

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE HORTICULTURE DIVISION

ADDRESS TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE N.B.A. BY Mr. W. K. DALLAS, DIRECTOR.

Hony Crops: Unseasonable weather conditions at critical periods during the past season in many districts, including Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wairarapa, and parts of Southland, adversely affected nectar secretion and normal colony activity; consequently honey crops in these areas ranged from poor to almost a complete failure in some locations.

In North Otago and Marlborough, however, good crops of excellent quality honey was harvested. Elsewhere payable crops have been secured.

Trend in Beekeeping: The business of producing honey since the last war has made considerable progress as an industry. Prior to the last war the bulk of the honey produced was from domestic or semi-commercial apiaries; but since that time the advance made by the beekeeping industry has been considerable, so that it can now claim to rank with other leading primary industries of importance. The general trend is illustrated by the following table:—

| Year. | No. of Regis- tered Bee- keepers. | No. of Hives Registered. | Average Holding. |
|--------------------|--|---|---------------------|
| 1920 | 6,392 | 69,877 | 10.9 |
| 1943 | 5,646 | 133,604 | 23.7 |
| 30th June, 1945 | 6,507 | 129,576 (Complete schedule attached) | 19.9 |

Under the present rehabilitation plans and land development proposals framed to assist ex-servicement, the beekeeping industry will undoubtedly undergo moderate expansion with resultant increase in bee production.

Employment of Beekeepers: (Sche-

dule of work done attached). Fifty-six beekeepers were employed as part-time Apiary Inspectors last season.

Working under this plan, 1,630 apiaries containing 14,068 hives were inspected in areas which could not be completely covered the previous season.

The percentage of diseased colonies located and dealt with was slightly higher than the previous year in some districts and lower in others.

All diseased hives located and not under proper control were destroyed by fire on the spot by Apiary Inspectors, who found it necessary to burn 368 hives against 219 the previous year. The percentage of disease located is no indication of the situation as a whole, which is considered very satisfactory when taking into consideration the conditions under which everybody has been working during the past five years.

Provision has been made for an additional sum of money for this work during the coming season, and it is hoped to employ a number of men for solo work to enable as much inspection work as possible to be carried out simultaneously at the appropriate season.

Policy of the Department in dealing with Bee Diseases: It is the policy of the Department to destroy all diseased hives located which are not under proper control by competent beekeepers, and, without exception, to destroy by fire all badly diseased hives located.

There is no evidence at present indicating that beekeepers are failing to clear disease satisfactorily when given notice to do so by Apiary Inspectors who are exercising their powers with care, tact and judgment.

The destruction of hives and mildly infected strong colonies of bees indiscriminately under present conditions would be unwise in my opinion.

The Department does not allow the sale of honey for ordinary marketing purposes, known to have been extracted from diseased hives, or the movement of diseased bees from one location to another.

Sections 7 and 10 of the Apiaries Act give the necessary power in this respect, and a careful watch is being kept in this direction.

Problems of the Industry: During the year important work has been carried out for the beekeeping industry at Wallaceville Animal Research Station, including the investigation of pollen substitutes (and the best way to feed), deleterious honey in the Bay of Plenty district, the use of D.D.T. as an insecticide, and the possible effect on the beekeeping industry, also fermentation in honey. This work is proceeding, and results will be made known to the industry when completed.

Other problems connected with the beekeeping industry will be tackled as opportunity occurs, including:—

Adult and brood bee disease in New Zealand.

Humidity in relation to low specific gravity.

Storage of bee combs and prevention of mould growth.

Spring and summer colony dwindling.

Wintering bees in New Zealand under varying conditions.

Most suitable wire to use on queen-mailing cages.

Continued Co-operation Required: I would stress the necessity for all beekeepers to continue to co-operate to the fullest possible extent with the Department, so that a maximum of service may be maintained to the best advantage of the industry as a whole. Many beekeepers do not realise the importance of keeping their apiary registrations up to date, and this has very often caused unnecessary delays where Apiary Inspectors are called upon to certify to necessary supplies of rationed material. The best attention of all beekeepers to this matter is required.

