NO.7 JUNE 1987

NORTHLAND BEEKEEPING

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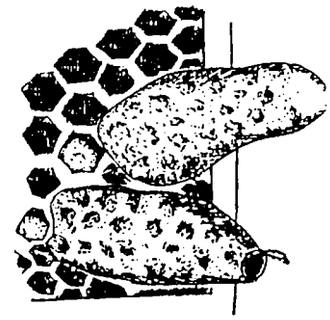

APICULTURAL ADVISOR

SWARMING AND

SUPERCEDURE

As many of you already know, this will be my last issue of Northland Beekeeping. After five years with MAF I've decided to take up a position as manager of Homestead Apiaries in Kerikeri.

Leaving MAF has been a very difficult decision for me. I have really enjoyed my job as Apicultural Advisory Officer and have tried to serve our industry as best I could. But I have also always wanted to run a commercial beekeeping business and so I am taking the opportunity, while I am still able, to "give it a go".

I don't have any illusions (I hope!) about what's in store for me in this new occupation. I have a lot to learn about the many little things that add up to successful beekeeping. And we all know that "talking" and "doing" are two very different things. As a result, I have no plans to light the beekeeping world on fire. Experience has shown me that those who try it often end up blowing their candle out!

I've set only two simple objectives for myself for the next little while. One, to service Homestead's existing pollination contracts at the same professional level as in the past. Second, I hope to add a honey production component to the business. Rapid expansion has meant in the past that the honey crop has had to be sacrificed.

Those that know me may find it strange that I have no plans at present to get into commercial queen production. While I am as interested as ever in this fascinating aspect of beekeeping, I have come to realise recently how much hard work is actually involved in producing large numbers of quality queens for sale. That sort of activity doesn't fit in well with Homestead's existing beekeeping activities, which is the reason why the successful large producers have created satellite outfits for queens. And if I'm honest with myself, I'm not ready for that. I've got too much else to learn.

So that's my story. The only other question is who's to fill the vacancy. One of the good things about MAF's re-organisation is that it is now actually easier to appoint good people to take on jobs. I am happy to report that Derek Bettesworth, OPONONI, is being appointed to the position and should be in place prior to next season.

I'm excited to have Derek in the AAO Whangarei position. After all, he's going to be my advisory officer, too!

MAF RE-ORGANISES

On 1 April (no, I'm not kidding) MAF underwent a major re-structuring. Instead of nine divisions there are now four : MAFQual (animal health, ag. quarantine, meat inspectors, export certification), MAFTech (research and most advisors), MAFFish (you guessed it), and MAFCorp (administrative services).

There was also a regional change. Instead of eight regions there are now four. Northland is now part of the Northern region which includes Auckland, the Waikato, and the Bay of Plenty.

With the change there's a lot of slimming to be done, especially in management. There were 55 managerial positions; now there's something like 20.

As for the Apiary group, we'll probably fit into MAFQual, although AAO's are likely to operate across boundaries and also work in with MAFTech.

For you, the beekeeper, there's likely to be little affect. As AAO's we will still be responsible for all beekeeper servicing in the various regions. Positions are likely to be reshuffled as the result of staff changes, but all regions will be fully serviced by resident AAO's.

The only real change is still (yes, still) to come. The proposal for an annual registration fee to fund the apiary registration programme has now gone to the minister. We're hoping it will be put into affect this coming season.

And the NBA is negotiating an increase in the hive levy (paid by beekeepers with 50 or more hives) to fund a contracted inspection service with MAF.

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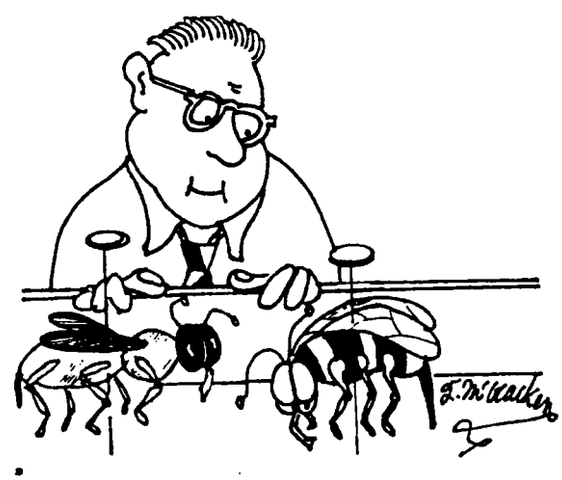
IMPORTING QUEENS - TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE

Raising queen bees for replacement is relatively simple, once you have the necessary skills, put in place the on-going procedures, and use the right ingredients.

Breeding queen bees for specific characteristics and then maintaining or building on these is not quite so easy. Throughout the world researchers, breeders and beekeepers have attempted to breed superior bees with varying degrees of success.



"This is the last time I go to an acupuncturist with my back problems."

Successful breeding programmes have been developed but few have remained viable, mainly because of the difficulties in maintaining stocks and retaining the interest of co-operators. The time and money involved is immense.

In New Zealand breeding programmes have never been successful, although many individual breeders and beekeepers do have a sort-of-selection system to produce stock suited to their perceived needs.

More recently there have been questions raised as to why we don't allow the

importation of genetic material to improve our stocks? Traditionally the industry and the MAF have taken a very hard stance against such a policy. The appointment of Dr Dennis Anderson as pathologist now presents the beekeeping industry with the opportunity to realistically reconsider the question of importing new genetic material (i.e. we can now effectively screen imported stock).

Why raise the issue here, when after all it can be argued that until we have a national or even regional breeding programme we don't really know what the full potential of our bees is?

There are a number of points which can be made :

1. The industry has never perceived the need for a breeding programme.
2. The time and money involved outweighs the benefits.
3. On the other hand some argue the danger from imports is not worth the risk.
4. And many believe that New Zealand bees are good enough and in many instances have been shown to be superior to overseas stocks.

