



APIARY SECTION REPORT

Presented by Vince Cooke, chief advisory officer (beekeeping) designate, on behalf of Ian Forbes, assistant director, advisory services division, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

“The industry can expect an improved advisory service. . .”

AS REPORTED in the March 1977 issue of the 'New Zealand Beekeeper', a complete re-organisation of the apiary section is currently under way. During the last year Mr Eric Smaellie, superintendent (beekeeping), and Mr Alf Bennett, apiary instructor at Hamilton, both retired.

There will be a gradual phasing out of the designation "apiary instructor" as present instructors qualify as advisory officers or are replaced on retirement by advisory officers holding appropriate university degrees. This major policy change will place apiary section officers in the same occupational class as other advisory staff in the advisory services division. Career prospects for persons joining the section will be much wider than before, and the beekeeping industry can expect to receive an improved advisory service.

The country is divided into nine apiary districts. Each district will ultimately have a resident apicultural advisory officer who will be responsible for providing a comprehensive beekeeping advisory service, and for seeing that the various provisions of our beekeeping legislation are properly implemented.

The districts are based at Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Palmerston North (which is the base for two districts), Nelson, Christchurch, Oamaru and Gore.

The position of superintendent (beekeeping) at Wellington has been replaced with that of chief advisory officer (apiculture). Mr Vince Cook, who was for 16 years the apiary instructor at Oamaru, has been appointed to this position.

Mr Murray Reid has transferred from Christchurch to Hamilton and he is now established as the apicultural advisory officer in that district. With the imminent retirement of Mr Jack Varley, the apiary instructor at Nelson, vacancies will shortly exist for two apicultural advisory officers. Steps are being taken to fill these positions as soon as possible.

Historically the apiary section had an essentially regulatory role and indeed initially its main purpose was to control American foul brood disease. Many older beekeepers still refer to the local adviser as "apiary inspector". This concept has now changed with the emphasis being placed on advisory work.

Your association is well aware that a big potential exists for the development of beekeeping in many areas of New Zealand, not only for extracted honey production but also for the other hive products, comb honey, beeswax, pollen and propolis. Many more queen bees of the highest quality could also be produced.

Lucrative local and export markets seem assured for hive products and queen bees. It will be a continuing and increasingly important aspect of our work to actively encourage the development of the beekeeping industry to profitably reach its potential.

Our efforts will not be confined to merely giving technical advice as it is requested. It is our aim to develop a team of skilled extension workers able to give advice on all aspects of apiculture including business and financial management. Several members of the section have already moved into these fields and their services are being keenly sought by both established and new beekeepers.

The block course on beekeeping management at Telford Farm Training Institute last October, which was oversubscribed, took the form of a three day, in-depth discussion on planning and achieving beekeeping objectives. The 22 participants all contributed freely and everyone considered the course had been very helpful. We hope to be able to run a similar course in the North Island later this year.

The control of American foul brood and the ministry's other regulatory services to the industry will be fully maintained. Each apicultural advisory officer will have a supervising respon-

sibility but much of the work will be done by other ministry staff as part of their duties. Selected officers have already been trained to draw honey samples for grading by the Honey Grader, and to grade export comb honey.

While beekeepers are required, under the Apiaries Act 1969, to inspect their own hives for American foul brood, the ministry has the overall responsibility for supervising the control of the disease. Hive inspections will continue to be made and arrangements are being made for volunteers from the animal health and meat divisions as well as advisory services division, to be trained to assist with this work. The ministry will continue to employ experienced beekeepers as part-time apiary inspectors.

Mr John Smith, apiary instructor at Christchurch, is visiting Poland to study the latest developments in the artificial insemination of queen bees at the University of Warsaw under Professor Woyke who is a world authority in this field.

Mr Smith's study was made possible by a grant from your association. The ministry appreciates this mutual co-operation and hopes the industry will benefit from the information Mr Smith brings back. The results of the study will of course be made freely available to beekeepers throughout the country.

