



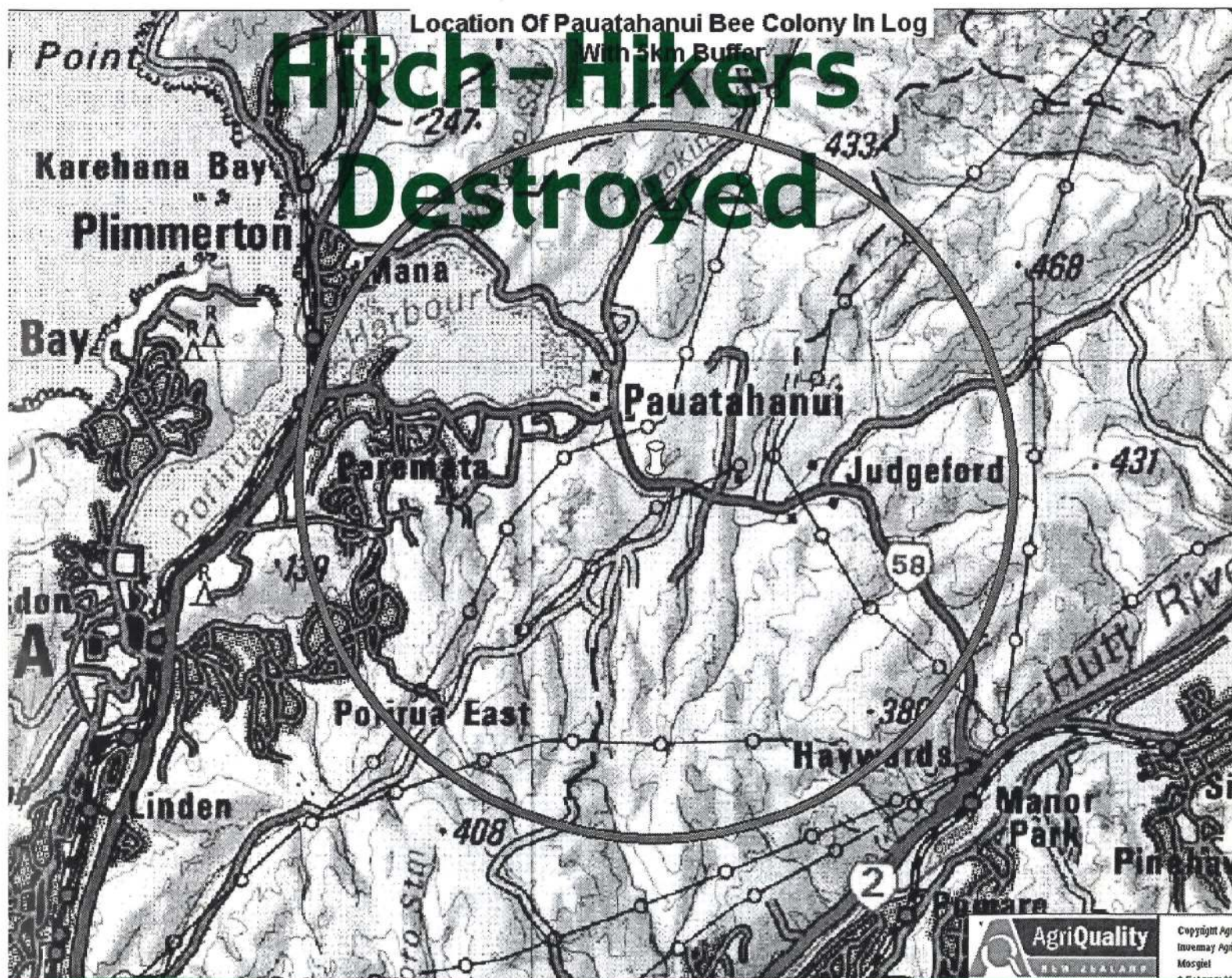
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### In this issue:

- Varroa slips through
- Levy proposal
- MAF report
- From the Colonies
- Varroa update
- Toxic honey management
- Biosecurity strategy
- WA submissions
- Sustainable Farming Fund



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# Prepare for busy year, president calls

## Greetings, and my compliments to all for the New Year.

Well, 2001 with all its good and bad moments has passed into history. Now we must look forward to whatever 2002 has in store for us. Reports from around the country suggest the 2001/2002-honey season will be one to remember, albeit not too kindly. It seems clear the honey crop, nationally, is well below expectations and in some areas appears to have failed completely.

Some inland areas expect a honey crop, but for beekeepers in areas exposed to eastern coastal weather, the outlook is not good. Dull, cloudy days with frequent heavy rain, localised flooding and extended periods of drizzle keep bees indoors.

Hopefully, fortunes will change and there will be a late honey flow.

Irrespective of whether there be honey or not, the year ahead looks a full one for the beekeeping community. In this edition of the *Beekeeper*, you will read about the issues the executive is dealing with on beekeepers' behalf.

Last October, the Minister of Biosecurity, Jim Sutton, called for the development of a National Biosecurity Strategy. A first part of the development process involved a call for public submissions on an "issues paper" prepared by a strategy development team.

Through Lin McKenzie, the executive prepared and submitted a submission on behalf of the National Beekeepers Association. This is printed on page 12.

Last November, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) sought submissions on a honey export application from Western Australia, an area free from European foulbrood (EFB).

It was not the first such submission - the NBA has been down this track at least twice in recent years. This time, however, it was made clear this was a new application and had to be treated as such. Responses to it had to be handled on the "risk posed to New Zealand's biosecurity" if Western Australia honey was imported. Further, all submissions had to be founded on sound, scientific evidence. Commercial considerations would not be taken into consideration.

The executive sent its submission on the Western Australia application and this was lodged with MAF and its receipt acknowledged in early January.

Space in the magazine restricts the full submission being printed, however a summary can be seen on page 20. It can be viewed in full on the NBA Web site, [www.nba.org.nz](http://www.nba.org.nz)

## Sustainable Farming Fund

This is a project that took time to get off the ground but has now been approved by the Minister and the funding has been lodged with MAF, which administers the fund on his behalf.

A management committee, chaired by Ivan Dickenson, has held its first full meeting and John Manhire from Agribusiness NZ Ltd was appointed project manager. An introduction to this valuable beekeeper support package is included on page 22 and beekeepers are urged to become familiar with it and the opportunities offered. The programme is a good one with little direct cost to the industry.

Thanks are due to Lin McKenzie who, after putting in a great deal of his own time, has been the driving force behind the project.

## Commodity Levy Order

Our current levy order expires in December this year. Accordingly, we are now in the process of preparing a new levy order application. The compliance committee, chaired by Frank Lindsay, has put in the hard yards over recent months and the matter now passes into other hands for further development, writing up, preparing, cost-benefit analysis and through to the final application to the Minister of Biosecurity.

On January 9, the executive and the compliance committee held a "workshop" to review progress and plan the next stages. The two NBA committees were joined by MAF Policy advisors who will help prepare the various papers and, in turn, advise the minister when the application is made.

A "project committee" has been set up, consisting of the NBA executive represented by Lin McKenzie, Federated Farmers in its capacity of service provider working with Richard Hatfield who has contracted his services.

The project committee recognises the importance of keeping NBA members informed about the steps being taken to introduce a new levy system. Updates will be printed in this magazine; regular postings will be made to the NBA Web site and communications made through branches. The time Frank Lindsay and other members of the compliance committee have donated to the project is noted with gratitude by the executive.

