

feral colonies. Hives were brought in only as a boost. Now, with the reduction in feral colonies, managed colonies will become more important — if we can keep them alive.'

In the long term, however, the environment as a whole can only suffer, Mr Stenhouse predicts. 'Bee farmers live only in areas suitable for bees. But there are areas not economically viable for beekeepers, where feral colonies would live. If they die out, there will be no honeybees at all in these areas, with a knock-on effect on bird life, and therefore on seed distribution. The whole environmental chain must be affected.'

An air of resignation appears to have set in among bee experts. Within Europe, only Ireland remains untouched by

varroa. 'Varroa cannot be eradicated and will eventually spread to every apiary in the UK as it has done in all other infested countries,' says the NBU. However, if varroa treatment becomes part of routine bee husbandry, the mite can be kept at harmless levels, especially if all beekeepers in a given area treat their bees simultaneously.

It is clear that more information should be gathered on feral bee colonies and their contribution to pollination. Meanwhile, constant monitoring of hives must be the key to protecting the honeybees that remain in this country. Left untreated, they will certainly die out. Richard Jones of IBRA ruefully sums up the situation facing beekeepers. 'After centuries, millennia even, of robbing

honey-bees of their winter food source, it's time we gave them something back.'

For more bee information, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to IBRA, 18 North Road, Cardiff, CF1 3DY.

Acknowledgement Country Life (UK).

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MAF Quality Management (MQM) Report to the Annual Conference of the National Beekeepers' Association of New Zealand — Nelson, 23-24 July 1997

Beekeepers, Apiaries and Hives

There were 5286 registered beekeepers owning 287,458 hives as at 30 June 1997 (Table 1). This represented a decrease of 0.4% of beekeepers but an unexpected increase of 652 hives or 0.21%. Apiary numbers decreased 2.6%, a trend that is expected to continue with the introduction of an apiary levy.

Honey Production

The total saleable crop was assessed at 8537 tonnes (29.5kg/hive) which is a decrease on last year's crop of 8610 tonnes (30kg/hive). The six year average is 8943 tonnes or 30.4kg per hive (Table 2). Per hive figures are taken over all registered hives not just the productive ones. There were 31 tonnes of bees exported to Canada and 3.2 tonnes to Korea.

Table 1.

BEEKEEPER, APIARY AND HIVE STATISTICS FOR NZ APIARY DISTRICTS AS AT 30 JUNE 1997

Apiary Register Location	Beekeepers			Apiaries			Hives		
	1997	1996	% Change	1997	1996	% Change	1997	1996	% Change
Whangarei	1135	1150	- 1.3%	2647	2687	- 1.5%	30252	28777	+ 5.1%
Hamilton	522	530	- 1.5%	2893	2947	- 1.8%	39692	41270	- 3.8%
Tauranga	518	511	+ 1.4%	3242	3414	- 5.0%	47964	47670	+ 0.6%
Palmerston North	1333	1330	+ 0.2%	3831	4005	- 4.3%	37055	38121	- 2.8%
Blenheim	469	463	+ 1.3%	1986	1935	+ 2.6%	22894	21775	+ 5.1%
Lincoln	790	789	+ 0.1%	5294	5361	- 1.2%	58452	58983	- 0.9%
Invermay	519	533	- 2.6%	3861	4030	- 4.2%	51149	50210	+ 1.9%
TOTAL	5286	5306	- 0.4%	23754	24379	- 2.6%	287458	286806	+ 0.2%

Table 2.

NEW ZEALAND HONEY PRODUCTION, IN TONNES AS AT 30 JUNE ANNUALLY

YEAR	Northland, Auckland, Hauraki Plains	Waikato, King Country, Taupo	Bay of Plenty, Coromandel, Poverty Bay	Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu, Wairarapa	NORTH ISLAND	Marlborough, Nelson, Westland	Canterbury*, North Otago	South & Central Otago, Southland	SOUTH ISLAND	NEW ZEALAND	Yield per Hive (kgs)**
1992	1200	1068	998	1231	4497	650	2870	1543	5063	9560	31.4
1993	1033	811	958	577	3379	560	1611	1536	3707	7086	23.3
1994	1295	1946	1524	1442	6207	493	2883	2236	5612	11819	40.8
1995	354	962	1426	1200	3942	499	1685	1921	4105	8047	27.5
1996	829	1639	1077	1367	4912	607	1287	1804	3698	8610	30.0
1997	766	829	933	1112	3640	919	2339	1639	4897	8537	29.5
6 yr ave	913	1209	1153	1155	4430	621	2113	1780	4514	8943	30.4

* Includes honeydew

** Total estimated production available for extraction divided by total number of registered hives