



*A Bacillus larvae bonfire in Southland makes an eloquent argument for disease detection at an early stage.*

BETWEEN NOW and November 7, every beekeeper should inspect or cause to inspect all his hives and report to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on their disease status.

With only one major bee disease of national concern, the disease to look out for is *Bacillus larvae*, otherwise known as foul brood.

To make the job easier, the Apiaries Act requires the ministry to provide all registered beekeepers with an appropriate disease reporting form.

And while the absence of that form would preclude a beekeeper from fulfilling his inspection requirements, it would pay anyone who hasn't received a form as yet, to contact the nearest MAF office and ask why. If you haven't a form, it either means you are the victim of a clerical error, or you are not registered.

The inspection and reporting requirement applies to every beekeeper. Ownership of only one hive is no ground for exemption.

It's all part of a programme which puts the onus for hive inspection into the hands of the beekeeper. The ministry's job is to ensure the appropriate control measures are implemented.

This means that regardless of the disease status of your hives on November 7, any beekeeper who finds foul brood in his hives at any time must notify MAF within seven days. Control measures don't have to be delayed — the beekeeper can burn the hives involved immediately — but the ministry men are meant to check that the job is done properly.

It's the beekeeper's job also to keep the ministry informed of the location of apiaries and hive numbers.

"It's a legal requirement," says chief advisory officer (beekeeping), Vince Cooke, "but most importantly, we can't help regulate insecticide spraying programmes if we don't know where hives are located."

For this reason the ministry is more concerned about apiary location than precise hive numbers. In practice, its officers don't amend the registered number of hives in an apiary unless they vary by five or more from the number registered.

Nevertheless, leave this discretion up to the ministry. Precise details of hive holdings, apiary location and disease status is in everyone's interest — especially yours.

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