- Don Bell

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BK67

## *Varroa mite slips through buffer zone*

A visual confirmation of the varroa mite near Wellington was made on February 8 after a member of the National Beekeepers Association reported the likelihood an infected colony of feral bees had been transported across MAF's movement control line.

A visual confirmation of the varroa mite was made by MAF varroa programme co-ordinator Paul Bolger at Pauatahanui near Porirua, north of Wellington. A sample of the suspected infestation was sent to MAF Laboratories to confirm the diagnosis.

MAF's control programme for varroa includes a movement control line extending across the North Island from Taranaki to East Cape, designed to restrict the transportation of live bees. The varroa mite at Pauatahanui was found in a hollow log, transported to a timber mill with a load of timber from the north of the North Island.

NBA President Don Bell said the detection was a big disappointment.

"Beekeepers have fully supported the movement restrictions. The NBA has also done its best to raise public awareness of the risk of live bees being accidentally transported from one part of New Zealand to another as appears to have been the case here."

A press release was issued in December warning holiday motorists about the risk of picking up "bee hitchhikers", he said. It had been hoped the wider public would have shown accepted some responsibility in guarding against spreading the Varroa mite.

MAF immediately destroyed the host bee colony found at Pauatahanui and is confident all reasonable steps to contain the presence of the mite are being followed.

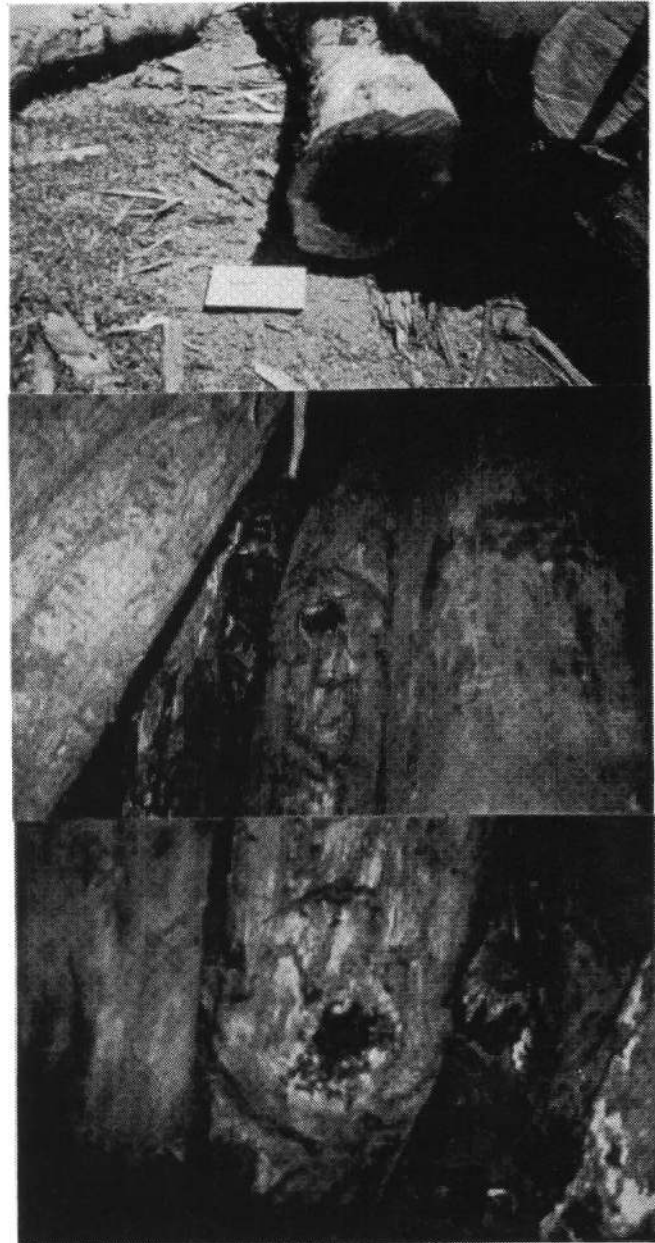
A meeting of MAF Biosecurity's Varroa Management Group was convened and further preventive measures were put in place. Those included an immediate restriction on live bee movement by beekeepers within a 5km radius of the latest find and undertaking a programme of preventive varroa treatment for all beehives within that radius.

MAF and the NBA would continue their efforts to slow the spread of the varroa mite into the lower half of the North Island, which had been "varroa free".

"We can only hope this is an isolated incident. Beekeepers are making progress in learning how to deal with the damage the varroa mite causes and we are encouraged that an NBA member helped to alert MAF to this suspected find," Mr Bell said.

MAF's movement control line was established two years ago and in December last year, MAF and the NBA agreed to an additional Southern Boundary Area, immediately south of the line in the Central Plateau region.

As well as the ban on movement of live bees across the control line any movement of honey boxes or used hive parts (frames etc) requires a MAF permit. MAF's Varroa control programme for 2001-2002 features on-the-ground surveillance for the Varroa mite throughout the lower North Island from April onwards. This area was designated a buffer zone.



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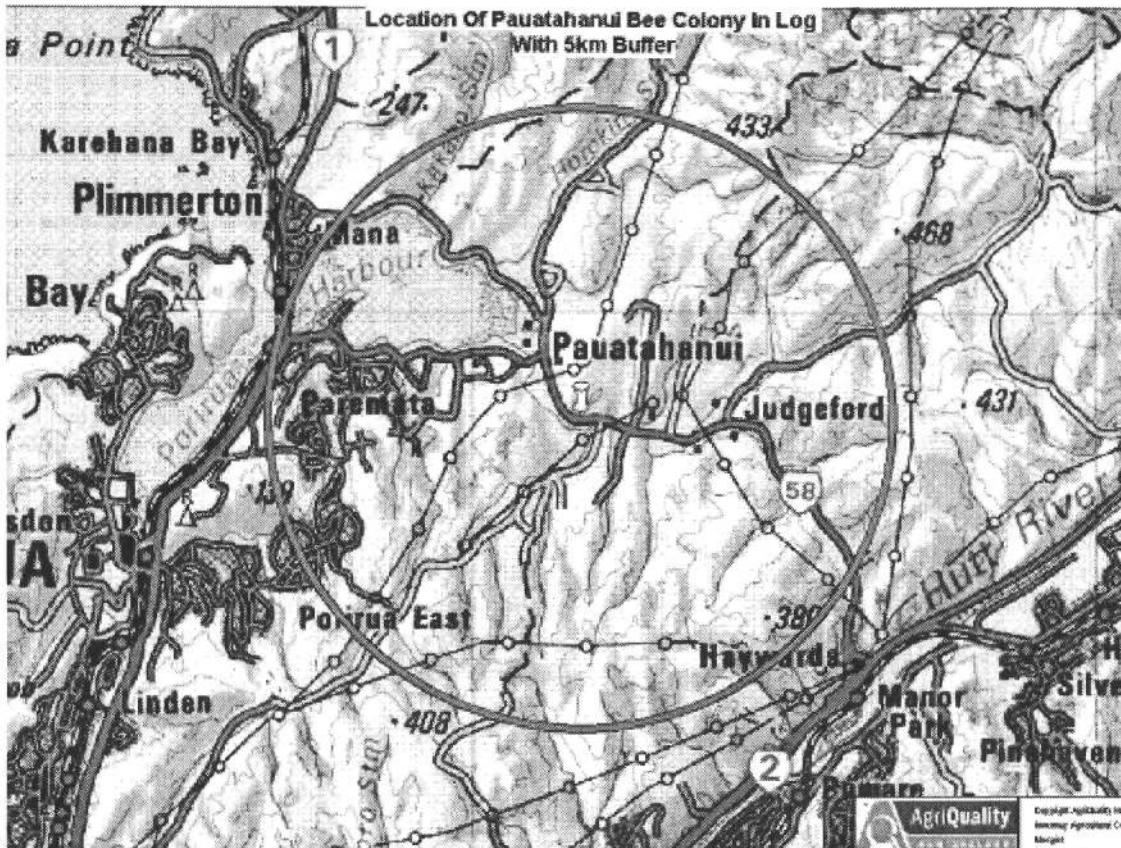
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BK6T