What we can say is -

* We now have the expertise to protect our existing stocks while adding to the gene pool.
* There is a need to incorporate disease resistance and defensive behaviour in our bees to combat chalk brood and wasps etc.
* Half moon disorder has been confirmed as a queen related problem
* Need to develop superior pollen foraging strains; eg pollination of kiwifruit.
* The industry needs to provide stocks, races or strains of bees suitable to our overseas clients if we wish to retain those markets.
* And importing new genetic material is probably the easy (cheap) way out.

Whatever the decision industry makes it must be based on consensus and a willingness to do things properly. Perhaps the time has come for beekeepers to rethink options and consider future directions and opportunities available to broaden their income base. We have been told often enough we are the best beekeepers in the world. Are we not then mature enough to think this option through to our mutual advantage?

Trevor Bryant, Your Newsletter, April, 1987.

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WHAT'S ALL THIS FUSS ABOUT WASPS?

Northland beekeepers with 50 hives or more will have received several months back a sampling kit (complete with government issue fly swat!) for the joint MAF/ DSIR wasp survey. The survey is being conducted by Dr Henrik Moller and Andrew Matheson with the purpose of determining -

1. The distribution and relative abundance of the German wasp (Vespula germanica) and the "common wasp" (Vespula vulgaris)
2. The economic impact of wasp predation on beekeeping.
3. How the Vespula vulgaris invasion may be altering the type and level of wasp damage beekeepers face.

Judging from the number of calls this office has received on the subject in the past two months, the publicity associated with this survey has struck a responsive chord with the general public. Following the initial TV and newspaper coverage, all manner of farmers, home gardeners, and school kids either phoned or came into the office with samples of the "new wasp". Besides germanica, people brought in the two paper wasps (Polistes humilis and Polistes chinensis), bee mimics (Syrphid flys, etc), and even one or two blow flies. There haven't been any reports of vulgaris in the district yet, but that certainly doesn't mean it isn't here. Maybe the survey will find a few.

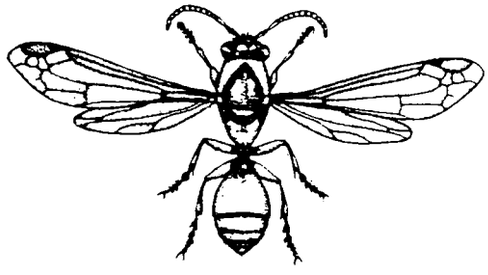
Obviously our industry is very interested in finding out more about this new wasp species. The German wasp behaves differently in New Zealand than it does in Europe; maybe vulgaris will, too. Andrew Matheson has recently observed the wasp feeding on bee hives the way germanica does. And it will be interesting (?) to see if vulgaris also forms over-wintering nests.

In a related development the DSIR is releasing a new parasite of germanica and vulgaris. The parasite, brought in by Dr Barry Donovan, is called Sphaecophaga vesparum.

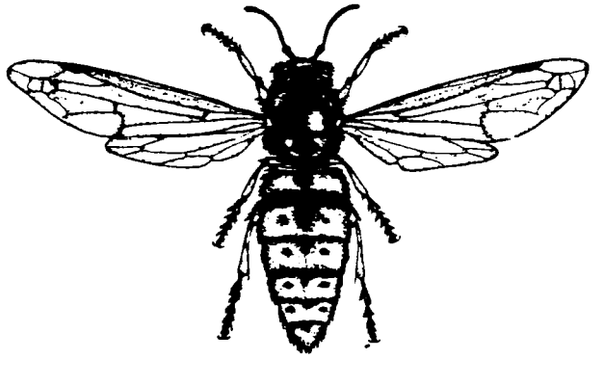
The parasite was initially released in the Christchurch area. No detailed studies have yet been made of its spread, but at least one accidental discovery confirmed its presence in a nest of German wasps 5 km from the original release site.

Abdominal markings of *V. vulgaris* (left) and *V. germanica*

Beekeepers in Northland also now have a chance to use the parasite. Boxes of 100 cocoons are available at a cost of $150 (+GST). This is an excellent way of spreading the parasite throughout New Zealand as well as supporting Dr Donovan's research.



Australian paper wasp



German wasp

Comparison of German wasp and Australian paper wasp at approximately twice life size.

Contact : Dr Barry Donovan
DSIR Entomology Division
Private Bag
CHRISTCHURCH.

Dr Donovan makes the following points about the release program :

* There is no guarantee that the parasite will successfully establish in your area.

* Biological control will never wipe out a pest species, but can reduce its incidence.

* This parasite will probably be more effective at eliminating small nests in spring rather than tackling the giant nests we get in autumn.

The parasites will be ready to emerge in October. Beekeepers interested in taking part in the program need to locate an over-wintering nest so the parasites have somewhere to establish.

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NBA PLANNING

The NBA executive met recently at Flock House to review its beekeeping industry plan. Also contributing were Peter Bray, Nick Wallingford, and MAF apicultural advisers. This industry planning system is for you, so that opportunities can be realised in advance, and problems prevented by forward planning. The details will be coming out to branches soon, but here's a selection :

* Develop a honey marketing strategy for New Zealand honey. Marketing doesn't mean selling, promoting or price-cutting. It means tailoring what you produce to the consumer's requirements.

The executive has commissioned several consultants to help with developing this strategy, and half of the seminar at the Christchurch conference this year will be on marketing. Remember the motto of the NBA? It's "Better beekeeping, better marketing".

* Education and training.

The executive will be taking steps to improve the audio-visual material in the NBA library, and encourage an adequate supply of beekeeper trainees for Telford and the correspondence course.

* Publicity and public relations.

The NBA sees a need for material to promote the NBA itself and the beekeeping industry in general, as well as for a more detailed information package about the beekeeping industry. Outside groups may be contracted to prepare this material.

* Bee disease inspection.

It's aimed to have a fully-funded bee disease inspection service in place by next spring. This will involve raising funds from hive levy payers to contract MAF to carry out inspections to a pre-determined level.

* Quarantine measures

The existing quarantine handout material is to be improved and updated.

