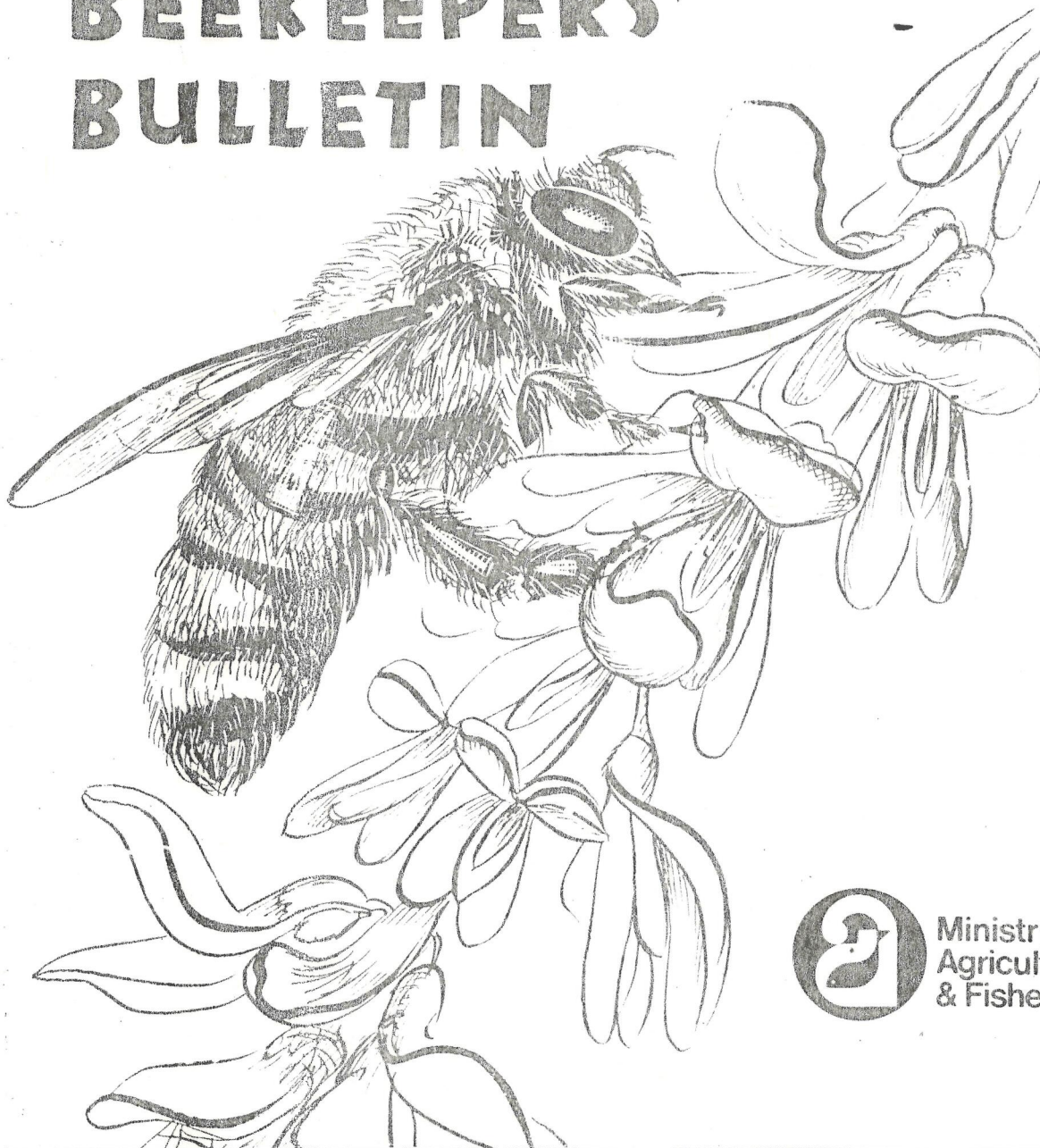


THE BEEKEEPERS' BULLETIN



Ministry of
Agriculture
& Fisheries

Edited by -

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Despite the problems, setbacks, and poor weather of the past winter and spring, there's many a beekeeper with a smile on his face, and that probably goes for bank managers too!