## NBA can offer easy levy payments

The National Beekeepers Association levy deferral policy for 2002 was finalised in November 2001 and outlined when levy invoices were posted before Christmas.

Applications for deferral had to be in by January 31, and the NBA executive secretary had received (and approved) 26 applications by that date.

The executive is aware this year's poor honey crop is putting many beekeepers under pressure. It is a statutory requirement to pay the levy, but assistance is offered to beekeepers in genuine need. Anyone in that situation is advised to write to the NBA, outlining their case and a payment plan can be worked out.

Confidentiality is promised and applicants will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Do not leave it until the end of March, because a levy penalty will then start accruing which the NBA will have to charge. Write now to: Tim Leslie, NBA executive secretary, PO Box 715, Wellington 6015.

## NBA endorses further varroa tests

Hives within five kilometres of Waiouru will all be tested and treated to ensure local bee populations have not been exposed to the varroa bee mite, following the National Beekeepers Association endorsement of a decision made by the Varroa Management Group.

It follows the placement of a five-kilometre movement control zone at Pauatahanui, north of Wellington, where an isolated find of the bee mite was confirmed on February 6.

The mite was transported to Wellington in a colony of feral bees living inside a hollow log trucked from the upper North Island to a Wellington sawmill. MAF discovered the truck that had transported the log stopped at Waiouru for approximately 30 minutes on January 16.

"It is important for beekeepers to know whether there is a varroa infestation, and if so that it be dealt with quickly and efficiently," said NBA president Don Bell. As members of the Varroa Management Group, the NBA [has] pushed hard to ensure these systems are in place.

"This breach of the varroa control line highlights how easy it would be for varroa to make its way across Cook Strait. All we can do is reinforce to all New Zealanders the need to be vigilant about transporting bees."



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# Two-tier levy proposal

A two-tier levy system to replace the current Commodity Levies (Bee Products) Order 1996 that beekeepers with more than 10 hives must pay, has been recommended by the National Beekeepers Association compliance and review committee.

The commodity levy was set up on December 2, 1996, to fund the National Pest Management Strategy (PMS), developed by the NBA to control American foulbrood disease. Due to expire on December 1 this year, the levy is based on the Annual Disease Returns (ADRs) or Certificates of Inspection (COI) all beekeepers are required to make before June 1 every year. The compulsory apiary levy is struck at two rates:

- 1) \$54 + GST for the first apiary site and
- 2) \$26 + GST for the second and subsequent apiary sites.

Beekeepers with 10 hives or less on three apiary sites or fewer can opt out of paying the levy by filing a Statutory Declaration with the NBA before March 31 each year. This year, of the 4710 beekeepers the NBA has invoiced for an apiary levy, only 660 must pay because they have more than 10 hives or more than three apiary sites. The remaining 3510 (hobby) beekeepers can either pay the levy or file a statutory declaration.

The compliance and review committee considers this a clumsy and burdensome process. It frustrates hobby beekeepers and is time-consuming and costly for the NBA to administer. Ways to develop a new levy for funding PMS and NBA activities were addressed by the newly-formed compliance and review committee from December 2000. By February the following year, it had drawn up a two-tier system to cover PMS costs under Section 90 of the Biosecurity Act 1990, and provide funds to the NBA under the Commodity Levies Act 1990.

The proposed levy would include a base levy, a hive levy and a commodity levy (based on production).

Under Section 90 of the Biosecurity Act, the **base levy**, would be a registration for all beekeepers, regardless of size. It would cover information dissemination (e.g. *NZ Beekeeper*), education and enforcement and membership to the NBA. There would be provision for conscientious objection.

The **hive levy**, also struck under the Biosecurity Act's Section 90, would be based on hive numbers at November 1 each year. A hive would be defined as a colony within a managed container, producing and breeding colonies of bees. The levy would cover disease management, enforcement, association management, audit of PMS, exotic tracking and general **AFB** and PMS administration.

Under the Commodity Levies Act, the **commodity levy** was to have been based on each beekeeper's declared sales over the past 12 months. Money collected would be used in marketing, lobbying, industry management, export issues, legislation, standards and product support.

Domestic (small) beekeepers were to be able to claim a commodity levy exemption by confirming through a statutory declaration that their products are not traded.

The two-tier levy proposal was initiated in April last year with an article in the *NZ Beekeeper* and a letter to all beekeepers with the Annual Disease Return mail-out. Of the

97 submissions received (91 from hobby beekeepers, six from commercial operators) a major issue was hobby beekeepers' opposition to compulsory NBA membership. They were, however, prepared to contribute to the PMS.

## Current Proposal

A revised levy scheme was adopted at the NBA annual general meeting in July 2001. It would contain:

- A **base levy** under Section 90 of the Biosecurity Act to register all beekeepers, regardless of size.
- A **hive levy**, also under Section 90, based on the number of managed containers declared on June 1 each year with producing and breeding colonies of bees. Money collected to be used for disease management, enforcement, PMS auditing, exotic tracking and general AFM and PMS administration.
- The **commodity levy**, as defined by the Commodity Levies Act, will finance industry activities.

## What happens now?

Because the current levy expires in December, the NBA must develop the two levy proposals and seek stakeholder and statutory approval.

The NBA's service providers, Federated Farmers of NZ (Inc), will oversee the two projects and former NBA president Richard Hatfield has been contracted to manage the projects and supervise a project team informing members about the levy development processes. A consultation programme must

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BK 60

be developed and implemented with stakeholders over the following two to four months, starting in March. NBA branch meetings will be held to outline the two levies and information will be provided in a mail-out to all beekeepers.

Extensive consultation will start next month with meetings for NBA branches and a mail-out sent to all beekeepers outlining the two levies. By the end of April, the NBA, as management agency for the PMS, will hopefully have the support it needs from the industry to make an application to the Minister of Biosecurity for a Section 90 levy.

Beekeepers wishing to make submissions on the proposal should write directly to the minister with their concerns. Only if the minister is satisfied that a Section 90 levy is the best way to fund the PMS and that concerns of objectors have been met will a levy be recommended.

For the commodity levy proposal, once consultation with stakeholders is completed, a referendum will be held for those required to pay the levy. The referendum is counted in two ways: A yes-no answer in favour of the proposal, according to how much of the commodity the stakeholder produced/controlled in the previous year or, for this year, hive numbers owned on June 1, 2001 as recorded on their most recent ADR.

