

# MAF advisory report

By Grahame Walton, chief advisory officer, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

## ORGANISATION AND STAFFING

Arising from the new Honey Export Certification Regulations 1980, which came into force on January 1 1981, the ministry now provides a regionally based export certification service. There are at least two officers trained within each region to carry out duties related to the examination and certification of honey for export.

Mr C G Rope, who formerly held national responsibilities for the grading of honey under the now revoked Honey Export Regulations of 1950, has been assigned a district apicultural advisory role, based at Auckland. This in effect has increased the number of apiary districts from eight to nine.

As mentioned in last year's report, Mr T G Bryant was selected as the division's candidate in an advisory exchange scheme maintained with Canada Agriculture. He has now returned to Gore after a year stationed in Alberta. During Mr Bryant's absence the ministry employed Mr C Van Eaton as an apiary instructor at Gore for a period of six months.

The division employs approximately 30 field officers and livestock officers to assist with the check inspection of hives; mainly for short periods during the spring months. In addition the division continues to employ beekeepers as part-time inspectors.

## BEEKEEPING STATISTICS

### Beekeepers, apiaries and hives:

As at May 31 1981 there were 5578 New Zealand beekeepers, maintaining 20 159 registered apiaries and owning 238 097 hives.

The number of registered beekeepers continues to increase, but at a slower annual growth rate this year (six per cent) than in the previous four years (an average of 12 per cent per annum). There has been an overall growth rate of 50 per cent since 1977; most of this percentage increase occurring in the 1-50 and 51-500 hive-holding categories.

### The honeycrop:

The surplus honeycrop for the 1980/81 honey season was assessed at 6931 tonnes; 3251 tonnes in the North Island, 3680 tonnes in the South Island. This represents an average crop.

### American Brood Disease:

The level of American Brood Disease (*Bacillus larvae*) continues to decline slightly from the peak reached in the 1978/79 season. During 1980/81 698 apiaries (3.5 per cent) and 1543 hives (0.65 per cent) were found to be infected with American Brood Disease.

The prime responsibility for disease control resides with the beekeeping industry. Beekeepers reported 554 apiaries, involving 1139 hives infected with American Brood Disease. In its disease monitoring role the ministry inspected 2056 apiaries, 14871 hives, detecting 144 diseased apiaries, 404 diseased hives.

## ADVISORY ACTIVITIES

Beekeeper education continues to be encouraged by advisory visits, discussion groups, newsletters, AgLinks, other publications, and the provision of specialist courses at the ministry's two farm training institutes, at Telford and Flock House.

Apicultural advisers have also worked closely with other advisers in matters related to pastoral management, horticultural development, agricultural engineering, and stock improvement.

Under New Zealand's bilateral aid programme with Papua New Guinea, assistance has been given to the training of beekeeping officers with the PNG Department of Primary Industries. Two officers visited New Zealand last year and a further three officers will arrive within the next month.

## OTHER ASPECTS

### Apiaries Amendment Act 1980:

An amendment to the Apiaries Act 1969 was passed last year and became law on January 1 this year. The amendment made a number of small changes to the Apiaries Act; an act which is seen by your industry, and by the ministry, to be sound and effective. Last year's changes to the Apiaries Act have been well publicised.

### Honey Export Certification Regulations 1980:

One of the major reasons for the passing of the Apiaries Act amendment was to facilitate the introduction of updated honey export certification regulations. Changes in the act were required to the definition of honey, provisions to appoint "honey certifying officers", and powers to make regulations for bee products.

Before these regulations were promulgated late last year, considerable discussion took place with representative groups of the beekeeping industry. The Honey Export Certification Regulations 1980 provide the basis of ministry export certification, and are sufficiently flexible to adjust and adapt to changing requirements of importing countries.

A full account of the new regulations was published in the March issue of "The New Zealand Beekeeper". It should be repeated that ministry export certification is not a compulsory requirement. An exporter, if he so

## BEEKEEPERS, APIARIES AND HIVES

Beekeeper category	Beekeepers	Apiaries	Hives
owning 1 to 50 hives	5124	7197	28173
owning 51 to 500 hives	323	3968	53569
owning 500+ hives	131	8994	156355
Totals	5578	20159	238097

## NUMBER OF REGISTERED BEEKEEPERS PER HIVE-HOLDING CATEGORY:

Category	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1975	1973
1 to 50 hives	5124	4792	4212	3737	3372	2957	3167
51 to 500 hives	323	301	274	232	217	209	267
500+ hives	131	124	121	123	120	114	125
Totals	5578	5217	4607	4092	3709	3280	3559

## 1981 NBA CONFERENCE

## AMERICAN BROOD DISEASE LEVELS IN APIARY DISTRICTS 1980:

Apiary District	No. of diseased apiaries	Percentage diseased apiaries	No. of diseased hives	Percentage diseased hives
Auckland	108	3.1	238	0.96
Hamilton	83	3.1	149	0.37
Tauranga	80	4.2	159	0.61
Palmerston Nth	89	2.8	186	0.53
Nelson	119	8.3	199	1.34
Christchurch	60	2.2	199	0.55
Oamaru	77	2.9	201	0.59
Gore	82	4.1	212	0.77
Total	698	3.5	1543	0.65

chooses, may export honey without government certification. The ministry sees it as the responsibility of the beekeeping industry, and exporters, to ensure that the honey meets the quality standards required by importers and importing countries. The ministry will endeavour to assist exporters meet the certification requirements of importing countries, upon request, by examining and certifying the honey in terms of the Honey Export Certification Regulations.

