

# MAF Quality Management report to the Annual Conference of the National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand Tauranga 18-22 July 1994

*by Murray Reid*

## 1.0 ORGANISATION AND PERSONNEL

In an effort to deal more efficiently with increased workloads within the National Apiculture Business Unit (NABU), managerial responsibilities were shared out during 1993 to various Apicultural Advisory Officers. The following list identifies those national responsibilities and the MAF Quality Management staff who spend at least half their time on apicultural business.

Name/National Responsibilities	Mailing Address	Telephone	Fax
Derek Bettesworth Process Manager for Exotic Pest and Disease Response (EDPR)	MAF, Private Bag, WHANGAREI	(09) 437 2822	(09) 437 1368
Murray Reid National Manager for Apiculture and Process Manager for Imports and Consultancy Services	MAF, Private Bag 3080, HAMILTON	(07) 838 5841	(07) 838 5846
Cliff Van Eaton Contract Manager for NBA AFB Disease Control Programme	MAF, Private Bag 12015, TAURANGA	(07) 578 2069	(07) 578 8429
Ted Roberts Process Manager for Export Certification	MAF, PO Box 585, PALMERSTON NTH	(06) 351 7935	(06) 351 7906
Dave Grueber	MAF, Private Bag, BLENHEIM	(03) 578 7369	(03) 578 0944
Stephen Ogden Process Manager for Food Quality Services	MAF, PO Box 24, CANTERBURY	(03) 325 3920	(03) 325 3919
David McMillan Process Manager for Surveillance and Apiary Registration	MAF, Private Bag 50034, MOSGIEL	(03) 489 3809	(03) 489 7988

## 2.0 BEEKEEPING STATISTICS

### 2.1 Beekeepers, Apiaries and Hives

There were 5565 registered beekeepers owning 289,875 hives of bees as at 30 June 1994. This represents an overall decrease of 1.0% of beekeepers and 3.0% of hives during the last 12 months (Table 1).

### 2.2 Honey Production

The total saleable crop for 1994 was assessed at 11819 tonnes (40.8 kg per hive), a significant increase over the previous year's crop of 7086 tonnes (23.3 kg per hive) and the previous 6 year average of 7698 tonnes or 24.3 kg per hive (Table 2).

### 3.0 American Foulbrood and NBA AFB Control Programme

MAF Quality Management was once again contracted to provide an AFB control programme for the NBA in 1993-94. The contract, which was reduced by \$20,000 from the previous year, called for the inspection of 3.9% (973) of registered apiaries by MAF personnel, the provision of inspection lists for NBA inspectors and diseaseathons, and various other services relating to disease control and reporting. Significant cost savings were made in the area of MAF Quality Management's involvement in NBA branch inspection activities, resulting in a smaller reduction in MAF inspections (7%), compared to the overall reduction in the contract price (17%).

The MAF inspection component of the contract was exceeded, with 1004 apiaries inspected. The target average hives per apiary (6/apiary) was also exceeded, with an average of 8.1 hives per apiary inspected. A total of 41 MAF Quality Management staff and contract beekeepers were used in these inspections (Table 3).

NBA branch inspections totalled 867 apiaries, or 57% of the 1522 necessary to achieve the target set by the NBA executive of 6.1% of registered apiaries. Two of the 13 NBA branches carrying out inspection programmes either met or exceeded their target of district apiaries inspected. A total of 194 letters of appointment were issued to beekeepers who wished to assist in NBA inspections, with 128 letters of appointment actually being used. This represented a 16% increase in participation over 1992-93 (Table 4).

The NBA AFB Disease Control Programme therefore resulted in the inspection of 7.5% of New Zealand's apiaries (MAF: 4.0% + NBA: 3.5% = 7.5%). The target inspection level set by the NBA executive for the programme was 10% of apiaries. A total of 13,427 hives were inspected (MAF: 8170; NBA: 5257). This figure represents 4.6% of beehives currently registered in New Zealand.

MAF Quality Management inspectors (and beekeepers contracted to MAF) found 532 hives infected with American foulbrood (6.5% of hives inspected). NBA

inspectors found a further 192 hives (3.7% of hives inspected). The total number of hives infected with AFB reported by beekeepers was 1938, up 263 (16%) on 1992-93 (Table 5).

The overall reported disease incidence in New Zealand beehives in 1993-94 was 0.9% of hives and 5.1% of apiaries, the same as in 1992-93 (Table 6).