If the referendum result is in favour of a commodity levy, an application will be sent to the minister to have a new levy in place by December 2002.

### What do you do now?

Beekeepers are asked to involve themselves in the consultation process over the following months – attending branch meetings and reading levy details in the *NZ Beekeeper* or on the Web site, [www.nba.org.nz](http://www.nba.org.nz).

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BK 34

The National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand is currently empowered by the following strategies and is what a Commodity Levy would be used for.

- a) To improve the beekeeping industry in New Zealand and the conditions obtaining in that industry.
- b) To promote the economic and other interests of beekeepers in New Zealand.
- c) To promote the production and marketing of honey and the products which derive from beekeeping.
- d) To collect and disseminate statistical information likely to be of value to the beekeeping industry.
- e) To initiate, adopt and pursue policies designed to further in any way the interests and well being of those engaged in the beekeeping industry in New Zealand.
- f) To carry on negotiating with the Government or other authorities on any topic or development likely to affect the interests and welfare of those engaged in the beekeeping industry, including the prices paid or received by beekeepers for honey or any products which derive from beekeeping.
- g) To undertake and execute any trusts consistent with the objects of the Association's objectives.
- h) To invest association moneys of the Association in any trustee security.
- i) To acquire by purchase lease or otherwise any property, easement, rights or privileges, and to improve and turn to account the same as may be desirable and to sell, lease, exchange, bail grant licenses in respect of or otherwise deal with or dispose of the same.
- j) To borrow or raise or secure the payment of money for the purposes of the Association in such amounts and on such terms as the Association may think fit and in particular by the issue of mortgages, charges or any other securities charged upon all or any of the real or personal property of the Association and to purchase, redeem or pay off any such securities.
- k) To lend and advance money or give credit to any person or company; to guarantee and give guarantees for the payment of money or the performance of contracts or obligations by any person or company; and otherwise to assist any person or company.
- l) To enter into, do and perform all contracts, acts, matters and things in any way connected with the objects of the Association or appurtenant thereto.
- m) To make grants-in-aid to any person or organisation for purposes likely to further the interests of the beekeeping industry.
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BK 71



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BK 73

# Law shifts for toxic honey management

Mark Goodwin  
Hort Research, Ruakura

Most beekeepers in the upper North Island will be aware that there have been changes to how the risks associated with toxic honey are managed. Many, however, will be unfamiliar with the history of toxic honey, how serious a problem it has been in the past, and what the risks are for the future.

Toxic honey is produced by bees feeding on the honey dew produced by the vine hopper, *Scolypopa australis* (Fig 1 and 2) feeding on tutu plants.

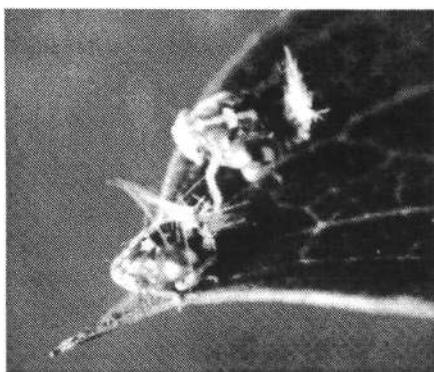


Fig. 1. Hopper nymph

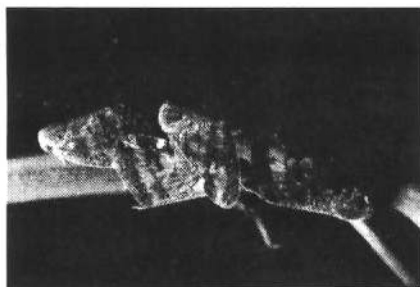


Fig. 2. Hopper Adult

Hoppers winter over as eggs. As a rule, that stage lasts six months or longer. Nymphs generally emerge between October and December and take nearly three months to develop. Adults appear from January to March, but in the far north some may be seen in late December and a few may survive until late May (Fig 3). This however, varies with location and climate.

Although once restricted to Australia, *Scolypopa* was introduced to New Zealand over 100 years ago. It occurs in our warmer areas - Northland and Auckland districts, around much of the North Island coast, in Nelson and Marlborough and even into the Buller. It is especially abundant in warm, sheltered areas of North Auckland. Further south it is usually absent from areas of high elevation.

Tutu (*Coriaria arborea*) is a native shrub or small tree occurring throughout New Zealand. The plant is highly toxic to stock and humans.

For toxic honey to be produced, there must be tutu and hoppers within flying distance of hives. Problems usually only occur when conditions are dry so the honey dew can collect, and when there is little else for the bees to forage on.



Fig. 3. Distribution of *Scolypopa*.

The honey is not toxic to bees but can be very poisonous to humans. It can prove fatal, but other symptoms include vomiting, delirium, giddiness, increased excitability, stupor, coma, violent convulsions and memory loss. These can persist for more than a week and relapses have been reported for up to six months after a poisoning. Toxic honey poisoning is definitely something you want to avoid, with half a teaspoon in a cup of tea enough to cause unconsciousness.

Isaac Hopkins first reported the problem in 1878, when Maori people from Thames told him native plants produced toxic honey. The next report, in 1889, was of three Maori who were poisoned. Two died after falling over a cliff while affected by the honey.

Another three people were poisoned in 1889, then the following year a well-reported poisoning occurred in Rawhiti, near Helensville, affecting 14 people. Three of them died; the first deaths directly attributed to the toxic affects of honey in New Zealand.

Before 1900, a total of 19 cases were reported, including five deaths, but it is likely other incidences may have gone unreported during this time.

Between 1900 and 1950, a further 163 cases were reported, including one further fatality in Rotorua and an extensively-reported poisoning in 1923 of children in an English boarding school. Of 233 boys in the school, 147 consumed honey at breakfast. Ten of these were seized with convulsions and 20 vomited. The honey was traced back to Te Teko in the North Island.

An excerpt from a letter written by Mr G. V. Westbrook, the apiculture advisor who visited the beekeeper to investigate

the boys' poisonings, makes interesting reading: "I visited Mr Luke and inspected the apiaries which extend from Ruatoke to Whakatane and Te Teko. Mr Luke was twice affected by his own honey. Once in 1922 and again in 1923. He was in the habit of testing the honey during extraction and during one extraction became unconscious and did not recover consciousness until the following day."

The years 1922 and 1923 were particularly bad for poisoning, then reported numbers declined, at least in part due to people in the worst affected areas refusing to buy and eat locally-produced honey. In 1945, a further 27 people in Pongakawa were poisoned.

In the past 50 years, only 41 cases have been reported, including seven in the past 20 years. They included three cases in the Marlborough Sounds area in 1982 and one in Opotiki, the latest recorded case in 1991.

The last reported cases from commercially-produced honey were in 1974 when 13 people were poisoned. Other cases, however, may have gone unreported or been misdiagnosed, especially poisonings from low concentrations of toxins.

Medical accounts of the poisonings show it is fortunate there have not been greater numbers of fatalities. All deaths have been reported to be the result of eating comb honey. Extracted honey has not caused any, possibly because it has been diluted by uncontaminated honey. Nonetheless, extracted honey still accounts for nearly 70% of reported cases of non-lethal poisonings.

