

Advisory Services Division report to the annual conference of the National Beekeepers' Association of New Zealand (Inc), Waitangi, July 28-29, 1982. Presented by Grahame Walton, chief apicultural advisory officer.

ORGANISATION AND STAFFING

During the past year a number of staff changes have occurred within the Advisory Services Division.

Mr D.A. (Doug) Briscoe, apicultural advisory officer, Tauranga has retired after 35 years valuable service with the ministry, 28 years as apicultural officer to the Tauranga district. Among many other responsibilities, Doug has had the challenging task of administering beekeeping in the restricted areas of the Bay of Plenty and Coromandel where toxic honey can be produced.

Mr T.G. Bryant, apicultural advisory officer, has been transferred from Gore to Tauranga, which left a vacancy at Gore. The division has now received the necessary approvals to confirm the appointment of Mr C. van Eaton, of Canada, to the position of apicultural advisory officer, Gore. Mr van Eaton was employed temporarily as an apiary officer in Southland during 1980/81 whilst the then apicultural advisory officer was on a year-long overseas exchange scheme. Mr van Eaton will take up his Gore posting in mid-October at the end of his Canadian contract.

Mr G.M. Walton, chief advisory officer (apiculture) has been appointed recently to the position of chief advisory officer (extension) within this division. He will have divisional responsibilities for publications, communications and staff development. Mr Walton will be leaving apiculture after more than 16 years service, four years as chief advisory officer to the beekeeping industry.

From August, Mr Murray Reid will take over supervisory responsibilities for advisory services division beekeeping activities. He will continue to have advisory responsibilities and will be based in Hamilton.

In the time that Mr Walton has been at head office many aspects related to the ministry's servicing of the beekeeping industry have been reviewed and improvements made. The Apiaries Act of 1969 has been amended, which among other things now strengthens the ministry's and industry's prospects of controlling the introduction of diseases and pests conveyed by bee products. The Apiaries Act amendment also paved the way for the introduction of the 1980 Honey Export Certification Regulations which revamped the ministry's role regarding honey export certification. The ministry no longer controls honey exports and grades honey for colour and flavour, rather it provides a verification and certification of particular importing countries.

A number of changes have occurred, or developments are underway in other areas. Apiary registration is in the process of being computerised and this should assist the ministry and beekeepers in regard to registration and the processing of the annual statement of hive inspection. There are changes in train which will strengthen the legislative provisions regarding the application of pesticides toxic to bees. Beekeeping restricted area policies have also been reviewed, with the assistance and guidance of the Apiaries Advisory Committee, and this has led to increased opportunities for beekeeping use of the declared toxic honey areas.

While the above developments were underway, there was clear justification in maintaining the senior apicultural

position in Wellington. However, as a result of Mr Walton's new appointment, the director has reviewed the need to continue to station the senior apicultural officer in Wellington. The division's most important role is to assist with the development of agricultural and horticultural industries at the producer level.

The director believes that apiculture, like a number of other sectors in agriculture, can be adequately serviced and led from locations outside Wellington. With this in mind Mr G.M. Reid, apicultural advisory officer, Hamilton has been appointed the ministry officer with national responsibilities for apiculture. He will take over these responsibilities in August.

The division's servicing of the beekeeping industry, traditionally provided by full-time advisers, has been complemented in recent years by the use of field officers, livestock officers and clerical officers. These officers have assisted with bee disease check inspections, export certification and apiary registration. Beekeepers can also call upon horticultural advisory officers and farm advisory officers for advice regarding pollination, agricultural engineering and other matters.

Advisory Services Division continues to employ beekeepers as part-time inspectors, and their assistance has been much appreciated.

BEEKEEPING STATISTICS

Beekeepers, apiaries and hives: As at 31 May 1982 there were over 6 000 New Zealand beekeepers maintaining 21 000 registered apiaries and owning a quarter of a million hives (see Table 1). This is a record number of hives and apiaries, and the greatest number of beekeepers for almost 30 years.

Table 1: Growth in numbers of registered beekeepers

Hives Owned	Beekeepers	Apiaries	Hives
1-50	5568 (3372)	7755 (4589)	30249 (19616)
51-500	347 (217)	4490 (3345)	60553 (45583)
500+	137 (120)	8774 (8329)	162803 (142038)
	6052 (3709)	21019 (16263)	253605 (207237)

(1977 figures in brackets)

In the last five years, since 1977, the number of productive units, beehives, have increased at an average rate of 4.2 per cent per annum, a growth rate exceeding that of most other areas of agriculture. The greatest growth has occurred in the Tauranga, Hamilton, Nelson and Canterbury apiary districts. The increase in the number of registered beekeepers continues to maintain the 12 to 13 per cent annual growth pattern of recent years. Most of this growth has occurred in the hobbyist (one to 50 hive holding) sector, with more than 400 new beekeepers this past year. The number of beekeepers with more than 500 hives (commercial beekeepers) shows a healthy 2.6 per cent per annum growth since 1977. Even more significant is the 12 per cent per annum increase

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in the number of beekeepers with 251 to 500 hives (semi-commercial or commercial beekeepers) which is often a stepping stone development stage on the way to larger hive holdings.

