MAF report

From Murray Reid, National Manager (Apiculture), MAF

ORGANISATION

MAF is divided into four major units; MAFFish, MAFTech (scientists and consultants), MAFCorp (administration) and MAFQual (quality assurance and regulatory). Officers who work as consultants, inspectors or registrars are in MAFQual. During the year MAFQual reorganised itself into nine national businesses eg Livestock, Dairy, Laboratories, Meat, Plants, National Agricultural Security Service (NASS), Statutory Boards, Agricultural Policy and Business Management.

Each of these national businesses was in turn divided into smaller business units with a national or local focus, eg the Plants Business includes part of the National Apicultural Business Unit (NABU) which deals with hive inspection and disease audits, import and export certification, market access negotiations, policy and legal matters, along with kiwifruit, summerfruit, pipfruit, seeds, plant varieties, fertilisers, pesticides, orchard vendor, plant imports and so on.

Other NABU activities to do with maintaining the registers, exotic disease surveillance, preparation for an exotic disease, other policy and legal matters came under the Exotic Disease and Pest Response business unit which is a part of the National Agricultural Security Service.

These businesses were operated in four regions North (centred at Ruakura), North Central (Palmerston North), South Central (Christchurch) and South (Invermay). Late in the financial year it was decided to reduce the South Island to one region centred at Christchurch. The implications for apicultural servicing from this reorganisation have yet to be determined.

STAFFING: NATIONAL APICULTURAL BUSINESS UNIT (NABU)

Staff levels within NABU remained unchanged for the first time in many years. Apicultural advisory officers were located at Whangarei (Derek Betesworth), Hamilton (Murray Reid), Tauranga (Andrew Matheson), Palmerston North (Ted Roberts) and Gore (Clive Vardy). Field Officers were employed at Auckland (Brian Milnes) and Ashburton (Mike McPhillips) and a Livestock Officer at Blenheim (Dave Grueber).

A number of other field officers and livestock officers, as well as many beekeepers, were engaged as temporary inspectors. The input and help freely offered by beekeepers, as well as my colleagues in MAF, is gratefully acknowledged. I also appreciated the help and support offered by the NBA President and his executive and members of the association.

BEEKEEPING STATISTICS

a) Beekeepers, Apiaries and Hives

There were 6695 beekeepers owning 330,338 hives of bees at 31 May 1989 (Figure 1). Hobbyist beekeepers decreased by 8% over last year. This decrease was due to more diligent purging of the registers and beekeepers giving up their hobby,

not necessarily to the eminent fee for keeping bees. Hive numbers also decreased in both the commercial and hobbyist groups.

b) Honey Production

The total crop was assessed at 5752 tonnes (17.4 kg/hive) compared to last years crop of 7748 tonnes (Figure II). This was the lowest total crop recorded since 1983 when 5053 (18.8 kg/hive) was produced.

FIG. I BEEKEEPERS APIARY AND HIVE STATISTICS FOR NZ AS AT 31 MAY 1989

	Beekeepers		Apiaries		Hives	
	1989	1988	1989	1988	1989	1988
Whangarei	614	670	1778	1837	19170	18335
Auckland	1226	1301	2479	2307	20859	20285
Hamilton	671	820	3055	3113	46506	43678
Tauranga	693	724	3826	3800	59889	61451
Palmerston Nth	1437	1503	4165	4162	38959	41719
Nelson	561	587	2223	2268	25457	26921
Christchurch	901	965	5100	5181	61072	64233
Gore	592	621	4456	4509	58426	59080
Total	6695	7191	27082	27177	330338	335702

The effects of the La Nina, or the southern oscillation, were felt over the whole country with wet weather affecting Northland, Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, and Waikato, Nelson and Westland while most eastern parts of the country and central South Island were very dry. A number of districts experienced a large variability in crop production with pockets of bush, clover or thistle yielding heavily while in other areas hives starved or needed feeding to get them through the winter.

FIG. II HONEY PRODUCTION IN TONNES BY APIARY DISTRICT AS AT 31 MAY 1989

Year	Whangarei	Auckland	Hamilton	Tauranga	Palm. Nth
1987	412	705	1506	1450	1012
1988	255	225	1298	976	834
1989	59	320	790	401	530

Year	Nelson	*CHCH	Gore	NZ Total	kg/hive
1987	966	1070	1011	10091	29.7
1988	807	1503	1850	7748	23.1
1989	621	1290	1801	5752	17.4

* Includes honeydew

Bulk prices rose from around 75c-$1.40/kg to $1.80-$2.60/kg. This reflected firming overseas prices, a lower NZ dollar and movement by most major packers to raise their wholesale prices.