* Branch effectiveness

Often willing members are reluctant to become branch secretaries, because they don't know what's involved. Existing secretaries sometimes have trouble working out what has to be done by when and how to do it. The NBA executive will prepare a resource kit to help branch secretaries, and plans to hold a short training session for potential office-holders at the 1988 conference.

Andrew Matheson, Beelines, May 1987.

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GAVIN'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

In honour of the 75th birthday of Gavin's Apiaries, Terry and Pat Gavin will be hosting a field day/pot luck at their home at Titoki, Saturday, 1 August, beginning at 11 a.m.

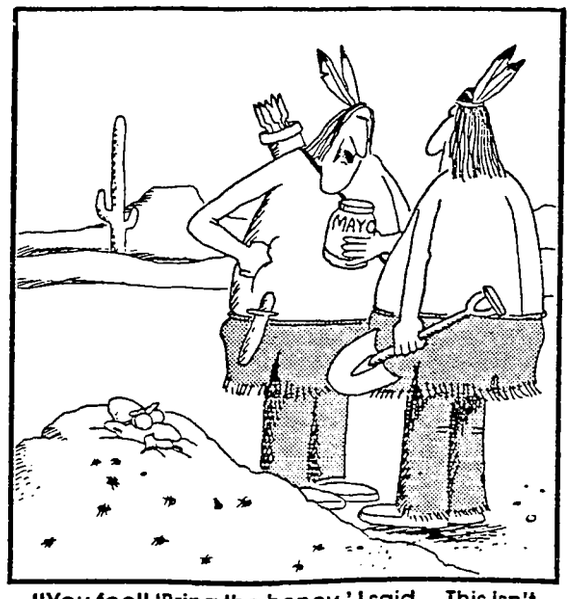
Guest speakers will include Brian Milnes, who will give a presentation on the new bee disease diagnostic service at Lynfield. Area beekeepers will be circularised soon with further details.

BEE BLITZ

Last spring Hawkes Bay beekeepers, in conjunction with Ted Roberts, AAO Palmerston North, conducted a "bee blitz" in and around Hastings. The idea was to inspect as many hives as possible in a one weekend period.

Nine teams of commercial beekeepers along with local hobbyists volunteered to do the checking, and during the weekend the 21 people involved managed to check out 320 hives. Ten were found to be diseased.

Feedback from the beekeepers was uniformly favourable with many hive owners finding the exercise very worthwhile and informative. The local branch also took the opportunity to publicise the "Bee Legal...Bee Registered" campaign. Local newspapers and radio were quite keen on the whole affair.



"You fool! 'Bring the honey,' I said ... This isn't the same thing!"

The Northland Branch in conjunction with the Whangarei Bee Club is planning a similar "disease crawl" in Whangarei on Saturday, 12 September. Beekeepers will be contacted in August by the organising team with further details.

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NEW PACKAGING ACT

New legislation came into force on the 1st of April, which does away with the idea of standard sizes for honey containers. In the past you had to sell honey in sizes of 250, 500 or 900 g, 2 kg or any multiple of 1 kg thereafter. Glass, though, was exempt from that requirement.

In the beginning it may have been necessary to force people into standard metric-sized containers, otherwise the unscrupulous few might have exploited the psychological price advantage of 1 pound containers versus 500 g, 8-ounce versus 250 g, and so on.

But it seems we've outgrown those days. The Weights and Measures Act 1987 (1987/15) is a very simple piece of legislation - easy to read and only a few pages long. One of those pages is needed just to list the whole raft of acts and regulations it supersedes.

The requirements of the new act are :

* You must use metric measurements on products and in advertising.

* You may only use imperial measurements as well as metric if your goods are also exported, or imported from, a country that doesn't use metric measurements. In this case the imperial measure must not be in bigger type than the metric information.

* Weights must be marked on the top or side of containers in legible figures and letters.

* Scales still must be tested and stamped by an Inspector of Weights and Measures (though automatic, self-loading machines seem to be exempt).

* The maximum penalty for offences is $2,000, plus $100 per day for continuing offences.

Andrew Matheson, Beelines, May 1987.

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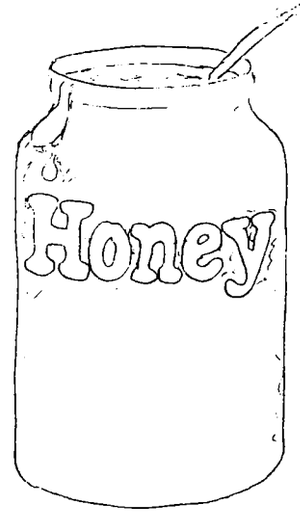
NUCLEAR- FREE HONEY



Seems following Cherobyl the West Germans are requiring a statement regarding radiation levels of honey supplied with our honey export certificates.

You couldn't hope for more nuclear-free honey than New Zealand's, but the Germans insist on a certificate signed by a recognised radiation lab.

The National Radiation Laboratory in Christchurch is willing to supply these at a cost of $2 to cover postage and administration.

If you're planning an export shipment to Germany contact me first for further details.

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A NEW WAY OF SUPPRESSING NOSEMA DISEASE

Nosema seems to be one of those diseases we discuss a lot, but do little about. I suppose the main reason for this is the lack of reliable field symptoms - despite all the good, scientific evidence of nosema's effects on honey production, if we can't clearly see nosema and its consequences we remain unconvinced.

There are standard recommendations for controlling nosema disease - feeding fumagillin to suppress the active stages of Nosema apis, the organism responsible, and regular comb replacement or fumigation to remove the spore stages.

