

is that there exists a potential for at least 60 000 beehives producing in excess of 3 000 tonnes of beech honeydew honey, with a current export value of \$5 million. These are astonishing figures when we consider that New Zealand's total annual honey production averages just over 6 000 tonnes and that less than \$2 million is realised through honey exports. Furthermore the assessed potential for beech honeydew is a tenfold increase on present hive numbers and honeydew yields.

Although these are astonishing figures they are realistic, attainable, and are certainly not pies in the sky.

Several beech forest areas stand out as having a very high potential. The north branch of the Selwyn River; the Okuku, Townshend, Torlesse and Mount Hutt areas all have high exudation levels of honeydew, but are not presently stocked with bees to any great extent.

It is immediately apparent from the results of the ministry's study that the areas where the greatest utilisation of honeydew has occurred in recent years, Mount Thomas and Alford Beech Forest areas are those areas where in fact some of the lowest densities of scale insect occur. It is also quite apparent that this vast potential is there for the taking, right now; in areas where roading exists, and where apiary sites could be established. It will be up to you, as beekeepers, to harness this potential.

Government, and government departments, have been of some considerable help to beekeepers, and particularly to honeydew producers, and I only need to cite the export taxation incentive on honeydew and some other honey products, the rural export suspensory loan, and the recent investigation into the honeydew resource, the results of which will be published by the ministry in abridged form shortly. In essence the aim of government assistance is to help yourselves and is not designed to do your work for you.

At present all honey, including honeydew and comb honey, is subject to the approval of the Authority before it can be exported. As far as comb honey and honeydew are concerned, the Authority has given its general consent to the export of these products and no specific approvals are required. The Honeydew Producers Association has asked that the minister's delegation to the Authority of his power to approve exports of honey, be withdrawn insofar as it relates to honeydew.

I have made some harsh comments to you in my address today, not because I derive any pleasure from doing so, but because the time has come when a number of critical questions must be answered.

I am quite sure that whatever decisions you reach the honey industry will continue to be a valuable and important one in the years to come.

What I have been talking to you about is what form your industry will take in the future.

There is a considerable human resource involved in the honey industry with, as I said at the start of my address, more than 4 600 beekeepers in the country. Working together as a unified industry group much can be achieved to the benefit not only of the industry as a whole but also to the benefit of all the individuals involved.

Without pointing fingers or making accusations I most sincerely urge you to set aside whatever sectional interests you hold and look honestly and objectively at the problems facing this industry, and to try and resolve them in a manner that will encourage greater unanimity and strength within your sector.

I don't claim to have all the answers but my door is always open to you or anyone in your industry who can help sort out the problems.

It is something of a well worn phrase but I'm sure if you defined your areas of agreement and built on your strengths rather than concentrating on internal differences much would be achieved.

I thank you for the opportunity to address you today and I have appreciated the courtesies you have shown me as I have pointed out where I see some of the weaknesses of your industry. It now gives me much pleasure to declare open what I trust will be a constructive and rewarding conference for you all, out of which will come a more dynamic and stronger New Zealand honey industry.

MAF advisory report

Presented by Grahame Walton, chief advisory officer (apiculture),
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

Qualified apicultural advisers

In my last two reports to your Annual Conference I discussed the changing role and reorganisation of the apiary section. The most noticeable change has been the phasing out of the apiary instruction group as apiary instructors either qualify as advisory officers or are replaced on retirement by advisory officers holding appropriate university degrees.

Five officers, Messrs D.A. Briscoe, T.G. Bryant, V.A. Cook, J.E. Rodie and C.G. Rope, have met the criteria set by the State Services Commission and are now redesignated as apicultural advisory officers at their former locations. The two officers remaining in the apiary instruction group, Messrs B.M. Milnes, and J. Smith, have the opportunity to translate upon completion of the National diploma in

Apiculture.

A new officer, Mr K.W. Simpson, was appointed in January and has recently been transferred to Palmerston North.

Sinking-lid policy

You would be well aware of the fiscal and staffing restraints that have been placed by government on the public service. The total funding allocated to agriculture this year is less than last year.

The so-called sinking lid policy, whereby government departments are required to make a one and half per cent reduction per annum in staff numbers, continues in operation.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries must necessarily and continually review its responsibilities and its input into all sectors that make up our farming, horticultural and fishing

industries. Bearing in mind these restraints and the priorities that must be established in servicing all agricultural sectors, I believe that the beekeeping industry is well provided for by existing staff within the advisory services division. There is no foreseeable prospect that the division could employ more full-time staff within the apiary section.

The honeycrop

The honeycrop for the 1978-79 honey season was 6474 tonnes, 388 tonnes above the 10-year national average. Above average crops were obtained in the Hamilton, Christchurch and Oamaru apiary districts and below average crops were gathered in the Nelson and Gore apiary districts. The honey yield was so low in parts of the Gore apiary district that special relief measures were announced by the

Rural Banking and Finance Corporation for beekeepers facing financial difficulty.

For the year ending August 31, 1978, 2441 tonnes of bulk extracted honey were submitted for government grading at the five receiving depots of the New Zealand Honey Marketing Authority.

