beekeepers have exported bulk honey for the first time this year, and some concern has been expressed that if too much honey is exported, supplies for the NZ market may become a bit short before next season's honey becomes available.

Product Specifications - these are now being requested by some end-use buyers. It has therefore been suggested that the association draft suitable specifications to cover honey, have them checked by the Health Department, and make them available for use by members.

The annual general meeting of the NZ Honey Packers Association will be held during the NBA conference at Gore.

Ian Berry, President

## CERANA HITS OZ

In past issues of *Buzzwords*, we have reported on the spread of *Varroa* into a number of countries, including Great Britain and Canada, and the movement of *Varroa* and *Tropilaelaps* through Papua New Guinea. The Australians are sufficiently concerned about the possibility of either of the mites entering their country that Dr. Denis Anderson has for several years been conducting a research project in PNG on the mites, and their association with the Asian bee, *Apis cerana* (see *Buzzwords* 33).

*Apis cerana* is the natural host of *Varroa*, and while *Tropilaelaps* has not been found in association with the bee in PNG (it is originally a parasite of *Apis dorsata*), scientists elsewhere still believe that *Apis cerana* is one of its alternative hosts. Both mites are now regarded as the most dangerous diseases of our western honey bee, *Apis mellifera*.

The Australians' concern now seems more than justified, following the discovery in February of swarms of *Apis cerana* on two islands in the Torres Strait which are just inside Australian territory. The discovery was announced by Dr. Gardner Murray, Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, in a letter to New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture officials.

According to the letter, one of the swarms was sampled and destroyed by Australian government agriculture quarantine personnel, but unfortunately the other swarm flew away. No mites were found in the captured swarm, although the sample which was taken was small and not in the best condition. And needless to say, because the other swarm got away, Australian authorities are not drawing any conclusions about the presence or absence of mites on the bees.

A joint Australian Quarantine Service/Queensland Department of Primary Industry response was mounted to survey both islands and quarantine measures have been strengthened on aircraft and sea movements from the northern Torres Strait Islands to the other islands and Cape York. As well, all movements of *Apis mellifera* hives from the Torres Strait to mainland Australia are now prohibited.

## FROM THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

NBA Marketing Plan Update - the Marketing Committee intends to include a summary of the recently completed NBA Marketing Plan in the conference remit mailing, due to be posted to all NBA members in early June. There will also be a remit on the order paper from executive asking for continuation of funding for the marketing plan for the 1993-94 financial year.

The Medicine Act 1981 - I mentioned in *Buzzwords* 49 that the NBA was planning a submission on the review of this act and that the submission was due in February. Unfortunately, however, the discussion paper which forms part of the review is taking government committee members longer than anticipated to complete. As a result, it now looks as though the release of document (and the call for the second round of submissions) won't happen until at least July.



This gives us longer to prepare a sound, scientifically based submission on the therapeutic uses of honey and bee products. With the research being conducted on such products as manuka and propolis, our hope is to have bee products licensed as medicines (under the Medicine Act), and not just as a food (under the Food Act).

But we need your help. To make a forceful submission, we need to gather as much scientific information as possible on the therapeutic uses of honey and other bee products. So if you have any relevant information you feel may be helpful, please forward it to the NBA head office, PO Box 4048, Wellington, or to Sue Jenkins, RD 2, Blenheim.

What Some Australians Think of Other Australian Honey - Kangaroo Island, a reserve island off the coast near Adelaide, will not allow the importation of any honey from mainland Australia. This is because of the possible spread of diseases (especially EFB) onto the island, which is maintained as a "genetic pool reserve" - free from bee diseases and apparently maintaining a relatively pure strain of Italian bees.

Using this analogy, New Zealand could readily lay claim to similar status, only in our case for the entire country! Perhaps we are overlooking another marketing opportunity - the value of our country to the rest of the world as an "apicultural reserve" in a comparatively disease-free and genetically stable bee environment. Let's run that one past the bureaucrats and politicians who seem hell-bent on increasing the risk of yet another exotic disease reaching our shores through unnecessary product importation.

Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee

## GIANT OF A BEE BOOK

It isn't often that you could call the publishing of a beekeeping book "an event". But then again, *The Hive and the Honey Bee* has never been just another beekeeping book. The original edition, written by the Rev. L.L. Langstroth in 1853, explained to beekeepers his discovery of "bee space". The book, and the discovery, laid the very foundations for the type of beekeeping we still practice today.

In 1889, the book was published for the first time by Dadant & Sons, a firm which also markets bee supplies and produces *The American Bee Journal*. Dadant's greatly improved and expanded the book and in 1949 began the first in a series of multi-author editions. The idea was to call on the services of leading bee researchers and extensionists to produce an up-to-date text on "scientific" beekeeping.

The edition readers are probably most familiar with is the 1974 (light-brown coloured) one. For two decades it has been used by many schools and universities as a text in bee biology. It has also found pride of place on many beekeepers' book shelves.

Unfortunately, however, in the past several years that edition has begun to sorely show its age, and not just because it has been thumbed through by its owners so many times over the years. Events, and our understanding

of honey bees, have greatly accelerated in the past twenty years. Varroa has spread throughout much of the beekeeping world and the Africanised bee has made it to the U.S. At the same time research, especially in the fields of bee genetics and pheromones, has greatly improved our understanding of bee behaviour.

Dadant's obviously saw the need for another edition of their famous book. They could quite easily have done a slick make-over, and because of the popularity of previous editions, it no doubt would have sold. Thankfully, though, for world beekeeping, they didn't take the easy way out.

What they've come up with instead is nothing short of another masterpiece. To begin with, at 1324 pages, its almost double the size of the previous edition. And they have taken the opportunity to not only have many of the old chapters extensively re-written; they have also included at least six totally new ones, including sections on pheromones, physiology, business management, and bee sting allergies.

A number of the authors have also changed, reflecting both the new research which is being conducted, and the sad passing of the old guard. In fact, the only chapter which doesn't seem to have been much altered is the one on bee anatomy by Snodgrass. His work, although now more than thirty years old, is still regarded as the recognised standard. So the only thing which has been added to that chapter is a series of impressive electron micrographs which accompany the old, familiar drawings.

As for drawbacks, I can only find a few, and those are probably more the result of the book's American focus than anything else. It would have been nice, for instance, to have seen some mention of kiwifruit in the pollination chapter, since the use of honey bees to help produce that crop is one of the great stories of modern commercial beekeeping. And it's a bit on the nose to see the authors in the business management chapter blaming low world honey prices on "developing" countries who have subsidised their beekeepers. It's a shame that Dadant's didn't get someone with a wider perspective to write a section on agricultural subsidies in the developed world and their affect on the world honey market.

But these are just minor quibbles. The publishing of this great bee book really is an event, and if you're thinking about doing some "light" reading during the off-season, this is definitely the book to buy. But before you order, a word to the wise: buy the book from one of our New Zealand bee supply houses, not directly from overseas. It took me almost six months to receive my copy mailed from the States, and the postage (even surface) was right out of this world.

## KILLER CHALKBROOD?

Beekeepers around NZ must have been scratching their heads following the release of an Australian Associated Press story claiming that chalkbrood, which has supposedly reached NSW, killed 10% of hives when it spread throughout our country in the late '80's. Australian government officials are claiming that the disease could cost beekeepers there



## HONEY INDUSTRY TRUST FUND

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

as much as AUS\$22 million in lost production (see *Buzzwords* 51).