### Protecting bees from pesticides:

At the present time, the Apiaries Act 1969 provides beekeepers with a degree of protection against the spraying and dusting of materials toxic to bees. Although this legislation appears to be an advance on that existing in many other countries, there are some deficiencies with the present provisions. For instance, damage to bees is limited to

specific crops, and to particular methods of application. Also the effects of drift of toxic sprays is not covered.

To provide improved protection to bees it is proposed that new Pesticides Regulations will contain the following statement: "Where a pesticide label accepted by the (Pesticides) Board contains the words "toxic to bees", every person who uses the pesticide contrary to the directions following these words on the label commits an offence unless used in accordance with a permit issued by the director-general."

A recent meeting, involving members of your national executive, staff of the Agricultural Chemicals Board and the Ministry of Agriculture, reviewed all 270 chemicals registered by the board and considered their uses and effects on bees.

This meeting made a number of label recommendations regarding bee toxic-

city and these will be considered further with a view to adoption.

### Apiary Registration:

Apiary registration procedures have been reviewed. An accurate record of the location of apiaries is important if we (the beekeeping industry and the ministry) are to confine and control serious bee diseases; for instance such diseases as varroa, acarine and EBD, if they are discovered in this country.

A new system of issuing the annual statement of hive inspections incorporating a list of registered apiary locations has been adopted in some districts in recent years and will be extended to all New Zealand districts this year. A beekeeper need now only check the accuracy of the apiary registration and provide details of serious brood diseases if these are present.

### Questions arising from Mr Walton's speech.

*Q: Is there a blanket prohibition on imports from countries with EBD?*

A: Mr Walton reminded Mr Bartrum that imports are not prohibited. The MAF imposes a policy of restriction, honey can be imported as long as it meets the import requirements.

He said MAF regards EBD as a serious disease threat and would not import honey from any country with this disease. Honey imports are allowed into New Zealand on a permit basis from Tasmania, Western Australia and Niue.

"Last year MAF looked into the continued importation of Niue Island honey. The situation in Niue was looked over by a New Zealand advisory officer because Niue was importing bees from an island with an unknown disease history.

"Tonga belongs to the 'doubtful class', but it has recently been looked into and industrial grade honey can be imported so long as it is heated in New Zealand under MAF supervision."

### Fewer MAF newsletters?

*Q: Is it true that MAF is to prune its regional beekeeping newsletters?*

A: Mr Walton said that there was undue concern about this and explained the rumours started because the industry was offered a new "Agmag" which, after consultation with advisors, he decided was unnecessary, as the industry was already well serviced.

He said the situation with this national magazine would be reviewed, and that as long as the districts and regions had sufficient funds to pay for their newsletters they would continue.

### Advisory placements

*Q: How does MAF go about placing their advisory officers?*

A: Mr Walton explained that this was based very much on tradition and he would like to review it in the future with help from the industry.

## Life membership for Bob

MR HARRY CLOAKE, on behalf of the South Canterbury branch, moved that Mr Robert Davidson senior be elected as a life member of the association.

"Bob Davidson first became interested in beekeeping while he was instructing in engineering at Timaru Technical College. Typical of Bob, who never does things half way, he set about learning beekeeping as thoroughly as possible from the knowledge of Bill Jennings, James Foster, Len Robbins and my late father," Mr Cloake said.

"In the early 1940's Bob ventured into his own commercial beekeeping business, with 400 hives in the Fairlie district. Bob became the leader in beekeeping in South Canterbury where his influence is still evident today. He was always free with his knowledge and would impart it to anyone who asked for it.

"Bob's service to the industry was mainly through the South Canterbury branch where he served as secretary for many years, holding the branch together in its early days. He served a

term on the Honey Marketing Authority too."

Mr Cloake said he felt sure that Bob wouldn't mind being mentioned as being difficult at times, "This benefited us in the long run because it made us take a good look at what we were doing," he said. "Bob is one of those people born with an analytical mind, he worked out what was right and what was wrong and by jove you toed the line!" He also said that though a lot of beekeepers crossed swords with Bob he never carried a personal grudge.

Mr Cloake finished the motion by saying that normally such memberships are awarded on retirement, but as Bob is now in his 80th year and hasn't retired yet it was time to do something about it.

Robin Jansen and Keith Herron also spoke in favour of the motion. President Paul Marshall said he was pleased to announce the awarding of Bob Davidson's life membership, which was accepted by a branch member on Mr Davidson's behalf.