Some large stocks of comb honey from the 1987/88 season were finally sold at very low prices. Other sales of current seasons comb honey realised NZ$28-$34/dozen or better. Beekeepers continued to develop valuable niche markets, such as 40 gm packs of comb and creamed honey, full combs for export, cut comb in various shapes and containers, high moisture honey, speciality floral types such as ling heather, thyme, manuka, or honey certified as organic and so on.

For the year to December 1988 New Zealand exported 1074.5 tonnes of bulk honey ($1.77/kg), 582.7 tonnes in retail packs ($3.28/kg), 260.1 tonnes of comb honey ($6.52/kg), 127.6 tonnes of honeydew ($2.53/kg) and 121.7 tonnes of beeswax ($4.47/kg). The above average prices are New Zealand dollars and free on board (fob).

c) American Foulbrood Disease and Diagnostic Services

While the total number of American foulbrood (AFB) infected hives reported by beekeepers, or found by MAF, decreased slightly from last season, most districts recorded increased levels. (Fig III).

The large reduction in diseased hives reported from Auckland was a direct result of an increased inspection program by MAF and by beekeepers working as temporary inspectors.

Disease levels attributed to management practices for kiwifruit pollination, and perhaps robbing of diseased hives in orchards, has led to increased levels of disease for most beekeepers who carry out kiwifruit pollination. Beekeepers have undertaken to be more diligent in registering apiaries with MAF, with pre-pollination inspections and in keeping records of hive movements for traceback purposes.

MAF inspected 8.3% of apiaries compared to 8.2% last year and found 438 diseased hives in 191 apiaries (Fig IV). This was less than the target of 10% of apiaries to be inspected but was considered satisfactory following budget cuts, reduction in MAF staff, lack of industry funding and the unwillingness of many beekeepers to assist as temporary ispectors or failing to carry out inspections as agreed.

Brian Milnes, Diagnostician, Lynfield, continued to operate a diagnostic and quality assurance facility for beekeepers and exporters of bees.

Dr Denis Anderson, Bee Pathologist at DSIR completed his contract with the National Beekeepers' Association (NBA) and returned to Australia. Denis' contribution to bee pathology in New Zealand will be missed although he has trained Helen Murray at DSIR, and Brian Milnes at Lynfield in diagnostic techniques.

d) Queen and Package Bee Production

Queen bee production was difficult in Northland because of the La Nina cycle, but good elsewhere. Export orders from Canada were again late in being placed and while our New Zealand dollar was competitive against the Australian dollar, hives were generally weak after a poor honey crop so it was difficult to produce packages. Reduced freight space compounded the exporters problems.

However, 40075 queen bees, worth NZ$435,000 C and F, were exported, along with 9458 one kilogram packages worth NZ$500,000. Queen bee exports were up 34% on last year but packages declined 8%.

A small quantity of drone semen

was imported under quarantine from Western Australia. This was the first legal importation of honey bee genetic material since 1956. Select queens were inseminated and observed for three months under MAF quarantine until cleared for release. Ten percent of the semen was taken by MAF for testing by DSIR but no exotic pathogens were found.

e) Pollination

Beekeepers continued to discuss the formation of a single kiwifruit pollination association with a set of standards, code of ethics, and quality assurance schemes. Some groups employed their own quality auditors while others employed MAF personnel. In either case growers continued to pay for audits of hives on their properties. A number of large horticultural companies continued to buy hives.

Pollination fees for kiwifruit varied from district to district but generally ranged from $50 to $85 per hive. Prices reflected competition for contracts, as a result of a downturn in the kiwifruit industry, and various discounts to growers who supplied and/or fed sugar syrup, assisted with moving hives, accepted hives on pallets, provided depot sites and so on. An estimated 70,000 hives were placed in kiwifruit orchards last season.