In Nelson/Marlborough the word "drought" has hardly had an airing, as it's as green now as it was before Christmas last year! The bush has turned it on in all areas, with the West Coast hills turning red for the first time in three years.

All in all, quite a good effort!

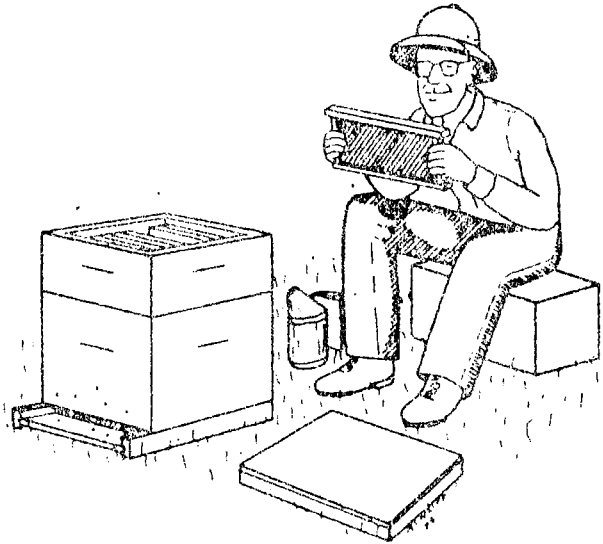
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One of my jobs straight after the new year was to write my annual report. January is a strange time to start and finish the agricultural year, but I believe it has something to do with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries report to Parliament in March.

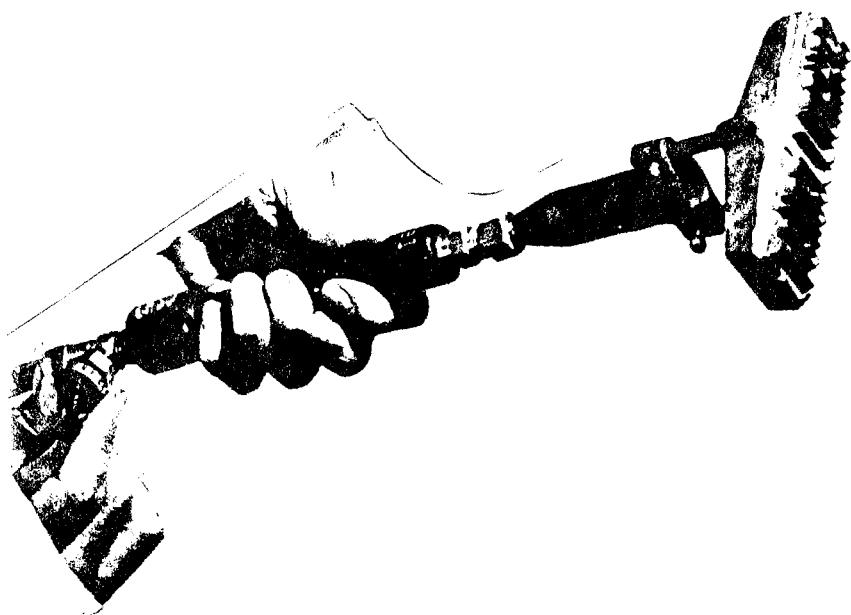
Some excerpts;

- the unprecedented increase in interest in beekeeping continues with 11% more beekeepers this year than last. This is mostly in the domestic sector of course, and hive numbers only increased by some 3%, mainly because of heavy winter losses on the Coast.



- B.L. incidence is down on last year's record levels, to 7.20% of apiaries and 1.26% of hives (last year 11.07% and 1.74%). Among the many reasons for this would be increased beekeeper education, particularly at the hobbyist level, and increased inspection (despite travel cuts for some P.T.I.'s).

HIVE RUSTLING



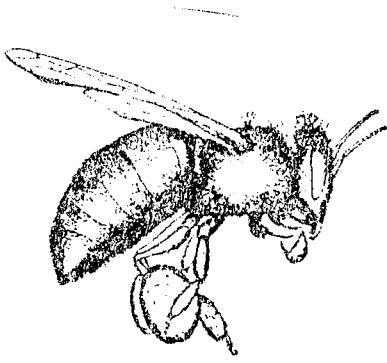
Brand
Your Hives!