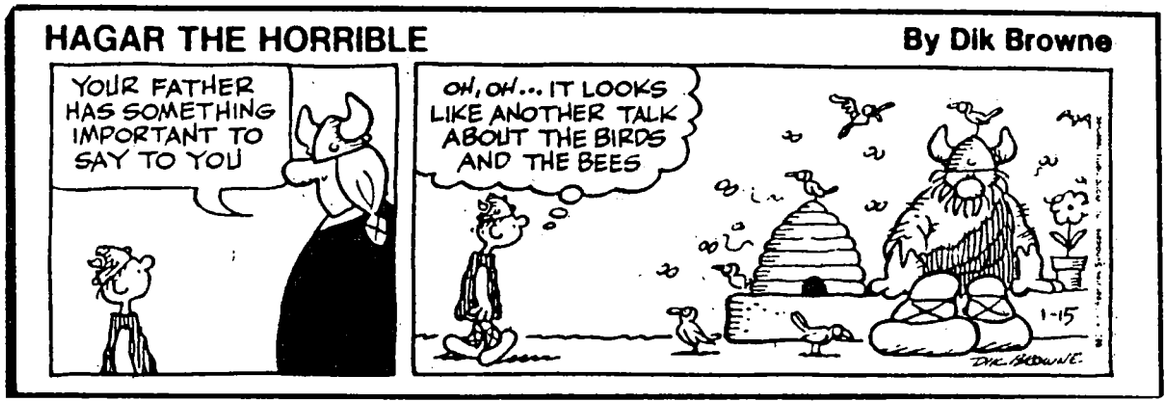
Drug feeding is usually recommended as follows : two doses of fumagillin in sugar syrup are fed in autumn to reduce the level of spores in faeces deposited in the hive over winter. This is followed by two more doses in spring to suppress any nosema disease caused by faecal contamination. One dose, for a full colony, is normally 4.5 grams of Fumidil-B per 3.8 litres of 2:1 syrup. Without fumagillin treatment, nosema disease peaks in spring (September and October) and affects the brood-rearing capabilities of the colony.

Even though fumagillin is recommended for controlling nosema disease, we know that most beekeepers either don't use it, or don't follow up autumn treatments with the vital spring ones. This is partly because of the lack of field symptoms I mentioned above, but it's also due to the problems of syrup feeding. Not everyone is set up for using syrup, and it's hard to convince yourself that you need to poke litres and litres of syrup into hives that may already be bursting with honey.

A simpler and cheaper method of administering fumagillin in spring could be useful. I know that a lot of beekeepers have asked me about alternative ways of feeding the drug. Fumagillin doesn't always work when fed in pollen supplement patties,

or in candy to large colonies. A recent issue of American Bee Journal reports two studies of applying fumagillin mixed with dry icing sugar. One experiment was carried out in British Columbia, and the other in Alberta.

Both studies started out by feeding the standard autumn does of 200 mg of fumagillin in sugar syrup to each colony. In spring the nosema levels were very different: less one million spores per bee in BC, but an average of 15 million per bee in Alberta (this is why autumn feeding on its own can be a waste of time).



Then the treatments were applied : fumagillin in syrup, fumagillin in icing sugar, and no fumagillin. The results : both dry feeding and syrup feeding of fumagillin dramatically reduced Nosema levels, while the untreated colonies went through ut usual spring peak.

How much fumagillin? In the BC trial three do ses, each of 100 mg, were applied. The first treatment dramatically reduced Nosema levels, the second did little, and the third did nothing. In the Alberta experiment, which you'll remember started with the massive spore county of 15 million per bee, they used only 42 mg of fumagillin. Yet this reduced the spore level to 4 million. That's still a high level, and the authors concluded that 100 mg probably would have eliminated Nosema, at least to below economic levels.

How much and what sort of sugar? Both studies used ordinary icing sugar. The BC team put in 3.2 kg per hive, but only so that those colonies would receive as much sugar as the ones being fed syrup. They report that other researchers have successfully used smaller quantities - down to 50 g. The Alberta scientists administered one part Fumidil-B to five parts icing sugar, and 12 level teaspoons of this mixture gives 100 mg of fumagillin. They spooned it onto a square of paper resting on the top barts of the second brood box.

So what changes will this all mean to us in New Zealand? Remember that spring feeding of fumagillin must be coupled with autumn feeding for best results. But now we know that dry-sugar feeding of fumagillin is OK for spring. It will be a lot easier (and cheaper) for some beekeepers than syrup feeding. Give each hive 100 mg of fumagillin - reducing this dose may make the whole exercise a waste of time.

Remember these other points about using fumagillin :

* we're still stuck with syrup feeding in autumn for the time being. Someone needs to do a controlled experiment for autumn dry feeding before we can recommend it for this treatment.

* fumagillin use must be coupled with a routine comb replacement programme to remove the reservoir of spores in faecal contamination.

* this may also be done by fumigating combs with ethylene oxide (10,000 ppm the same dose as for wax moth control), to destroy the spores.

* the drug fumagillin is sold under the brand names Fumidil-B, Nosem-X and Ceema Fix.

* both fumagillin feeding and comb treatment should be combined with good manag ment : young and vigorous queens; high autumn populations; sheltered, sur and dry apiary sites; adequate stores, especially pollen.

References :

Wyborn, M.H.; McCutcheon, D.M. 1987. A comparison of dry and wet fumagillin trea ments for spring nosema disease suppression of overwintered colonies. Americ Bee Journal (127(3) : 207-209.

Szabo, T.I.; Heikel, D.T. 1987. Effect of dry fumagillin feeding on spring Nose spore counts in overwintered colonies. American Bee Journal 127(3) : 210-211.

Andrew Matheson, Beelines, May 1987.

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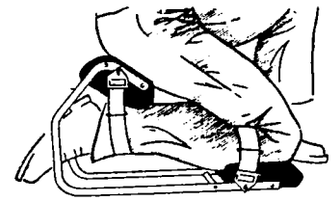
GADGETS AND GISMOS

Craftseat - just what the doctor (or at least the ACC guy on TV) ordered, especially for brood inspections and mating nuc work. The seat straps to your leg so you can walk around (with your hands full) from hive to hive. When you bend down the hind bit supports your back. Not a bad idea.



For details contact : Giguere Honey Farm Supplies
Box 2
St Germain, MANITOBA ROG2AO
CANADA.

