

HORTICULTURE DIVISION

ADDRESS BY DIRECTOR

The work of the Apiary Section of the Horticulture Division and the position in the beekeeping industry were reviewed by the Director of the Horticulture Division (Mr. A. M. W. Greig) in his address to the 1951 Conference. Mr. Greig mentioned the four avenues through which the Apiary Section was assisting the industry—the advisory service, research and experimental work, inspection service, and honey grading—and outlined the main problems which are at present receiving attention.

STATISTICS

There is a total of 6697 beekeepers—4795 in the North Island and 1902 in the South Island. This is an increase of 210 beekeepers since March, 1949, to June, 1951. There are 51 ex-servicemen from World War II established in commercial beekeeping and 6 more receiving training.

RESEARCH

This work is directed by Mr. T. S. Winter and is carried out by Mr. T. Palmer-Jones at Wallaceville or in the field in co-operation with the Apiary Instructors. The work includes:—

- (a) Diagnosing troubles with bees.
- (b) The artificial insemination of bees in order to develop improved strains for commercial honey production.
- (c) Developing the use of gam-mexane smoke generators for destruction of diseased colonies of bees instead of calcium cyanide.
- (d) Trials over 3 seasons to find a suitable drug to feed to bees affected with nosema apis.
- (e) Experiments to see whether any of the new chemical weed-killers are dangerous to bees. Some results are published in the *Journal of Agriculture*, February, 1950.
- (f) Checking for the presence of toxic substances in honey from the test hives in the Bay of Plenty district.

DISEASE CONTROL

The most important inspection service is detecting and destroying hives affected with the bacterial disease American foul-brood.

The size of this job is seen from the numbers of apiaries and hives.

At June, 1951: Total 12,376 apiaries—186,832 hives. North Island: Total 7,937 apiaries—120,781 hives. South Island: Total 4,439 apiaries—66,051 hives.

Last season 5,015 apiaries containing 47,424 hives were inspected and of the hives inspected 1,470 were burnt, or just over 3 per cent.

To check entry of diseases not recorded in New Zealand, especially Acarine disease, a strict quarantine service is maintained. All new introductions are required to enter through Wallaceville.

During the past year, The Apiaries Diseases Order, 1950, was gazetted and came into force in October, 1950.

This enables the Department at Wallaceville to destroy any bees introduced into New Zealand and found infected with Nosema or the Beelouse.

IMPORTATIONS

Last year the Conference requested that inferior strains of bees be prohibited entry into New Zealand and a recommendation has now been made to the Minister that the Apiaries Act be amended so as to enable action to be taken along these lines.

PART-TIME INSPECTION

Over £1,000 will be on the Department estimates this year to meet the cost of this work. In order to make full use of this allocation it is important that beekeepers who agree to do this work actually carry it out or, if unable to do so, advise the Instructor by the end of October in each year so that a replacement can be found or the money transferred to another district.

As recommended by previous Conferences the policy now adopted by the Department is to burn contents of diseased hives and thoroughly to sterilise the equipment.

SPRAY POISONING

Last spring in Hawke's Bay there was a recurrence of the losses of honey bees from arsenate of lead spray poisoning.

In 1946 there was an Amendment to the Apiaries Act, 1927, reading as follows:—

"No person shall spray or dust any fruit-trees during the period within which those trees are in bloom with any preparation containing any poisoning substance injurious to bees unless almost all the blossoms have fallen from the trees."

Mr. Greig visited Hawkes Bay in November, 1950, to inquire into the position and to check the administration of this section of the Act.

A Departmental Committee has now been appointed at Hastings to arrange publicity, inspection procedure, and receive reports, and Horticultural Inspectors stationed at Hastings have been gazetted as Inspectors under the Apiary Act.

To be successful the full co-operation of Hawke's Bay beekeepers is essential.

PRODUCTION

It is estimated that the overall production during the past season was 6,035 tons of honey (an increase of 1,518 tons on the previous year) and 181,050lb. of beeswax.

MANUKA HONEY

Messrs. Palmer-Jones, Winter and Walsh are working on this problem. Mr. Palmer-Jones has filtered a quantity of low grade honey, extracting most of the colour, and it is hoped that the resulting product (Invert Sugar) will find a demand for manufacturing purposes.

NECTAR SECRETION

Waikato beekeepers have been concerned with the failure of white clover to yield nectar in recent years.

In conjunction with another section of the Department, the Soil Research Station, Rukuhia, Hamilton, 16 plots of clover pastures have been set out and manurial trials are being conducted to see whether an improved nectar secretion can be obtained.

WASPS

An insectary has been established and it will be used for the following purposes:—

- Controlled experiments with insecticides.
- Study of food habits of wasps.
- General biological studies of wasps.
- Observation of effects of wasps on fruits.

In addition two small apiaries are being established in wasp-infested areas to carry out hive robbing tests and methods of control. Tests of wasp excluders and camouflaged hive entrances are also being made and the use of baits and counter-attractants is being investigated.

In his concluding remarks Mr. Greig emphasised the amount of capital which is invested in bees, equipment and honey extracting plant. The Horticulture Division aims to assist in maintaining and expanding this investment and will be pleased to co-operate with the Association in every possible way.

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