I mentioned this activity in the last issue, and didn't propose to raise it again. I know of no hive rustling in this district and have no desire to create a problem where none exists.

But it is a fact of life in some areas. Murray Reid from Hamilton reports that in his district, over 107 hives have gone missing in the past year. A hive is worth a lot of money, especially just prior to the honey flow (or with a crop on, for that matter). If they are stolen, you may as well write them off, unless they are well identified.

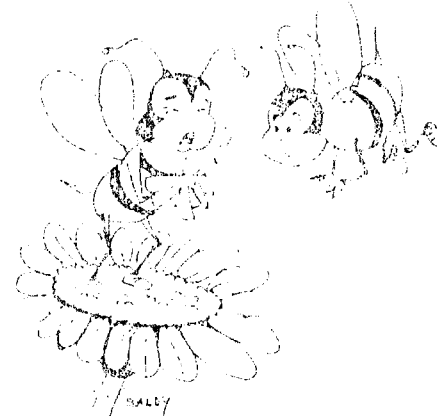
Make yourself a brand with your Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries code number on it, for doing supers, lids and bottoms. Steve Lyttle uses a rubber stamp pad for marking frames; the ink soaks into the wood for quite some distance.

Pollen



Interest has been high during the last year in the potential for pollen collection in the Nelson district. The full potential is by no means being reached, and quite a few beekeepers are building more traps.

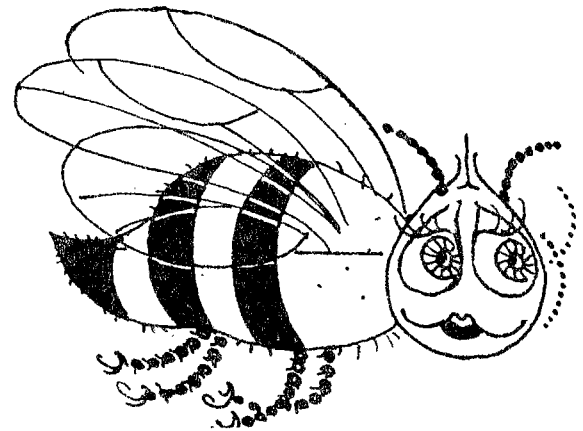
The market for pollen is very firm at the moment. Healtheries in Auckland are paying \$9.00/kg, with a base price of \$8.00/kg for poorer quality pollen. Their demand for pollen has increased because of their inability to import any. TNL Export Ltd. are also buying pollen for exporting - see P. Cropp.



I'm allergic to pollen

---oOo---

Drifting Bees



Now might also be the time to rethink the position of hives in your apiaries. Traditionally, in New Zealand as well as overseas, hives are placed in one or two straight rows, and to make things look "neater", the hives are usually all the same colour.

This might appeal to our sense of aesthetics, but is bad news for the bees. Drifting occurs, that is, bees enter the wrong hive by mistake. This would not be so bad, if each hive gained on the swings what it lost on the roundabouts. But drifting occurs in particular patterns, towards the ends of a straight row, away from the centre. Where two or more rows of hives are used, the front row catches more bees.

Why should you prevent drifting?

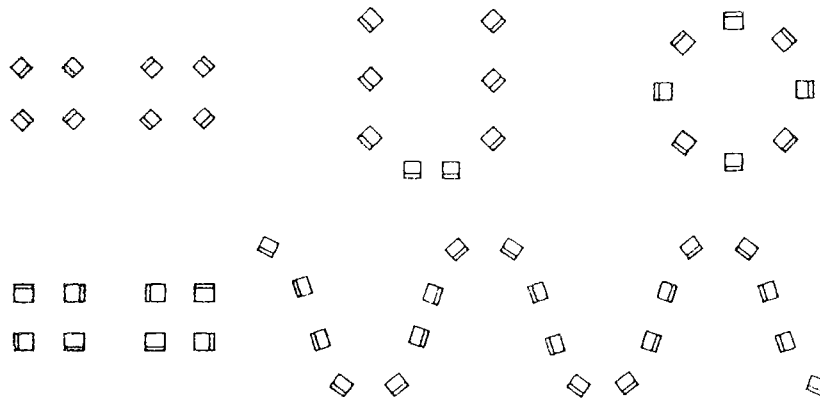
- in a high-drift situation, some colonies become very strong and may cause swarming problems. Others become so depleted of foraging bees that they may become "passengers". This means that the apiary cannot be managed as a single unit, i.e. with all hives at more or less the same stage of development. Management problems and overall time spent must be greater.
- if you requeen with cells, correct mating in out-apiaries is vital. Queens returning from their mating flights and entering the wrong hives by mistake will probably be killed.
- honey production records from apiaries where there is a lot of drift are not very useful. Beware of the potential breeder that is on the end of the row!
- drifting bees may spread A.F.B.
- studies carried out by Dr. S.C. Jay at the University of Manitoba show that hives arranged in a non-random layout each produced, on average, 11 kg more than hives arranged in rows.