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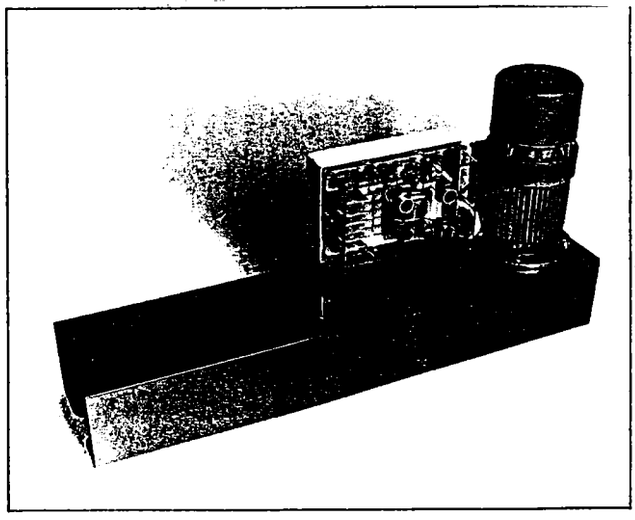

Electronic Extractor Controls - Murray Bennie, the engineering wiz from down in Central Otago is now offering a fully automatic electronic extractor control.

The unit, which includes a .75 kw self-braking motor and programmable control, fits on any standard radial, semi radial, or reversible extractor.

The control is a series of silicon chips which can be programmed to any setting from 1 second to continuous. There are enough chips to allow you to programme up to 5 direction changes with independent timings.

Price $1500.

Contact : Bennie Engineering
24 Northland St
RANFURLY

phone RNF 59S.

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Gentech Liquid Level Sensers - a new, low cost float switch system for sumps, honey tanks, and barrel fillers. Made of non-corrosive materials (nylon or polypropolene) with excellent reliability. A typical set-up with 12 volt transformer and bell would run around $77.

Contact : El-Tec Marketing
P.O. Box 515
MANUREWA
ph (09) 2669305

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IAEA - not really a gadget or a gismo, but a great way to arrange good, highly-motivated labour from overseas. The IAEA is the International Agricultural Exchange Association, a non-profit organisation which sets up agricultural exchanges for young people. Started in 1963, the organisation has gone from strength to strength and now places trainees in over 18 foreign countries.

International Agricultural Exchange Association
P.O. Box 328, Whakatane.

Young people seeking an overseas agricultural job join the organisation, pay a fee which includes airfares and administration and are then placed with a host family in the country of their choice.

Host families provide meals and accommodation, the job, and a trainee allowance.

Placements are for six to nine months and the best thing is that IAEA handles all Labour Department/work visa hassles.

Several beekeeping enterprises in the South Island have used this programme very successfully. Jill and Tony Clissold, Glass Brothers, GORE take on one or two trainees every year. They find the trainees bright, motivated workers and really enjoy the experience they get from the cultural exchange.

If you're thinking of hiring overseas people or you think one of your kids might benefit from a year overseas contact :

IAEA
Armstrong House
P.O. Box 328
WHAKATANE ph (076) 70=086.

Telford Training - and if you can't afford to send the "up-and-coming" overseas, why not consider the Telford beekeeping training programme. Tertiary bursaries are now available for this one year "hands-on" course, which should go a long way to defraying expenses.

For more information about the programme contact :

Ian Lyttle
Principal
Telford Farm Training Institute
Private Bag
BALCLUTHA
ph. (0299) 81550

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OVERSEAS - WHAT'S UP

*United States - Hives came through the relatively mild North American winter in good shape but a lot of spring feeding has been necessary.

However, Florida reports heavy spring dwindling with some beekeepers losing up to 50% of their overwintered hives. Normal losses would be around 5%.

No one cause can be found although amoeba, tracheal mites, and nosema have all been seen in some samples.

*Canada - Canadian sellers are having a hard time moving quantities of their honey into the U.S. Prices have come down and we saw the direct effect here in New Zealand as some Canadians were reluctant to place orders for queen bees and packages.

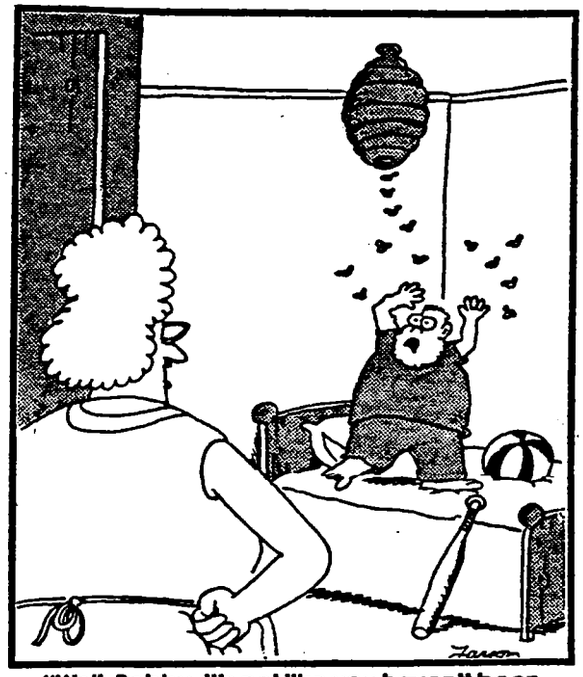
And in Saskatchewan, researchers conducting tests of tracheal mite infected packages report "that high levels of Acarapis woodi infestation can have a devastating effect on package bee colony development."

*Mexico - The big news is that the Africanised bee has been confirmed in Chiapas, Mexico, near the Guatemala border. The Americans are proposing a U.S. $9 million bee barrier at a narrow neck of the Mexican peninsula, but at the rate the bee spreads (40-50 km/month with swarms capable of travelling 90-160 km before settling) it doesn't look like the plan stands a chance. The bee is predicted to have a devastating effect on Mexico's honey production.

*Israel - Israeli beekeepers have reported hive losses up to 40%, due to Varroa. Their beekeepers are buying numbers of queens from Australia and New Zealand in an effort to keep ahead of this devastating mite. Initial reports are that the Israelis are well-pleased with our queen stocks and customer service.