Both the ministry and your industry have recently become involved in assisting the government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with beekeeping projects under the bilateral aid programme.

Mr Percy Berry of Arataki Apiaries Ltd and Mr Allan Ward (Lecturer in Agricultural Economics) of Massey University visited Bangladesh in 1975 to assess the beekeeping situation there and, as a result of their findings, New Zealand will be giving beekeeping aid to that country.

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Last year Mr Grahame Walton, apicultural advisory officer at Palmerston North, attended a conference in London on Apiculture in Tropical Climates. The conference recognised the enormous potential for beekeeping in many developing tropical countries.

Mr Gavin McKenzie, a former executive member of your association, is in Papua New Guinea for two years as project manager of the Papua New Guinea/New Zealand Beekeeping Development Project. You will be pleased to know that Mr McKenzie and his wife and family have settled very well into the Papua New Guinea way of life, and that the project is progressing well. Mr Vince Cook, chief advisory officer (apiculture) is the project director.

It is commendable that our collective beekeeping expertise is being used to assist beekeeping development outside New Zealand.

Apimondia Congress

The ministry recognises the importance of this congress which will be held in Adelaide in October, and I am pleased to advise you that approval has been given for three apiary section officers to officially attend.

Pesticides

The problem of protecting honey bees when brassica and clover seed crops are sprayed is potentially serious each season. Fortunately, however, bees are rarely, if ever, poisoned because a continued extension, regulatory and research programme successfully deals with the problem.

The 1976/77 season saw this programme rigorously tested, as a new pest, the blue-green aphid (*acrythosiphon kondoi*) heavily infested crops of lucerne and white and red clover in the main seed growing (and beekeeping) areas of Canterbury and Otago.

It was impossible to foretell which plant species would be infested, the rate and length of infestation and the damage that would be caused. Chemical control was obviously warranted in some areas, and research was commenced to investigate the whole question and this work is continuing.

I am satisfied that, in view of the circumstances, the problem was dealt with sensibly and responsibly by all those concerned, viz: the ministry, farmers, beekeepers, and spray contractors.

The established programme withstood the test. From the evidence available it can only be concluded that bees were not poisoned and that there were no losses of honey production, or reduced pollination.

Metrication

An official ministry booklet, "Metrics for Beekeepers" is now available through all ministry offices free of charge.

Statistics

Beekeepers and hives

As at May 31 1977 there was a total of 3 577 beekeepers owning 15 319 registered apiaries and 191 757 hives.

Honey

Honey production for the 1976/77 season was assessed at 6078 tonnes. This compares with the 4915 tonne crop of last year and is 300 tonnes more than the average production of the past six years.

For the year ending August 31, 1976, 1700 tonnes of bulk extracted honey was submitted for grading. Of this 38 tonnes did not meet the export grade requirements.

One hundred and thirteen tonnes of comb honey was graded for export compared with the 154 tonnes graded the previous year.

No beekeepers applied to export any packed extracted honey.

American foul brood

At this time, the ministry is unable to give the percentages for diseased apiaries and hives for the 1976/77 season. As the figures have not been collated due to our staff situation.

In brief, however, the situation with American foul brood is that the incidence of the disease has for a number of years been held fairly constantly at 2.50 per cent diseased apiaries and 0.50 per cent diseased hives.

While at first glance these figures appear satisfactorily low, it must be emphasised that the disease is extremely widespread. It is clear that any relaxing of the control measures now in force could result in a serious spread of the disease.

Cawthron study

The Cawthron Institute at Nelson is presently testing a number of typical New Zealand honeys in relation to their storage and heating characteristics. These features, in particular the levels of diastase and hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF) in honey, are becoming increasingly important to the industry in terms of our international honey trade prospects. The present work, which will continue with further samples next year, is the first in-depth study of fresh unprocessed NZ honey.

The study has been financed from the Issac Hopkins Bequest, a grant from the Honey Marketing Authority, with assistance from the ministry.