Toxic honey can be produced anywhere that both tutu and the vine hopper can be found. The highest levels of toxic honey recorded came from hobby hives in the Marlborough Sounds, resulting in two poisonings. Toxic honey has also been reported from Eastern Bay of Plenty, the Coromandel Peninsula Great Barrier Island, Northland, Rawene, Helensville, Kiwitahi near Morrinsville, Otorohanga and in North and South Auckland. As agricultural practices change and tutu plants are eliminated, however, the risks of honey poisoning have reduced.

Animals were initially used in toxic honey tests and some of these make interesting reading. A sample of honey that poisoned four people in Great Barrier in 1931 was sent to MAF Wallaceville: 'A sample of the honey was fed to rats and mice at Wallaceville without causing symptoms. Some honey was also eaten by a member of the staff who suffered no ill effects'. After this, a test was developed using guinea pigs (Fig 4).

Fortunately for rats, mice, guinea pigs and scientists we now have chemical tests for the toxins. Even so, a hobby beekeeper in the Bay of Plenty was recently discovered doing taste tests.

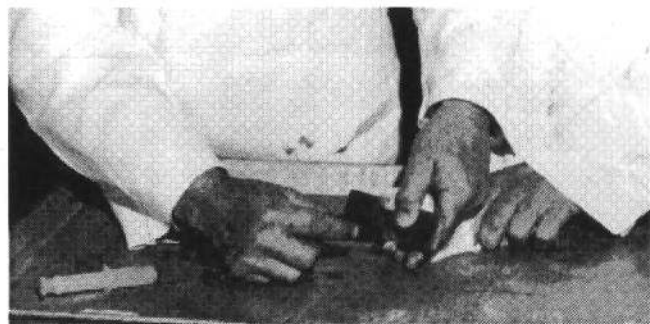


Fig. 4. Testing toxic honey on an uncooperative guinea pig.

He does it each year and if he isn't sick he passes it as safe for his family to eat.

In 1948, following 27 poisonings in Pongakawa in 1945, the Government passed legislation restricting beekeeping in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. In 1974, when the 13 people were poisoned in Whitianga, MAF closed the Coromandel area to beekeeping and ordered all beekeepers to move their hives out between December 14 until May 1 the following year. In 1977, the restrictions were changed so hives no longer had to be moved. All surplus honey, however, had to be removed by December 31 (Fig. 5).

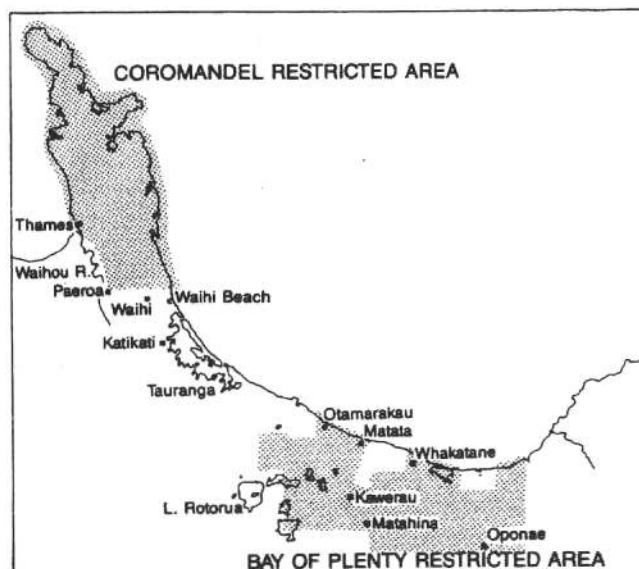


Fig. 5. Restricted beekeeping area

Laws have changed again with the Animal Products Act. Restrictions have been removed from beekeeping in areas where there is a risk of producing toxic honey. Instead, commercial beekeepers must now sign a declaration indicating any likelihood of the honey containing toxins. It is important to remember that toxic honey can be produced outside the old restricted area.

There are a number of options to manage the risks of producing toxic honey.

- Remove all honey supers before January.
- When this writer looked around the restricted areas in January, it was clear a number of beekeepers had chosen not to use this traditional method.
- Ensure there is no tutu with hoppers within foraging distance of your apiaries.
- This is harder because you have to know what the foraging distance is and how much tutu is too much.
- Have your honey tested for toxins.
- This can be costly, especially if toxins are found in your honey. The changes leave a number of questions still to be answered:
- 1) How do beekeepers determine the likelihood of their honey containing toxins?
  - 2) What are the effects of low levels of toxins?
  - 3) What will be done to manage the risk of hobby beekeepers producing toxic honey, which will then be a health risk and produce bad press for honey?
  - 4) What will happen to commercial honey found to be contaminated?
  - 5) Are maximum residue limits going to be established?
  - 6) If a poisoning occurs due to a retail pack, who is responsible, the beekeeper or honey packer?

# National Biosecurity Strategy

When the Minister of Biosecurity Jim Sutton called for public submissions on the development of a National Biosecurity Strategy, vice-president Lin McKenzie prepared and submitted a paper on behalf of the National Beekeepers Association. Below is an edited version.

## Points of issue from the NBA

- The present fragmented approach to biosecurity is not sustainable. Any strategy, in whatever form it evolves, must not be yet another exhaustive, bureaucratic paper. It must have an identifiable and auditable end point.
- The concept of biosecurity is lagging behind world trade and as a nation, we must deal with the biosecurity risks involved in that trade.
- We do not accept a world economy should bring with it world ecology. There is a danger this philosophy may be seen as inevitable.
- There should be one biosecurity agency with final responsibility for the nation's biosecurity. It must not be sensitive to changes on the political scene, nor become another under-resourced government initiative.
- A recognition and appreciation of the "public good" is paramount to the development of a Biosecurity Strategy. Surely the whole reason for any biosecurity initiative is one of national interest, based around the community as a whole. Any other concept is realistic so there is no stronger justification for a Biosecurity Strategy.
- There must be "response plans" in place, ready to deal with incursions. Many years ago, our industry consulted with members then, in partnership with MAF, drew up "game plans" to deal with incursions of one sort or another. In the face of the varroa incursion, these plans were nowhere in evidence.
- We note the reference on page eight to "leaving regional councils and/or industry groups to develop long term arrangements". While we accept the need for a focus on response to new incursions, government agencies should not walk away from what are the nation's challenges.
- Any strategy developed must be "in touch" with those at the coalface. On page 27, there is reference to "regional stakeholder workshops . . . for invited participants." Our industry recently faced an incursion with both a high profile and a major effect on the national primary production scene. How many of our industry leaders and/or those within the industry meeting this challenge were invited to these workshops?

There is a belief that "Government manages the risk but the stakeholders take the risk". This perception has to be removed and a sense of "partnership" developed, hence our belief that the stakeholders' input must carry more weight than it currently does.

- We agree there is a case for more "off shore" activity. It makes sense to keep the possible incursion beyond our borders, rather than hope our border protection systems will cope. Any organism reaching Oceania is a much greater risk to New Zealand. Mutually-beneficial responses can be developed with our South Pacific neighbours.
- It is accepted there is a cost and the higher the degree of protection, the higher the cost. This is why any strategy developed should be long-term and not at the whim of political expediency.
- Objectives set must go beyond the merely desirable, they must maximise the protection from risk. We must err in favour of the environment. Lack of scientific knowledge must not be a reason to postpone or minimise environmental protection. It is not good enough to state, "there is no evidence of a risk". It is well accepted that it is difficult in the extreme to prove a negative.
- We are a trading nation and that trade must not be placed in jeopardy. However, if our productive capacity is reduced because of the presence of an undesirable organism, the trading opportunity will also be reduced. This applies equally to most areas of trade, e.g. the presence of venomous snakes would do nothing for our eco-tourist trade.
- Education as the way forward in the biosecurity challenge but there is a need for robust and enforceable legislation. In the current legislation, there needs to be a will and an intent to enforce the provisions of the biosecurity and HSNO Acts. We have little confidence there is and believe evidence points the opposite is the norm. Perhaps the burden of proof is indeed too high.
- The two Acts do not always seem to complement each other and the plethora of chief technical officers can only lead to a dilution of effectiveness.