*China - China exported 54,000 tonnes of honey (to more than 40 countries) in 1985. In so doing China takes the lead as the world's largest honey exporter.

Chinese beekeepers own over six million hives and produce about 155,000 tonnes of honey per year. The Chinese are the second largest owners of hives and producers of honey next to the Russians.



"Well, Bobby, it's not like you haven't been warned ... No roughhousing under the hornet's nest!"

AUSSIE BEE CONFERENCE

Travel costs (and the New Zealand dollar) seem to be making tours to Apimondia world beekeeping conferences a once-in-a-lifetime event. But for those not fortunate enough to be independently wealthy (or have their ways paid) there's still hope. Seems the Aussies are having their own international do, next year in Brisbane. The idea is to celebrate Australia's bicentennial, drum up support for their World Expo, and have a repeat of the successful Apimondia conference held in Adelaide in 19[illegible].

Organisers promise trade displays and tours, the "world's biggest honey show", and an education programme featuring speakers such as Cam Jay (Canada), Prof. Woyke (Poland), and Cecil Tonsley (U.K.). A number of papers from New Zealand apiculturalists will also be presented.

Dates for the conference are 21-26 July, 1988. The venue is the Gold Coast International Hotel, Surfers' Paradise.

For further information write to : The Convenor
Second Australian & International
Bee Congress
G.P.O. Box 1402
BRISBANE, QLD. 4001.

No doubt an "official" tour will be organised from here. Watch the NZ Beekeeper for details.

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MY FIRST (AND LAST) TOTALLY BIASED BEEKEEPING AWARDS

I've always been intrigued by those end-of-year "Best of's..... Worst of's" that you see in newspapers and magazines. Now, since this is the end for me, both as editor of this newsletter and as AAO, Whangarei, I'm going to take this opportunity to deliver my own personal "Best of....Worst of" beekeeping awards, based on my five year stint with MAF. Here goes -

Silliest Regulation - quite a few, actually, but the one that sticks in my mind was the Metric (Retail Trading) Regulations, 1978. You know, the one that made New Zealand metric but said that beekeepers had to pack in 900 g, not 1 kg. As many beekeepers know, the real reason for that non-metric metric regulation was to protect certain interests producing old imperial containers that wouldn't quite hold 1 kg.

The NBA fought unsuccessfully for years to get the regulation changed and to eliminate all references to certain sizes in honey. TecPak in Dunedin finally took the bold step of marketing 1 kg containers to beekeepers. And now, just a month or so ago, the regulation was replaced by the 1987 Weights and Measures Act, which doesn't mention honey at all. AMAZING!

Smartest Thing Ever Said About Beekeeping (with a startling revelation about who first said it!) - whenever I've been faced with a totally unexplainable event in my work with bees (like colonies starving with plenty of stores, or a strong colony not producing in a big honey flow, or three queens laying happily in the same brood nest) I always call on a phrase I first heard uttered by a friend in Canada - "You never can tell with bees." Quite profound, and useful in those situations when a beekeeper wants an answer and you really don't have a clue.

But now I am forced to reveal, for the first time, the real author of those immortal words. Not my friend in Canada - but Winnie-the-Pooh!

How embarrassing.....

Second Smartest thing Ever Said About Beekeeping

Also first heard spoken by my pal Jaime MacDonald in Canada (and he swears he made this one up all by himself) "Remember, the question isn't how did you get into bees.... the question is how are you going to get out of them."

Best Beekeeping Veil - Ceracell's "round view" veil, which retails at $11.35. Doesn't bend out of shape after you use it a couple of times (like the "folding" wire type), and gives an excellent unimpeded view. Best of all, it doesn't use that god-awful florescent orange plastic drawstring (you know, the stuff that comes undone just when you strike a nasty hive!)

Best Beekeeping Hat - the Dadant "Sun" moulded plastic hat, which retails at $22.80. It should really be called the "Rain" hat, though, because it doesn't fall down around your ears in the wet like the woven fabric ones do. Stands up to everything but truck wheels!

Best Honeyflow - 12 tonnes/100 (that's six full-depths per hive, folks) by Peter Cox, Otematata, Central Otago in 1982. The Vipers' Bugloss flow in this area must be one of the great honey flows in the world.

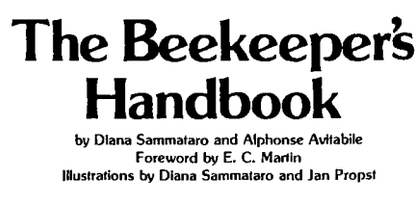
Worst Honeyflow - 0.5 tonnes/100 spread over 30,000 hives in Southland and South Otago in 1982/83. Income that year didn't even pay the interest on commercial bee-keepers' overdrafts. Still, every commercial beekeeper down there managed to weather that crisis and a 1.5 t/100 crop in '83/'84.

Best New Zealand Beekeeping Book

Practical Beekeeping in New Zealand by Andrew Matheson (Government Printer, 1984)
No, this isn't a plug for a mate; the book honestly is the best one for beginning beekeepers in New Zealand. The book doesn't fully replace the old bulletin 267 Beekeeping in New Zealand by T.S. Winter, though, because it leaves out some N.Z. commercial methods. Andrew had to make a hard choice when he left out the commercial material, but there's always.....

The New Zealand Beekeeping Book We'd Most Like to See - Commercial Beekeeping in New Zealand by Andrew Matheson. Stay tuned.

Best Overseas Beekeeping Book - this one's a toughy, but when I look through my book shelves the one book I seem to have used more than any other is The Beekeeper's Handbook by Sammataro and Avitabile (Scribners, 1978). A deceptively simple book, but with excellent diagrams and line drawings which beginners find very reassuring ("So that's how you do a spring reverse!"). I've used the anatomy, bee development, communication, seasonal fluctuations, flower parts, and bee sting drawings all as overheads for talks and courses and more than a few of the line drawings have found their way into these pages from time to time.