Private exporters exported 39 tonnes of retail pack honey and two tonnes of bulk honey. 225 tonnes of honeydew and 222 tonnes of comb honey were exported.

American brood disease

The level of American Brood Disease (*Bacillus larvae*) as reported continues to increase throughout the country. During the 1978/79 season 712 apiaries (3.9 per cent) and 1809 hives (0.80 per cent) were found to be infected with American Brood Disease.

Most beekeepers are meeting their obligations under the Apiaries Act 1969 in reporting and controlling American Brood Disease. Over 72 per cent of the diseased hives were detected by beekeepers in the past year. In the same period the ministry has stepped up its deployment of staff, including field officers and livestock officers in check inspections.

It is apparent that a few individual beekeepers maintain an unacceptably high level of disease within their enterprises. It is also apparent that the major problem lies with commercial beekeepers, and not with hobbyists. European Brood Disease has not been positively identified in New Zealand. It is a disease we certainly can do without. Another serious disease, Varroa, is the cause of some concern throughout Europe, Asia, Northern Africa and South America. It has not been detected in Australasia.

It is highly probably that New Zealand has fewer bee diseases and pests than any other beekeeping country in the world; a position which should be maintained and safeguarded. Beekeepers themselves are New Zealand's first line of defence. Any suspicious disease, pest or other condition within a hive should be reported promptly to the ministry.

To further protect the beekeeping industry from the importation of bee diseases and pests an amendment to the Apiaries Act 1969 was made last year.

This amendment prohibits the importation of honey and other bee products without the prior approval of the Minister of Agriculture.

Beekeeping potential

During the past year, a detailed

Beekeepers, apiaries and hives

AS AT MAY 31, 1979 there was a total of 4,607 beekeepers maintaining 18,438 registered apiaries and owning 226,870 hives.

Category	Beekeepers	Apiaries	Hives
Owning 1 – 50 hives	4212	5895	23865
Owning 51 – 500 hives	274	4222	59849
Owning more than 500 hives	121	8321	143516
Totals	4607	18438	226870

Last year I reported the upsurge in interest in hobbyist and side-line beekeeping. This interest has continued this past year and is reflected by a 13 per cent increase in the number of registered beekeepers owing up to 50 hives each.

Although small-scale beekeeping has boomed over the last decade (a 48 per cent increase since 1969) there has been negligible growth in the number of commercial and semi-commercial beekeepers (in 1969 there were 393 beekeepers owning more than 50 hives each; today there are 395 beekeepers in this category).

Investigation of the beech honeydew resource has been carried out by advisory services division staff assisted by the New Zealand Forest Service. The parliamentary under-secretary of agriculture, Mr R.L.G. Talbot, in opening this annual conference referred to the potential for at least 60,000 beehives to produce in excess of 3000 tonnes of beech honeydew honey.

The rapid expansion of the kiwifruit industry presents beekeepers with considerable opportunities and challenges. Approximately 4000 beehives were used this current season to pollinate 13,700 tonnes of exported kiwifruit. By 1985 and 1990 the respective export projections for kiwifruit are 40,000 and 81,000 tonnes. Within 10 years, 20,000 colonies of bees may be required to provide a pollination service for this crop, in districts stretching from Northland to North Westland, but with major concentrations in the Bay of Plenty.

The ministry has previously indicated that it sees considerable potential in most New Zealand districts for increased production of blossom honey, pollen, queen bees and other bee products.

The grading of honey

A draft of the proposed revision of the Honey Export Regulations 1950 was sent to beekeeping organisations for their comments late last year. This revision gives due emphasis to the general honey requirements of importing countries; in particular the purity, wholesomeness and nature of honey. An amendment to the definition of honey under the Apiaries Act 1969 will be required to facilitate the introduction of the proposed Honey Export Regulations.

With increasing frequency, importing countries are requesting specific documents in addition to the Export

Grade Certificate supplied by the ministry. The additional information required by importing countries relates to bee diseases in the vicinity of honey-producing apiaries, honeyhouse hygiene and honey chemistry. The ministry is prepared to provide the necessary certificates provided that the requirements of importing countries have been clearly determined, that these requirements are relevant, and that they could be accurately verified within the limitations imposed by staff, facilities, cost and time.

A number of requirements contained in the existing Honey Export Regulations (1950) have not been included in the revised draft. Such aspects as grading honey for colour and flavour categories and the specifying of container sizes are matters now considered to be more appropriately the domain for the buyers and sellers of honey and not matters for export control.

The ministry has also reviewed its servicing of the Honey Marketing Authority. The ministry has advised the H.M.A. that it will cease grading of intake honey by the end of the 1980 season. The grading of H.M.A. honey intended for export will continue.

Advisory activities

In addition to normal advisory activities, including individual advice, arranging and attending meetings, published articles, ministry staff have carried out the following advisory activities: Beech Honeydew Seminar (Mr J. Smith); Seminar on the Production of Queen Bees and Artificial Insemination (G.M. Reid and J. Smith); a series of meetings and visits in association with Dr T.S.K. Johansson (U.S.A.); hosted other overseas visitors; and a recent Hamilton meeting to discuss the Coromandel beekeeping Restricted Area.