- One biosecurity entity would be desirable over the current multi-agency system, which is too fragmented and produces a scattered approach we have little confidence in.
- Any entity to be set up should include stakeholders in the decision-making process. The need for all parties to listen includes stakeholders taking note of agency representatives, but the input of those same stakeholders must be given credence. Our experience during the varroa incursion does not lead us to believe this happens. It must be made to happen!
- There is a perception that the national biosecurity agency wishes to abdicate responsibility to regional authorities with almost indecent haste. This may be open to debate, but that is the perception and the perception often becomes the reality.
- The existence of a commercial "applier of the regulations" serves to further muddy the water. The application of regulations is too much part of government responsibility

to accord commercial gain to any third party. There are also the questions of separation between applying the regulations and interpreting them and of a focus on cost of delivery, as opposed to a focus on the effectiveness of delivery.

- In conclusion, the NBA believes that biosecurity is too important to our country to be left with the fragmented approach in place at present. We believe:
  1. There should be one national office administered by a board or authority.
  1. Stakeholders must be identified and be part of that board or authority.
  2. The board must be accorded a vote.
  3. The board must recognise the concept of "public good" and all that term implies.
  4. Objectives must be carefully drawn up and then "set in stone", beyond political whim.
  5. There must be a clear end point or "grand objective", i.e. a "mission statement".

## MAF urges beekeepers to remain varroa-alert

By Paul Bolger



### Monitoring hives critical

Beekeepers in varroa-affected areas are urged by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to regularly monitor varroa levels in their hives.

Monitoring is critical through the late summer/autumn period, when most hive losses overseas have occurred. The alternative to monitoring is a serious risk of losing hives. Reports are now reaching MAF of hives in the upper North Island collapsing due to high varroa levels.

Once the initial, acute stage of varroa infestation has passed, beekeepers should be able to get away with less monitoring. This could be three to five years after varroa becomes widespread in an area. Despite monitoring being a key recommendation of the 'Living with Varroa' workshops held last spring and the monthly updates published in this journal, it appears many beekeepers in varroa-infested areas have not kept an eye on varroa numbers over the summer.

If treatment is required, beekeepers should remove honey supers before treating their hives with Apistan.

### 'Living with Varroa' programme

The 'Living with Varroa' workshop programme was designed by HortResearch, and is usually delivered by

AgriQuality New Zealand. A series of two-day workshops for commercial beekeepers and three-hour workshops for hobbyists began in the upper North Island last spring. The programme will resume late this month in the upper North Island and then move to the lower North Island.

A separate programme of one-day commercial beekeeper workshops and three-hour hobbyist workshops will begin in the South Island in March or April.

Most participants at last year's workshops found them extremely worthwhile and MAF urges all beekeepers to attend. AgriQuality NZ will notify beekeepers directly by mail of planned workshops, as well as contacting NBA branches and hobby clubs.

### Organic acids registration

MAF Biosecurity expects that formic acid and oxalic acid will be approved for varroa control by the end of February 2002. The legal processes involved are relatively complex, involving the drafting of an amendment to the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2001. A Cabinet legislative committee must approve that. In addition to an exemption under the ACVM Act 1997, use of the products must be approved by the Minister of Agriculture

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BK51

under the Animal Products (Ancillary and Transitional Provisions) Act 1999.

While the legal requirements keep MAF occupied, beekeepers interested in using these products need to focus on how and when they will apply them. The *Control of Varroa* handbook contains useful information on applying both formic and oxalic acid. Because approval will be soon, interested beekeepers should decide on their application method and start obtaining the necessary materials. Those with heavily infested hives, however, need to consider whether their hives will survive until the treatments are approved, or whether the treatments will act rapidly enough to save the hives from collapse.

### Registration of Thymol

The registration of thymol for varroa control has raised residue issues that are not a concern for formic and oxalic acid. While both formic acid and oxalic acid are naturally found in honey at low levels, thymol is not a natural constituent of most honey types. Because of this, the assessment of thymol is not yet complete.

### Autumn surveillance programme

Another round of South Island surveillance, beginning next month, will be on a similar scale to last year, when about 25,000 hives were tested. Specifications have been modified to change the 'high-risk' criteria, and increase the level of testing of high-risk areas. A consequent reduction in testing of low-risk areas will occur. Most of the sampling will be carried out by contracted beekeepers ('Authorised Persons'), but some test kits will be mailed directly to beekeepers for self-testing. Field work is scheduled to begin in March.

Sampling will also be carried out in the southern North Island. A detailed programme has yet to be developed, but all areas south of the Movement Control Line will probably be tested, in addition to re-testing areas close to the line. A grid-based approach, similar to that used in the South Island, may be followed.

### Movement Control Changes

MAF made two changes to movement-permitting conditions in December 2001. The first change removed the "Raetihi bubble", reducing the Boundary Area at this point to the standard 10km strip. This followed the detection of varroa at several points within the "bubble", and also south of the movement control line in this area.

The second change involved the creation of zone 10-20km wide, immediately south of the movement control line in the Central Plateau region. Hives within this "Southern Boundary Area" are restricted from being moved further south, to prevent them spreading varroa around the southern North Island should they become infested. Affected beekeepers were notified of these changes by mail at the time. More information can be obtained from the MAF web site at (<http://www.maf.govt.nz/biosecurity/pests-diseases/animals/varroa/index.htm>) or by contacting Paul Bolger in Wellington (04) 474-4144.

### Auditing of Movement Control Line

MAF contracted AgriQuality NZ to carry out audits of hive movements around the movement control line in the November-January period. Most beekeepers were found to be fully compliant with the relevant movement control

conditions. However, two suspected breaches of conditions in the East Cape region are being investigated.

### Export of Live Bees

The arrival of varroa has forced the re-negotiation of all of New Zealand's live bee export certificates. Revised export certificates are likely to be in place for Canada and some transit points this coming season. Suppliers of queens and bulk bees for export are advised to keep in close contact with their exporters to ensure they are fully informed of product and certification requirements. Exporters should liaise directly with Jessie Chan ([chanj@maf.govt.nz](mailto:chanj@maf.govt.nz)).

### Long Term Varroa Management

Beekeepers need to be aware that the current range of varroa-related activities undertaken by MAF, such as movement controls, surveillance and beekeeper education, are all part of a two-year transitional programme. The programme is scheduled to end at the beginning of November 2002; meaning these activities will then cease unless some form of long-term varroa management strategy has been put in place. This is a topic the beekeeping industry will need to discuss in detail in the coming months and some of the issues around a long-term strategy will be discussed in this column next month.

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BK58



## From the colonies



### Southland

Most beekeepers are still hoping for a honey crop but, at best, it's looking to be an average season in Southland. The cold easterlies that affected the whole country in the early part of the summer had a devastating effect down here.