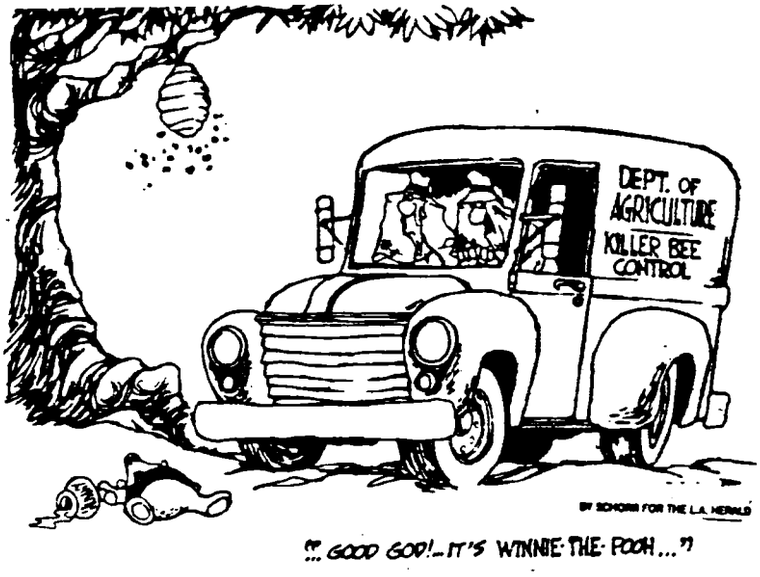
Beekeeping Book Most in Need of a Revision -

The Hive and the Honey Bee (Dadant, 1975) -
A beekeeper's bible and the one best academic text on bees, the book is now unfortunately showing its age. New research (caste determination, mating behaviour, closed population breeding, etc) and new beekeeping trends (Africanised bees, tracheal mite, U.S. market subisides) need to be included and new beekeeping authorities (Page on breeding, Taylor on Africanised bees, Beetsma on caste determination) need to be given a chance to show their stuff. Probably little chance of it happening but at least I can dream.

THE SPEEDY BEE
The Beekeeper's Newspaper

Best Beekeeping Journal - the Speedy Bee published by Troy Fore, P.O. Box 998, Jesup, GEORGIA (US$11.25/year). Sounds like a silly name for a magazine, but actually its a good description of the one world beekeeping journal that prints beekeeping news first, accurately, and with no axes to grind/interests to protect. Fore is an editor who does what an editor should do - he keeps his ear to the ground, produces objective stories while they're still fresh, and puts his biases firmly where they belong (in the editor's page). An outstanding publication.

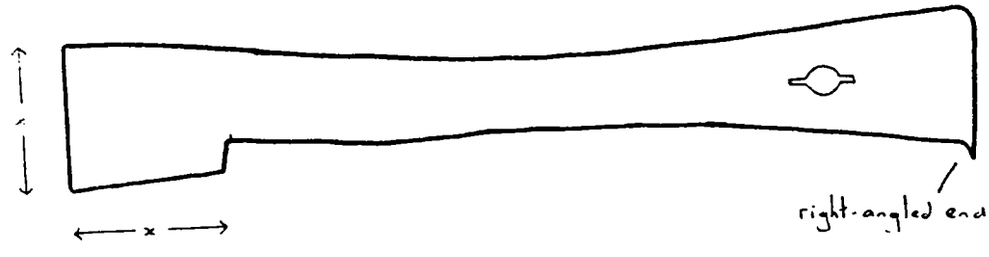
Favourite Beekeeping Cartoon



"You never can tell with bees!"

Best Hive Tool

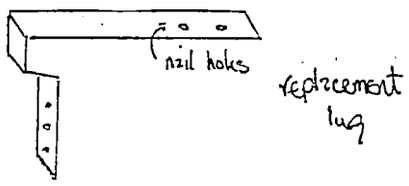
this one -



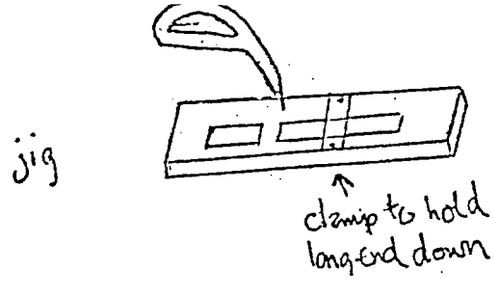
It's really a Maxant-type modification of a Kelley hive tool. What it gives you is the best of both worlds. The Maxant's one great improvement is the protruding

end which makes a great lever for prying frames apart. The Kelley is still best for scraping and nails. This hybrid incorporates the best features of both. But some of you are asking, "what about the Maxant hook?" I'm afraid I never use it. If I need to lift a frame up I always pry the frame from its neighbour first and lift it out in the space I've created when I removed the first frame. People who use the hook tend to pull frames straight out of the middle of the brood nest without ever making room. A great way to roll the queen!

Best Simple, Cost-Saving Gadget - with all the problems we have in this country with dry rot, a lot of good, serviceable frames fail before their time because of broken lugs. These simple metal replacements nail easily into the existing frame and fix it good-as-new. No more frames falling on your toes when you lift off a box.



Alliance Bee Supplies used to sell these lugs but I don't see them listed in their latest catalogue. You can make your own by building a contraption like this. Use medium gauge sheet metal cut to 2 x 14 cm blanks.



Best Honey Pottle - the Tec-Pak Safe-a-Pak pottle in all its sizes, shapes, and materials. Steve Old has really been a dynamic force in our industry. He markets a superior product, gives excellent service, and even comes to the party on such things as art work and small runs. How does he get orders to Northland quicker than his competitors in Auckland?

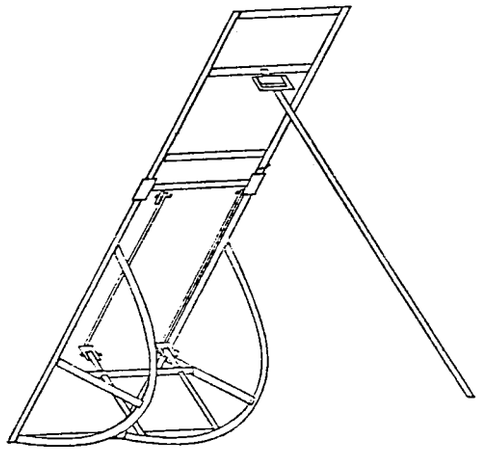
Tec Pak Plastics
P.O. Box 713
DUNEDIN.