#### **4.0 Exotic Disease and Pest Response (EDPR) Capability**

Training of MAF Quality Management staff continued and simulation exercises were held for HQ personnel, as well as laboratory staff and Field Team Leaders. Systems and procedure manuals were reviewed and revised where necessary. Planning is under way for a major simulated exercise in Canterbury scheduled for September 1994. This will involve an HQ, Field Team Leaders and Field Team Members.

NBA members from the Canterbury area have volunteered to act as Field Team Members. EDPR training and preparedness continues to be funded by government through a contract with the MAF Regulatory Authority (MAF RA). However, under the Biosecurity Act, there is a requirement for interested parties to prepare management plans for exotic and endemic pests and diseases of concern. Preparation and management of these plans or Pest Management Strategies (PMS) will be the responsibility of the farmers, growers or beekeepers concerned, unless they can persuade government to be a partner.

Recent communication from the MAF RA has indicated that they will not take any initiatives or responsibilities for preparing a PMS for the Africanised honey bee. This was one pest that MAF Quality Management felt could secure government support, since the aggressiveness of the bee has implications for public health.

Government will almost certainly not assist financially with developing PMS's for the other exotic pests and diseases of honey bees. The implications of this need to be carefully considered by the beekeeping industry because if the NBA does not develop strategies for exotic bee diseases due to financial or other considerations, then the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is not likely to continue investing resources in training and systems development. (See *The New Zealand Beekeeper*, July 1994).

#### **5.0 Surveillance**

The Honey Bee Exotic Disease Surveillance Programme is comprised of three parts:- the apiary register, hive sampling and border protection.

##### **5.1 Apiary Register**

The maintenance of this register (in the form of a computer database) is a current legal requirement of government under the transitional provisions of the Biosecurity Act. The database relies on accurate statements of inspection provided by the beekeeper each spring. However, once again this year approximately 40% of beekeepers failed to provide such statements of inspection by the deadline of 7 December.

The current database has served well as an apiary register for many years, but it is now reaching the end of its useful life. For this reason, MAF Quality Management has designed a new database system which is currently being

programmed and should be in use by the beginning of the upcoming season. This database has been designed to meet the many changing needs of MAF Quality Management and the beekeeping industry. The new database will improve the efficiency of many of MAF Quality Management activities such as the American foulbrood control/eradication programme, the exotic bee disease surveillance programme, export area clearances, and HQ operations in an exotic disease response.

##### **5.2 Hive Sampling**

During the past 12 months, MAF Quality Management staff have inspected 461 apiaries for the presence of exotic bee diseases and taken samples for laboratory analysis for internal and external parasitic mites. In addition, 27 samples were taken for European foulbrood diagnosis and 29 samples were taken for Africanised honey bee analysis. Apiaries were sampled in "at risk" areas including sea ports, garbage dumps and areas frequented by overseas travellers. No specimens of exotic diseases or pests were found. A further 430 samples of bees were tested at Invermay as part of the export certification programme. The samples were analysed for the presence of exotic internal and external parasitic mites. MAF Quality Management wishes to thank participating beekeepers for providing samples.

##### **5.3 Border Protection**

The beekeeping industry continues to have a high profile in the work of MAF's Quarantine Service, with numerous consignments of honey and other bee products being intercepted at the border, and the disease risk of honey and bees being brought to the attention of the travelling public. Seven staff from the National Fauna and Flora Investigation Unit were given training in assessing risks to the beekeeping industry in 1993-94.

A dead swarm of bees was found in a container from Australia. This was picked up by MAF Quarantine Services staff. The bees were tested for Africanisation, internal and external parasitic mites, and European foulbrood, with negative results for all diseases and pests. The incident once again highlights the importance of the Quarantine Service to the New Zealand beekeeping industry.

##### **6.0 Export Certification**

The 1994 export season was extremely trying for live bee exporters, MAF Quality Management certifying officers and the MAF Regulatory Authority. Difficulties were experienced in our two leading live bee export markets, and area freedom requirements for honey exports continue to cause concern. Many of the problems and costs associated with export certification stem from our inability to negotiate favourable access conditions with our trading partners. A number of joint industry-government initiatives are being undertaken to address these problems. The initiatives are more fully detailed in the July issue of *The New Zealand Beekeeper*.

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Loyalty**