How can you prevent drifting?

There are three main ways of doing this:

- arranging hives in an irregular pattern
- making sure that hives are painted different colours
- using landmarks near hives (bushes, trees etc.)

Although all of these work well, the first is perhaps the easiest and most effective to use in a commercial situation. Almost any layout in which the entrances of neighbouring hives face in different directions works well. A few examples are shown below:



Five useful hive layouts to prevent drifting. The double line indicates the hive entrance.

(above): diamond, U-shape, circle; (below): square, "snake"

Of course there are other factors influencing hive layout, e.g. access for trucks and other equipment, position of shelter, personal preference of the beekeeper, etc.

The second method for preventing drifting, namely painting hive components different colours, deserves more consideration than it is usually given. When painting boxes, it is a simple matter to use different batches of paint. Then by sheer chance any hive is going to have a different combination of colours from its neighbour. It's only a false sense of professional pride that prevents us from doing this, but in fact it is a mark of a thoughtful beekeeper, isn't it?

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Wintering Down

This job is a while away yet, but there won't be another "Bulletin" before it's done. A few points -

1. Locate the hives on a slope facing the sun, sheltered from winds and out of reach of floods.
2. Leave on plenty of stores - about 25-40 kg of honey and several frames of pollen, in two full-depth boxes. Feed sugar syrup to colonies without this quantity of food.
3. Unite colonies that occupy less than six frames in April - May.
4. Carry out a B.L. check if brood is still present - diseased colonies will probably die and be robbed out in winter.
5. Shift poor combs to the outsides of boxes, for future culling.
6. Clean and repair floorboards and hive bodies.
7. Put entrance reducers on before wasps become a problem and mice move into winter quarters.
8. Provide a top entrance or else prop up the inner cover on matchsticks to give ventilation (more about this later).
9. Take the queen excluder off, or else you may lose a queen as the cluster moves upwards.
10. Check that the apiary has your I.D. number displayed.
11. Attack the undergrowth once more, by slashing, spraying or whatever. To keep down grass growth around each hive, I use a granular, slow-release herbicide such as "Prefix". A 200 mm or so strip of bare ground right around the hive keeps the entrance clear, reduces dampness, etc.

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More About Top Ventilation

Top ventilation is a much neglected subject in New Zealand beekeeping. Somehow we seem to have got the idea that bees need to be tucked up in bed for winter, and kept warm. Remember the old adage:

"Bees never freeze to death
- they starve to death"

Langstroth was well aware of this, as he wrote "No extreme of cold experienced in latitudes where bees flourish can destroy a strong colony, well supplied with honey, except indirectly, by confining them to empty combs. They will survive our coldest winters, in thin hives raised on blocks to give a freer admission of air, or even in suspended hives, without any bottom board at all. Indeed in cold weather, a very free admission of air is necessary in such hives, to prevent the otherwise ruinous effects of frozen moisture ... "

Well worth giving some serious thought.

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Apiary Business

Management Course 1980

For those of you who were disappointed last year this course is going to be held at Flock House Training Institute, Bulls, from 30 June to 4 July. It is designed for established beekeepers in commercial production (or their wives, if they keep the books).

Subjects include:

- interpretation of accounts
- record keeping
- forecast budgets
- taxation
- estate planning



A pre-course exercise will be set. Participants must be familiar with, and bring, a calculator.