Kamahi, a Southland bush flower, is the dominant pollen producer this year with rata trees not even flowering.

- Don Stedman

### Catlins

### Waikato

Summer 2001-02 got off to a bad start with more than 200ml of rain in December. Falling almost non-stop, there were just four fine days in the whole month, leaving many hives close to starving.

Things improved in January, though, and by the middle of the month a very good honey flow had started and bees were picking up very fast.

Varroa mite numbers are now high in the Waikato, though, so many beekeepers have treated their hives early while others will before the end of the month.

The poor weather kept bees under shelter while the manuka trees were flowering so there is little or no manuka honey produced in the region this year. Pennyroyal flowered abundantly, though and last month there were almost record levels of clover flowers in the pastures.

- Lewis Olsen

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BK 69

### Auckland

Hives in the region had a very early, very quick build-up at the beginning of season, resulting in many swarming problems. Then it started raining . . .

The amount of rain has been phenomenal this summer, making crops very late, although things started coming on in the middle of last month.

Reports of varroa mite presence are flooding in and everything we've been told from overseas about its spread and how quickly it hits hives is happening here. Still, with good treatment products we've got good control of it - it's just a matter of time and being able to afford the treatment products - and Auckland beekeepers are relatively confident they can handle varroa. That's not to say hives haven't been and still won't be hives lost, but in the long term, with the help of the branch's own pest management strategy (which is working very well) we will learn to cope with varroa.

Manuka honey is virtually non-existent this summer and what is around is rumoured to be fetching \$15+ a kilogram.

- Brian Alexander

### Kaukapakapa

### Marlborough

The season started coming right in the middle of January, as the weather warmed and became more settled. It was too late for the manuka crop, though, and quantities taken are well down on last year - and THAT was a poor year.

Signs are for a half-reasonable white honey crop, though, with lots of clover flowers up country and in forage areas.

The branch hopes to hold a farewell ceremony soon for MAF apiculture officer Dave Grueber, who left at the end of October.

Meanwhile, beekeepers in the region are keeping a vigilant look out for the varroa mite and want to learn more control methods for when it does cross Cook Strait.

- Will Trollope

### Blenheim

### Northland

A disappointing start to the season with heavy rain in November and December making it one of the wettest periods remembered. The weather improved late last month and clover was flowering well.

Except for a few isolated valleys, the varroa mite is now prevalent throughout Northland - thanks to beekeepers from Auckland bringing hives up here for pollination! Hopefully there will be a big enough crop for Northland beekeepers to pay for protection strips.

### Hawkes Bay

Christmas has been and gone and with such unseasonable weather, the honey flow is a bit late in getting underway. Some

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BK 2

bush sites still needed feeding in early January and even by the end of the month a few areas were still short. There is plenty of clover in pastures, so with some warm, sunny days, maybe - just maybe - we will get a late flow. Winter maintenance and annual holidays are not a good sign in January.

Hawkes Bay is still varroa-free and beekeepers at strategic sites are doing regular inspections so early warnings can be given when the mites get close. Byron Taylor of AgriQuality is organising a Varroa Seminar in early autumn so by the time it arrives we should be ready (if one can ever be). The key to any pest elimination or control programme has to be co-operation between commercial and hobbyist beekeepers, talking to your neighbours and working together so treatments are made at the same time and the same management plan is used. We may not be able to eliminate varroa, but with co-operation we can make life a lot easier for everyone.

The branch is trying to get the Hastings District Council to re-think the Hastings City by-law prohibiting the keeping of bees in the city. The council is being asked to consider the effects of all floral pollination once varroa arrives and wipes out feral bees. In the meantime, anyone with a hive in the city should keep his or her activities low key.

Did beekeepers all made submissions against the importation of Western Australian honey? We don't want it! From the guys and gals in Hawkes Bay to all the guys and gals in the rest of God's Own, may it be a happy and prosperous New Year with successful extracting.

- **Milton Jackson**  
**Waipawa and**  
**Ron Morison**  
**Taradale**

### North Otago

The honey season started with unusual weather in October, including 72mm of rain - twice the monthly rainfall - recorded at the Oamaru Airport. Inland areas were not as fortunate, with only 34mm recorded in Omarama. This followed a very dry autumn and winter, so beekeepers were hoping for more rain in the region to help flowering crops along.

After spring inspections and re-queening hives, the outlook was good for an early honey flow with the first week in November fine and sunny, bringing exceptional growth for coastal North Otago. Inland it was a little warmer, but the Upper Waitaki area was feeling the effects of the previous season's drought, which stunted the early growth of both clover and blue borage.

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The following three months, like the rest of New Zealand, have not been kind to beekeepers with continuous rain and cool, overcast conditions. Many hives were still being fed well into the New Year, so honey production is lower than usual for this time of the year. Some late summer sunshine and warmth could still see another box of honey per hive, before the flow is over.

- **Richard Lord**  
**Oamaru**

### West Coast

This has been the worst season I remember in more than 30 years beekeeping. The almost constant rain started with a record rainfall in November; December was warm but wet, preventing bees from leaving their hives to gather pollen.

More recently, the weather has become hot and dry and although koromiko is flowering, honey per hive will be around 30kg, way down on last year's crop.

Ten members with our NBA branch are negotiating a collective consensus with the Department of Conservation, now controlling part of the former Timberlands estate that beekeepers have had hives on. With 98% of the West Coast controlled by DOC, there are few spaces apiaries can be placed without needing a permit.

Getting one of those from DOC requires the application going through Ngai Tahu, local councils and being advertised in newspapers so members of the public have the chance to oppose it. The process is an expensive one for individual beekeepers so the collective approach means costs can be shared.

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BK 22



## Canterbury

Due to an abnormally cold and wet summer, beekeepers are experiencing below-average honey crops in most areas.

If February weather is consistently hot and fine, late crops may be gathered from clover, borage, thistles and bush areas to yield a surplus or winter-feed.

Honeydew crops could still eventuate in bush areas if suitable weather allows the dew to yield and bees to gather it, during late summer-autumn.

Swarming has also been a problem in most areas and hives have lost their bee numbers due to the weather.

It appears to most that a wet and cold summer is worse than a drought and adds to the list of risks beekeepers must overcome in order to make a profit for the season.

On a brighter note, the branch held a successful field day at Staveley in November with a good turnout from South Island branches. There was also an informative seminar in Christchurch on hive management and the potential impacts of varroa, presented by Dr Mark Goodwin and Michelle Taylor of Hort Research, and David McMillan of MAF AgriQuality.

- **Tony Scott**  
**Christchurch**

## Southern North Island

### Taranaki

The general consensus was that for a particularly poor honey crop. Some beekeepers were lucky to get a flow of dark honey in December but since then very little; removing honey frame by frame rather than by super!

Hives seem to have plenty of stores, but little or no crop – even in urban hives. Just coming into the manuka crop so will be praying for continued fine weather. Many hives are much weaker than expected, with some beekeepers re-queening to stop the rot. No comb honey produced.

Clover is not good, probably due to the low night temperatures.

### South Taranaki

Had their first spots of rain for the last 20 days and don't expect the honey crop to be anything to talk about this season. Due to the exceptional wet spring and early summer, bees have been unable to build up to take advantage of the latest dry spell. Some late swarming has been experienced.