Worst Honey Pottle - the waxed cardboard, plastic top, "old reliable". No wonder housewifes expect honey to retail at 99c for 500g.

Honey Pottle We'd Most Like to See - a 250 g clear P.E.T. Poly Jar from CPI. Their 500g is the best, safest pottle for speciality tourist packs, and would be the one fool-proof container for the mail (if you throw one full of honey on the ground it bounces!). The only problem is that 3-packs for overseas mailing using this container just weigh too much.

No tourist wants to spend that much money to send a honey gift back home. A 250 g pottle would solve all that and move more high value product overseas.

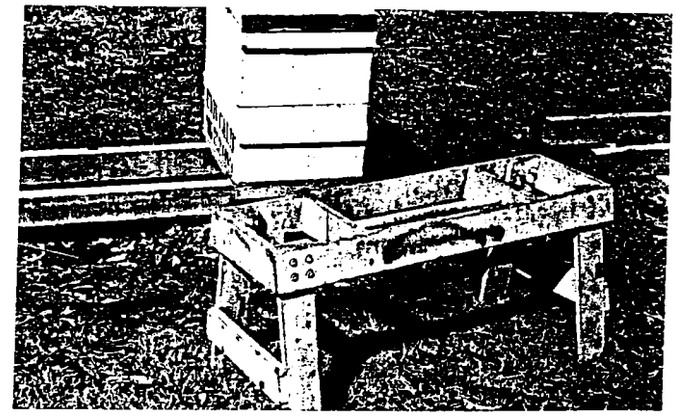
Best Labour-Saving (Back-Saving) Device - the Pearson hive cracker, manufactured by Peter Pearson, Darfield, Mid Canterbury. You don't see this device in the north, but down south, where the crops can be big and there's a lot of two-queening, they're becoming an industry standard. Easy to use, surprisingly quick, and makes under-supering, escape board placement, and harvest disease checks a breeze.



Second Best Labour-Saving (Back Saving) Device -

I don't know of anyone in New Zealand who uses one of these, but in California the old time queen producers swear by them. (That's probably why they're still able to keep bees).

I'm talking about the "hive horse", of course. They're built similar to saw horses (hence the name), but instead of one 4 x 2 on top there's a frame wide enough to safely support supers.



To use, you simply lift off the brood super or honey super you want to go through and place it on the horse. At waist height you don't have to bend your back while going through the frames. Its the prolonged holding of the bent back position while working hives which leads to "Beekeepers Back". The horse does away with that position entirely.

The "Doubting Thomas" Honey Marketing Award - to Peter Bray of Airborne Honey, for producing those 30 second TV commercials, the first of their kind in New Zealand. Peter didn't just talk about marketing, he did something professional about it. His commercial came out just one year after a respected beekeeping spokesman said at conference that not even the industry as a whole could afford TV spots. He claimed that honey got its best advertising through supermarket specials! (No wonder housewives expect honey to retail at 99cents for 500 g!)

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NEWSLETTER QUESTIONNAIRE

These questionnaires have been distributed in other districts in the last year. Now it's my turn. You may wonder why we want your comments when I'm closing up shop. But really, the information will be extremely useful when Derek takes up the reins. If you give us your ideas, he'll be able to tailor the newsletter more to your needs. So take time out to fill in and mail back the questionnaire included with this issue.

Questionnaire

Please tick the most appropriate space for each of the questions, or answer otherwise where necessary. Any relevant comments would be appreciated.

1. Where do you get most of your information about beekeeping? (Please note that this means information about beekeeping, not scandals and gossip about the beekeeping industry in New Zealand).

   Number the most important 1-5, with 1 being the most important?

   AAO's newsletter ( )

   farmer magazine ( )

   radio ( )

   discussion groups ( )

   personal contact with AAO ( )

   newspapers ( )

   field days and seminars ( )

   other beekeepers ( )

   Telford, Flock House or community college courses ( )

   "Apiarist" ( )

   TV ( )

   "NZ Beekeeper" ( )

2. Why do you use your first choice the most?

   _____

   _____

3. How would you describe your reading of the newsletter?

   I read every article carefully ( )

   I skim every article and read some carefully ( )

   I read only occasional articles ( )

4. What makes you decide to read a particular article?

Tick each space which best indicates how each factor influences your decision.

	strongly	moderately	slightly	not at all
(a) interest in the title	_____	_____	_____	____
(b) look of the first paragraph	_____	_____	_____	____
(c) illustrations	_____	_____	_____	____
(d) length of article	_____	_____	_____	____
(e) other, please specify	_____			

_____

5. What type of articles do you like best in the newsletter?

Number 1-5 in order of importance, with 2 being the most important.

research results from overseas ( )

my ideas on beekeeping management ( )

district news and events ( )

equipment and gadgets ( )

funnies ( )

"stirring you up" about your beekeeping ( )

changes in tax and other laws ( )

other issues, please specify _____

_____

6. What other topics would you like to see included in the newsletter?

_____

_____

_____

7. How easy it is to understand the articles?

very easy ( ) moderately easy ( ) moderately hard ( )

very hard ( ) varies widely ( )

Comments _____

_____

8. How useful has the newsletter been?

extremely ( ) moderately ( ) slightly ( ) not at all ( )

Comments _____

_____

9. Can you remember information in any of the newsletter articles which resulted in economic benefits, such as cost savings, greater income, time savings, reduced tax?

Yes ( ) No ( )

If 'yes', please describe or estimate the benefits.

_____

_____

_____

10. Can you suggest any changes in format, such as length of articles, writing style, presentation, frequency of posting, etc?

_____

_____

11. Approximately how many hives do you run? _____

Thank you for your time in completing this. Please post it in the envelope provided - don't forget!