Numbers will be limited, so send for further information or apply soon to:

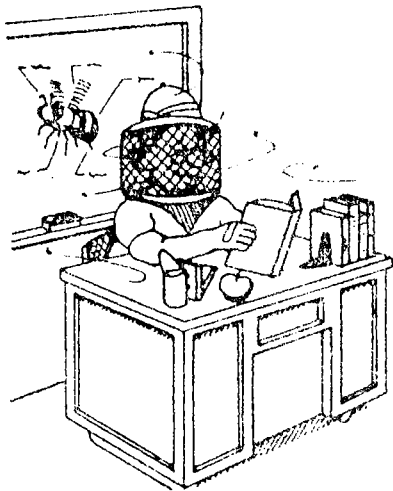
The Registrar
Flock House Farm Training Institute
Private Bag
Bulls

Costs will be approximately \$17 for tuition, plus \$7.50 per day for accommodation and meals.

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From Here and There

- * Nelson Polytechnic is offering beekeeping courses again this year. There will be two series of evening classes at Nelson, and weekend beekeeping schools at Motueka (March 29-30), Westport (possibly in April), and possibly another one or two next spring. Since I started these courses two years ago, over 100 people have been through them.



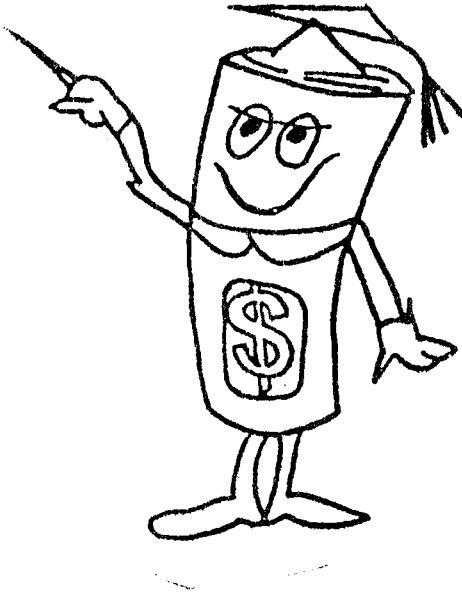
- * New Zealand Tree Crops Association annual conference is at Queenstown over Anzac weekend 25-27 April. This should be of good value for beekeepers with an interest in tree crops. Information from E. New, P.O. Box 1328, Invercargill.



- * A new type of hive strap is being used in the Nelson area. It is made of a polypropylene type of plastic, with an ultra-violet stable nylon strap. Tightens easily by hand or with ratchet tightener, undoes at the press of a button. Easy to store. Details from:

Braeburn Apiaries
R.D. 2
Upper Moutere (UMO 765)

- * Latest news on the spread of the Varroa mite. In Europe, Czechoslovakia and Greece, both previously considered free, have now found to have the pest. Heavy colony losses are reported from Turkey and Iran. Varroa has spread into Northern Africa, where the use of fixed-comb hives makes inspection and control impossible. The mite is spreading in South America, and Australasia is the only continent still free from Varroa.