HONEY CROPS.

Unseasonable weather conditions at critical periods during the past season in many districts, including Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wairarapa and parts of Southland, adversely affected nectar secretion and normal colony activity; consequently honey crops in these areas ranged from poor to almost a complete failure in some locations. In North Otago and Marlborough, however, good crops of excellent quality honey were harvested.

TREND IN BEEKEEPING.

The business of producing honey since the last war has made considerable progress as an industry. Prior to the last war the bulk of the honey produced was from domestic or semi-commercial apiaries, but since that time the advance made by the beekeeping industry has been considerable, so that it can now claim to rank with other leading primary industries of importance. The general trend is illustrated by the following table:—

| Year. | No. of Registered Beekeepers. | No. of Hives Registered. |
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| 1920 | 6,392 | 69,877 |
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EMPLOYMENT OF BEEKEEPERS.

Fifty-six beekeepers were employed as part-time inspectors last season. Transport was provided by Apiary Inspectors, who accompanied these men and worked with them during their rounds of inspection. The percentage of diseased colonies located and dealt with was slightly higher than the previous year in some districts and lower in others. All diseased hives located and not under proper control were destroyed by fire on the spot by Apiary Inspectors, who found it necessary to burn 368 hives, against 219 the previous year. The percentage of disease located by part-time inspectors is no indication of the situation as a whole, which is considered very satisfactory when taking into considera-

tion the conditions under which all concerned have been working during the past five years. Provision has been made for an additional sum of money for this work during the coming season.

POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT IN DEALING WITH BEE DISEASES.

Where bee diseases are concerned, it is the policy of the Department to destroy all diseased hives located which are not under proper control by competent beekeepers, and, without exception, to destroy by fire all badly diseased hives located.

Apiary Instructors have power under Section 9 of the Apiaries Act to destroy by fire or to give notice to beekeepers to destroy by fire any diseased hives located where the bees have been neglected or where they are badly diseased and considered likely to become a source of infection to other hives if handled by incompetent beekeepers. Apiary Instructors are exercising their powers with care, tact and judgment.

The Department would not allow the sale of honey for ordinary marketing purposes known to have been extracted from diseased hives, or the movement of diseased bees from one location to another. Sections 7 and 10 of the Apiaries Act give the necessary power in this respect, and a careful watch is being kept in this direction.

PROBLEMS OF THE INDUSTRY.

Important work has been undertaken at the Wallaceville Animal Research Station for the beekeeping industry.

The provision of adequate supplies of pollen in pollen-deficient areas is being tried in several districts with the help of beekeepers and Apiary Instructors. Preliminary work was carried out in Otago last season, and this year the work will be extended and should give conclusive results. There seems no doubt that several districts suffer from a spring pollen shortage, and that beekeeping in those areas would benefit consider-

ably if a satisfactory substitute were available.

Experimental work was carried out on the new insecticide D.D.T. This was tested as a dust and solution under conditions approximating to those which would result if it were used commercially. It was shown to be extremely toxic to honey bees, and its indiscriminate use in places normally visited by honey bees would be a serious menace to the beekeeping industry.

The problem of preventing undue absorption of moisture by honey during its progress from bee hive to container is being studied in collaboration with the Honey Grader.

Diagnostic work has been carried out on samples of bees infected with disease, and an experimental apiary of 15 hives has been established at Wallaceville.

All work is arranged in order of importance, and officers of this Department provide the necessary link between the beekeeping industry and the Laboratory at Wallaceville. Beekeepers should therefore bring their beekeeping problems to the notice of the Apiary Instructor for their district.

It is important for all beekeepers to continue to co-operate to the fullest extent possible with the Department so that a maximum of service may be maintained to the best advantage of the industry as a whole.

W. R. DALLAS,
Director of the Horticulture Division.

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