Honeycrop: The surplus honeycrop for the 1981/82 season was assessed at 6 495 tonnes, which was slightly below the average of recent years. The North Island yield of 4 215 tonnes, was the best since 1978; whereas the 2 280 tonne South Island crop was the lowest since 1967.

American Brood Disease: The level of ABD (*Bacillus larvae*) shows further decline from the peak reached in the 1978/79 season. During 1981/82 there were 713 apiaries (3.4 per cent) and 1 451 hives (0.5 per cent) found to be infected with ABD.

The prime responsibility for disease control resides with the beekeeping industry. Beekeepers last year reported 540 apiaries, 1 096 hives, infected with ABD. In this same period the division increased its monitoring of bee diseases. Inspectors examined 2 483 apiaries, 16 814 hives, and detected 173 diseased apiaries, 355 diseased hives.

Table 2: American Brood Disease levels in apiary districts 1981/82

Apiary District	Diseased apiaries		Diseased hives	
	Number	%	Number	%
Auckland	137	3.9	306	1.23
Hamilton	71	2.7	110	0.27
Tauranga	57	2.5	108	0.36
Palmerston Nth	86	2.6	134	0.36
Nelson	125	7.3	220	1.25
Christchurch	35	1.3	103	0.29
Oamaru	121	4.5	261	0.73
Gore	81	4.2	209	0.72
Total	713	3.4	1451	0.58

A disorder of bee brood, and affecting young larvae, has been observed and reported in a number of New Zealand beekeeping districts in recent years. Until such time as the cause has been clearly determined, it has been given the label "half-moon disorder".

The disorder displays many of the signs and symptoms of European Brood Disease. It appears to be stress-related and is more noticeable in weaker queen-breeding units. The re-queening of the colony results in an improvement in most cases.

Hundreds of analyses have been made on suspect samples both in New Zealand and overseas. In none of these tests has the causative organism of EBD, *Streptococcus pluton*, been identified and nor has any serious bee virus been isolated. Further overseas testing is currently underway.

THE BEEKEEPING RESTRICTED AREAS

The declared toxic honey areas of the Bay of Plenty and the Coromandel has, until recent years, been closed to beekeeping use during the period when tutu, *Coriaria arborea*, honeydew honey can be produced. Beekeepers were generally required to remove their hives during the period of high risk.

Arising out of the recommendations of the Apiaries Advisory Committee, a number of ministry policy decisions have

been made in the last few years which has led to greater beekeeping use of the toxic honey areas in ways which do not lead to the production and marketing of toxic honey.

Hive management programmes submitted by beekeepers for queen rearing, nuclei production, pollen production and hive division have been approved by the ministry and adopted by beekeepers.

ADVISORY ACTIVITIES

The division directs its major advisory efforts to agricultural and horticultural industries which offer New Zealand continued favourable growth, particularly in the export sector, or industries which can greatly assist other industries achieve increased production. Beekeeping clearly falls into both categories.

Advisory efforts are primarily focused on commercial beekeepers, or those beekeepers who have demonstrated their intent to expand into commercial beekeeping. Increased production can best be achieved in the commercial sector by encouraging the adoption of more intensive systems of management, increasing production per hive unit, and helping facilitate an effective pollinating service to agriculture and horticulture.

Unlike most other business commitments, beekeeping offers an intending commercial producer a stepping stone development programme which can be expanded or contracted to suit the situation. Table 1 shows the high proportionate growth of the semi-commercial sector. Many of these beekeepers have made the decision to expand towards commercial operating levels and their individual advisory requirements from the ministry are high, particularly in regard to advice regarding business development and management techniques.

To a lesser extent advice is given to the hobbyist sector, particularly in the areas of bee disease detection, disease control, and beekeeper responsibilities under the Apiaries Act. Some encouragement is given to the formation of hobbyist clubs and help given towards making these clubs self-sustaining.

Apicultural staff have again held a small number of beekeeper short courses at the ministry's farm training institutes, and judging from the feedback from participants these have been very successful.

There is a rapid increase in requests for advice regarding pollination management, from beekeepers as well as growers, not only in respect of kiwifruit but for other horticultural crops and for high country and new development pasture pollination.

Also on the increase is advice sought on marketing matters now that individuals have the necessary approvals to export bulk and retail honey on their own behalf.

GRAHAME WALTON LEAVES TOP APICULTURAL JOB

Following presentation of this report, NBA vice-president Mike Stuckey moved a vote of thanks to Mr Walton for his service to the industry, which was carried by acclamation. Mr Walton thanked the industry for their help during the last 16 years and said that in the future his only connection with the industry would be through a few hives of his own.

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