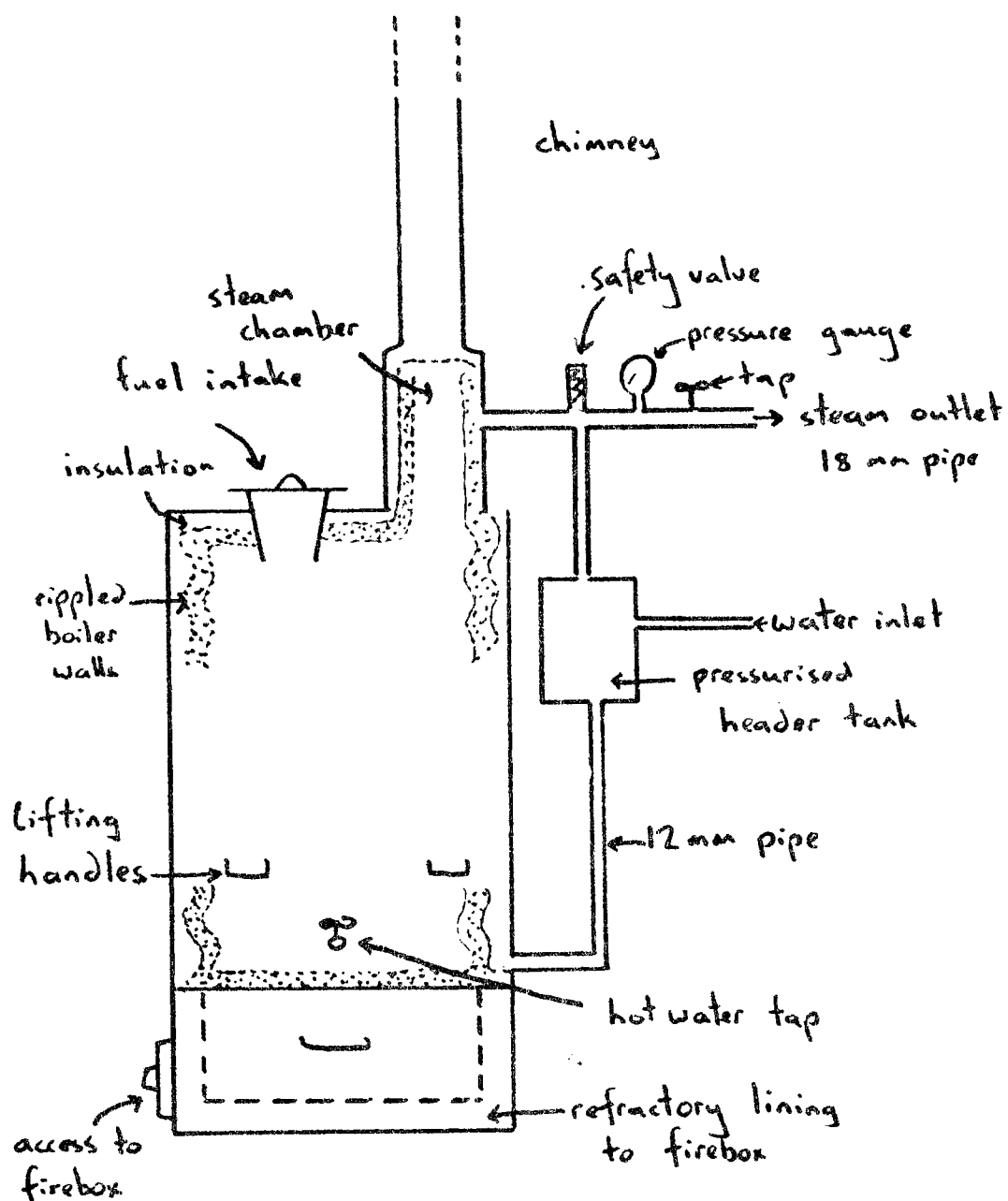
- * "Assistance and Incentives for Farmers 1979-80" sets out all types of subsidies and tax relief available to the agricultural community. Have you checked out what you're entitled to? Get a copy from your nearest Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Rural Bank or Lands and Survey office.

- * Hive woodware is now being made by the Alpha Bee Company in Riwaka. Can be purchased in kitset or assembled form. Your contact:

Terry Allingham, on
Packing Shed Corner.

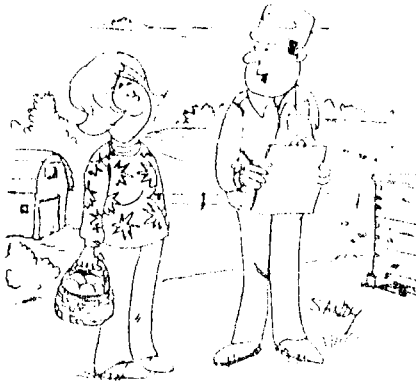
- * More on the boiler reported in the last "Bulletin"; power output is 5 h.p. (3.75 kW), and it produces 160 lb/h or 73 kg/h of steam at 5 psi (35 kPa).

It is designed to burn almost any type of fuel; wood, rubbish or coal.



Cost is \$1680 plus \$34 freight to the South Island. This price includes 10% sales tax which you may be exempted, and of course the unit is 100% tax-deductible. (See "Bulletin" Volume 1, Number 1). Look out for full details in the March issue of the "New Zealand Beekeeper".

* Keep those honey boxes rolling in. And when it gets too much for you, remember this -



I sold the honey. Our ends have met for another year.

Andrew Matheson

Andrew Matheson
APICULTURAL ADVISORY OFFICER