

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE HORTICULTURE DIVISION

APIARY STATISTICS

Apiary registration at 30th June, 1952, show an overall increase since June 1951, of 121 apiaries and 2808 hives. Totals for New Zealand at present are: North Island: 4701 beekeepers, 7877 apiaries, 121,767 hives. South Island: 1949 beekeepers, 4620 apiaries, 67,873 hives. Dominion totals: 6650 beekeepers, 12,497 apiaries, 189,640 hives.

The percentage of established apiaries and hives kept by certain groups of beekeepers, based on present holdings, are shown in the following table:—

Group.	Apiaries.	Hives.
1-20 hives	85.75%	13.29%
21-50 hives	5.8%	6.67%
51 hives and over	8.45%	80.04%

HONEY GRADING STANDARDS

The following information regarding honey grading standards is supplied in response to a request made at the last Conference of the N.B.A. for a statement indicating how and by whom grading standards are set.

During the period since 1933, honey standards were first set in 1934 by the New Zealand Honey Export Control Board. Grading to the standards set for honey going to export took into account flavour, colour, grain, condition and froth. At that time honey exported was shipped in straight lines as received from producers. Later a more modern plant and methods of blending and packing honey (developed by Mr John Rentoul), which took care of granulation, were introduced at the central honey packing depot. These changes gave certain advantages, and enabled the packing of reliable standard blends of New Zealand honey.

Subsequently, in 1938 conferences were held between officers of the Honey Export Control Board, Department of Agriculture and Internal Marketing Department, to thoroughly

examine the grading and pay-out system for honey, in the light of past experience and changed conditions, and to bring down recommendations for any possible improvements considered desirable.

The first step taken was to collect honey samples from producers in all parts of New Zealand, covering the widest range possible. The samples were then grouped in accordance with their values for blending and marketing purposes. When this job was completed the comparative values of the samples were converted to grading points on a graduated scale for flavour, colour and condition. An amended grading system which provided no penalty for granulation, and which simplified grading and also enabled payment for honey to be made on a pro rata basis according to grade, was then adopted.

The standard of ripeness for New Zealand honey is defined on the basis of minimum specific gravity (moisture content) necessary to prevent deterioration so that honey can be marketed with safety.

1.420 Specific Gravity is the standard, set some years ago, following earlier investigation and some 250 tests of samples from various parts of New Zealand.

The amended grading system and standards set proved suitable to the requirements of the industry over a period of years, and were incorporated in the Honey Export Regulations, 1950, to bring them into line with accepted practice.

These regulations consolidate with some amendments the old regulations governing the grading of honey for export and were approved by the Executive of the National Beekeepers' Association, also by the Honey Marketing Committee and the Marketing Department, to whom they were submitted for consideration and comment when in draft form.

PART - TIME APIARY INSPECTION

The appointment of part-time Apiary Inspectors for the new season is proceeding in accordance with the recommendations of Apiary Instructors.

Beekeepers who accept appointment are expected to undertake the work allotted to them, or if unable to do so, to advise the local Apiary Instructor not later than the end of October, so that if possible he can arrange with another beekeeper to do the job.

EXPERIMENTS

Trials and experiments to be carried out or continued during the coming season include:—

(1) Consignments of package bees (including queens) by air freight from North Auckland Manuka areas to the South Island to determine their economic use as against over-wintered colonies. Arrangements have also been made for private trials of package bees in the North Island for boosting backward colonies in spring.

(2) Investigation at Rukuhia Soil Research Station to ascertain if possible the relationship between soil and climatic conditions and the production of nectar in white clover will be continued.

(3) Experimental production of honey mead at Wallaceville, and testing the use of low grade honey for this purpose.

(4) Arrangements are being made with Extension Division for trials in the Palmerston North district to determine whether the methods now being used to apply insecticides (D.D.T. Super) for control of grass grub are dangerous to honey bees, and whether its use when ground nectar sources are in bloom would be detrimental to the beekeeping industry.

Beekeepers, particularly in Canter-

bury, can assist in this work by a close watch on their hives established in areas where D.D.T. Super is applied extensively by farmers during the coming season, and by forwarding samples of dead bees immediately, in any case where their mortality is excessive, direct to Superintendent Animal Research Station, Private Bag, Wellington, for examination. Not less than 500 dead bees (preferably 1000) from each hive affected would be required for testing purposes.

T. S. WINTER,
Superintendent,
Beekeeping Industry.

DARK COMBS

Leslie H. Walling, of Trenton, North Dakota, contends that storing in dark combs does not darken the honey but that improper melting of the cappings does darken it seriously. Most of his three thousand extracting supers are filled with dark combs and two years ago he produced two car-loads of water white honey in those dark combs. He observes that the bees store in the dark combs first and also at the close of the crop, when the flow is light.

E. L. Sechrist, Fort Bragg, California, says that he can't tell how much honey is darkened by being stored in old combs but will hazard a guess that it is darkened more than we think. He suggests as a test, filling a tank with cappings from new combs and letting the honey drain off, while at the same time filling a tank with cappings from old combs cut deep to drain in similar manner. Sechrist says that we forget too easily or fail to observe with sufficient care to be sure of the facts of commonplace matters of daily practice.

—American Bee Journal.