Now there's no doubt that chalkbrood behaves differently in different areas of the world, with the severity of the infection in places such as Israel and Thailand far greater than was experienced in New Zealand. And beekeepers in NSW have definite reason for some concern (although we understand that the disease has so far only been detected as spores in honey in that state). Still, as we all know, there's no way chalkbrood decimated the NZ industry. While the disease, at some times in the year, may have killed up to 10% of brood in some colonies, it didn't destroy even a small proportion of our hives. At most, the disease can only be said to have reduced the production of some colonies, but even that is debateable. Chalkbrood is an opportunist disease, and often it is quite likely that the disease is actually the result, rather than cause of a weak hive.

The Australian beekeepers, at least, seem to be taking a more cautious, reasoned approach to their new disease. Recently they contracted Murray Reid, MAF's National Manager for Apiculture, to address the NSW Beekeepers' Conference on NZ's experience with chalkbrood. Hopefully Murray will be able to set the record straight.

## RUSHIN' BEES TO KOREA

Eighty one million bees left Auckland for South Korea in early April on board a giant Russian Aleutian air freighter (see cartoon, page 1). The consignment, which weighed 15 tonnes, is thought to be the largest export of live bees ever made from New Zealand.

Export company Arataki Honey Ltd, of Waiotapu, said the biggest concern was keeping the bees cool during the flight. Company manager Annette Berry said the bees were kept in hive-like conditions inside cardboard tubes. Each tube carried about 13,500 bees clustered around a queen in a plastic cage, at temperatures below 20 degrees.

Mrs. Berry said it took up to 45 staff two weeks to put the bees into tubes and then into larger bins for transport. Mrs. Berry said New Zealand bees were in demand for their quality and relatively disease-free status.

*The New Zealand Shipping Gazette, April 3, 1993*

## FROM THE BRANCHES

The next meeting of the **Auckland** branch will be held on Thursday, July 8, beginning at 7.30 pm, at the Papakura Anglican Church Hall, 40 Coles Road (opposite Three Guys supermarket). Main topic of the meeting will be voting on conference remits.

The **Auckland** branch also wishes to advise readers that Mr. Colin Rope, long-time beekeeping advisor and branch

member, passed away on April 27. Colin was for many years the government honey grader, and was honoured with NBA Life Membership at the 1988 conference in Auckland.

The remit voting meeting for the **Waikato** branch will be on Friday, July 9, in the Green Room, Homestead, Ruakura. Secretary Tony Lorimer reminds members that proxy votes will be accepted.

The annual golf clash between the **Waikato** and **Bay of Plenty** branches is scheduled for Wednesday, June 16, at the Okoroire Hot Springs Hotel golf course (just east of Tirau). Tee off is 12:30 pm. And by the way, if you think this is some flash tournament at a pluty golf course, think again. You certainly don't have to be even an occasional golfer to have a good time (isn't that right, Peter Townsend?) and the Okoroire course is definitely "country-style". Green fees are minimal and we've even seen gum boots being worn around the fairways! So come on, everybody, it's winter and you can afford the time off. Definitely a great day out!

The **Hawkes Bay** branch will be holding its next meeting on Monday, June 14, at the Cruse Club, Taradale, beginning at 7.30 pm. Secretary Ron Morrison reports a decent crop from the branch apiary this season which has helped to refill branch coffers. Colin McLean was recently elected branch president, replacing Bob Wotherspoon, who has decided to step down now that the successful 1992 conference is behind him. Well done, Bob! And, oh yes, Ron informs us that "Cruse" isn't one of his spelling errors. So they don't do much sailing at branch meetings, after all.

The next meeting of the **Southern North Island** branch will be on Friday, June 25, at the National Party club rooms, beginning at 10 am. Ham Maxwell reports that their last meeting was addressed by an associate professor of marketing at Massey University. MBA students there are conducting a survey on our industry as part of their course work.

Finally, here's a great idea from the **Marlborough** branch. They held their recent remit formulation meeting at the local Redwood Tavern Restaurant. No doubt the wee bit of conviviality didn't go amiss, and as Secretary Murray Bush points out, the best part is that because the venue is a pub, the meeting has to end by 10:30 pm!

## 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.