Management practices continued to evolve with widespread feeding of sugar syrup the use of HiCane (cyanamide) and artificial pollination.

f) Pesticides

Since MAF adopted a 'user-pays' policy very few beekeepers have paid $50 per sample to have bees analysed for pesticides. MAF continued to promote the correct use of insecticides in the media but beekeepers must also raise grower awareness especially in areas where spraying is being done for clover fleas and the Fruit Federation is no longer maintaining orchard maps. There is no accurate data on damage to bees caused by pesticides.

g) Financial Situation: (MAF)

Budget cutbacks continued with Government contributing around $60 million to MAFQual but reducing this to $43 million over the next two years. Further cuts were announced in the 1989 mini-budget whereby MAF had to absorb any wage movement, redundancies, inflation and GST increases. These costs alone are expected to amount to over $9 million. MAFQual spent $120 million delivering services to its clients (which include the Government) but this will reduce as staff cuts and rationalisation of services continues.

Along with the move to a June financial year and an accrual accounting system a detailed coding system for activities, income and expenditure was instituted. Officers are now individually accountable for time and expenses, and as these have to be coded to a designated budget, the need to be cost effective has become critical.

As all members of NABU could not earn sufficient from beekeeping to justify full-time employment in that field, officers were expected to work for other business units such as ERP, Dairy, or Meat Inspection. This trend to multi-skilling will continue even should industry funds become available to operate the registers and carry out disease control based on inspecting 10% of apiaries. These activities usually occupy 30-50% of an advisor's time depending on the size of the district being serviced.

Other revenue sources were:

* auditing pollination hives, especially kiwifruit and summerfruit.
* subscription clients.
* general consultancies.
* import and export certification and inspection.
* overseas consultancies.

Overseas consultancies are becoming an important source of revenue for NABU, and while some beekeepers objected to our involvement in this field we are obliged to earn income whenever we can.

h) Legal And Policy

All the Acts and Regulations administered by MAF or producers were reviewed and consolidated. Acts dealing with disease and pest control were brought under an Agricultural Security Bill while legislation concerned with quality assurance came under a Primary Products' Bill. The Apiaries' Act 1969 came under both these Bills with a set of Regulations covering aspects peculiar to apiculture.

The Hive Levy Act came under an umbrella Bill, called the Primary Producers' Levy Bill, while other legislation dealing with pesticides, fertilisers, animal remedies, and stockfoods came under the proposed Agricultural Compounds Bill.

It was hoped to have most of this legislation into the House by September 1989 and to Select Committees shortly thereafter. Major changes proposed to the Apiaries' Act involved removing anomolies and introducing specific measures required for a disease monitoring program. Specific changes involved:

* redefining an apiary.
* defining a hive.
* establishing powers to impound and sell abandoned hives.
* changing the disease schedules.

FIG. III AMERICAN FOULBROOD DISEASE LEVELS IN APIARY DISTRICTS TO 31 MAY 1989 (1987/88 FIGURES IN BRACKETS)

Apiary District	Diseased Apiaries No	%	Diseased Hives No	%	Apiaries Inspected by MAF Inspector
Whangarei	109(39)	6.12(2.2)	385(185)	2.0(1.0)	14.6(3.0)
Auckland	126(291)	5.1(11.7)	258(1278)	1.1(5.6)	5.9(18.4)
Hamilton	293(84)	9.6(2.7)	491(180)	1.1(0.4)	8.7(7.8)
Tauranga	358(249)	9.4(6.6)	681(514)	1.1(0.8)	5.1(5.4)
Palm. Nth	184(121)	4.4(2.9)	732(322)	1.9(0.8)	5.6(10.9)
Nelson	160(125)	7.2(5.5)	427(235)	1.7(0.9)	13.0(3.5)
Christchurch	147(302)	2.9(5.8)	421(429)	0.7(0.7)	6.1(4.6)
Gore	153(287)	3.4(6.4)	281(662)	0.5(1.1)	7.8(12.0)
TOTAL	1530(1498)	5.6(5.5)	3676(3805)	1.1(1.4)	8.3(8.2)

FIG. IV NUMBER OF APIARIES AND HIVES WITH AMERICAN FOULBROOD DISEASE FOUND BY MAF OR REPORTED BY BEEKEEPERS TO 31 MAY 1989 (1987/88 FIGURES IN BRACKETS)

	No. Apiaries	No. Hives
Found by MAF/MAF Agents	191 (654)	438 (1786)
Reported by beekeepers	1348 (844)	3228 (2019)
Total	1539 (1498)	3676 (3805)