### Wanganui

Hives in town are OK and Wanganui Bee Club members report they are extracting good crops now and putting supers back on. In the rural areas, it is bad news. No or very little manuka, bees are starting to store honey in supers but most hives will be lucky to get 3/4 box of capped honey. Quite a lot of honey has been stored in second brood box.

### High country - Inland Plateau

Hopeless, very little, just winter-feed from the late flow. The weather was cold and wet during most of the flow. Frosts already.

Of concern is that some beekeepers are paying \$1000 for manuka sites. A more sustainable, ethical approach is required from northern beekeepers.

### Inland Manawatu

Perhaps a super, some areas have much less than this.

New Zealand Beekeepers February 2002

## Levin

The crop is not worth commenting on.

## Masterton

Never seen it so green. Temperatures remain cool, a dribble coming, in, which would improve if it got warmer.

## Wellington

The city is below average with 20kg -30kg, all coming in before October or during the pohutukawa flowering. Very little manuka.

## Kapiti Coast

Season is patchy but those areas protected from the southerlies have produced some early, dark honey. If it warms up, prospects for a late flow look reasonable, but time is running out.

- The branch meeting will be held in the AgriQuality conference room, Palmerston North, on February 25.
- An autumn field day on "surviving after a poor season" is planned. A date and venue will be advised.

## Franklin

AGM meeting: March 3, starting 10am with cuppa and registration of competition honey.

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BK6

# February varroa update

Dr R.M. Goodwin  
HortResearch Ruakura

We have now entered the most crucial season for varroa control.

Most colony damage and death due to varroa occurs in the autumn. Hopefully, beekeepers in areas with varroa will have checked on mite levels, as recommended in December, so there will be no unpleasant surprises when they next visit their hives.

Checking varroa levels this month is definitely worthwhile, especially if you did not do a summer check. Some beekeepers may see from a February check they need to remove immediately honey - what there is of it - and treat their hives.

Our own hives in South Auckland will definitely need to be treated early this year. One hive treated in early spring has now produced 240 mites from 300 bees. The colony is likely to be dead by the time you read this.

The late honey flow in some places this year certainly complicates matters. Although not to be recommended, the label instructions for Bayvarol<sup>®</sup> indicates the product can be used while honey supers are on hives if the treatment is required to avoid colony losses. The Apistan<sup>®</sup> label instructs beekeepers not to use the product while honey supers are on hives.

## Timing autumn treatments

Deciding when to treat is more difficult in autumn than spring as there are two opposing demands on the timing of the treatment. You will want to treat as late as possible because if there is a lot of invasion pressure after the treatment you may need to do it again. However, the later you leave the treatment the more likely you are to lose colonies.

## Follow label instructions

This is one instance where I know many beekeepers will ignore the advice provided. We can now add another method of misusing control products. The list so far includes not removing strips, reusing strips after the eight-week limit, and using a variety of unapproved products.

Having spoken to a number of beekeepers, it is clear many are using fewer Apistan<sup>®</sup> strips than recommended on the label now they have to pay for them. Although there are obvious financial reasons for doing this, it could lead to varroa developing a resistance, which will cost even more in the long term. The label on Apistan<sup>®</sup> reads

*“Resistance management. Intensive use of Apistan could result in the development of resistant strains of mites. To minimise this risk use Apistan strictly in accordance with the label directions”.*

It is important to follow the label instructions on all chemicals used, unless it has been demonstrated safe to do otherwise.

## Organic treatments

Hopefully oxalic and formic acid will be available to use in autumn. If they are approved, their low price will attract

many beekeepers. Beekeepers will also be able to alternate between control products, slowing down the development of resistance. There is, however, an important issue with the use of organics that needs to be considered carefully.

Apistan<sup>®</sup> and Bayvarol<sup>®</sup> are both very good products. They have high varroa-control rates and are so reliable there is usually no need to check varroa levels after they have been used to see if they have worked.

The organic acids, however, are different. Although they can give good control they may not work well at times. They also require the user to have a higher skill level than Apistan<sup>®</sup> and Bayvarol<sup>®</sup>. For these reasons it is important varroa levels are checked after treating with the oxalic acids. This adds to the cost of using them, but will reduce hive losses.

## Apistan<sup>®</sup> and Bayvarol<sup>®</sup> use while requeening

The AgriQuality varroa help line has had a number of queries concerning whether it is safe to use Apistan<sup>®</sup> and Bayvarol<sup>®</sup> while rearing queen cells and introducing them into hives. As far as we can determine from information published overseas, there should be no problem with raising cells and requeening at the same time as using Apistan<sup>®</sup> and Bayvarol<sup>®</sup>.

## Parasitic Mite Syndrome

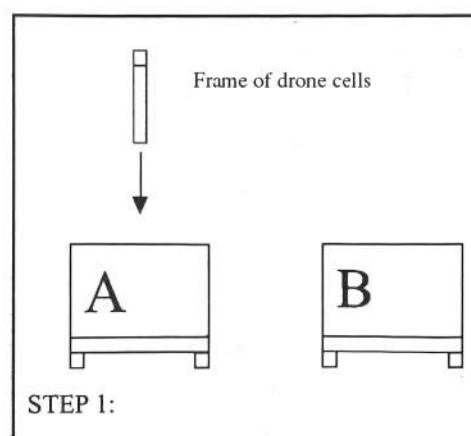
A large number of hives in varroa areas will be exhibiting parasitic mite syndrome. Some will have symptoms similar to American foulbrood disease, making diagnosis more difficult. If you are unsure whether a hive has AFB or parasitic mite syndrome it is important to get a sample tested. If you contact an AgriQuality apicultural advisor first you can use the National Beekeepers Association's free laboratory testing service.

## Hive splitting varroa control method

The varroa control manual describes a method of controlling varroa by splitting hives (pg 58 - 59). The method is reasonably complicated so we have developed a series of diagrams to make it clearer.

### Step 1

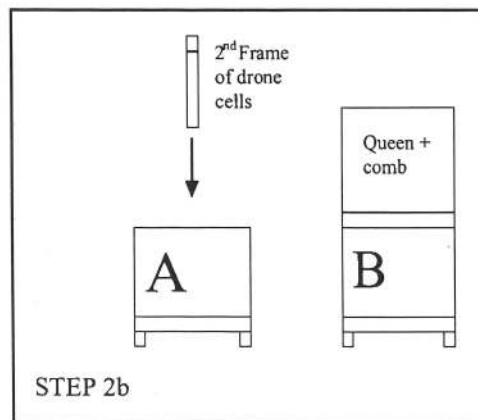
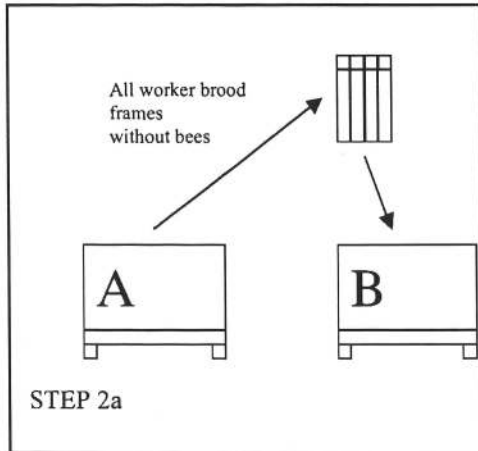
- Choose two colonies.
- Place a comb with empty drone cells in the centre of the brood nest of one colony (colony A).



Step 2 (one week later)

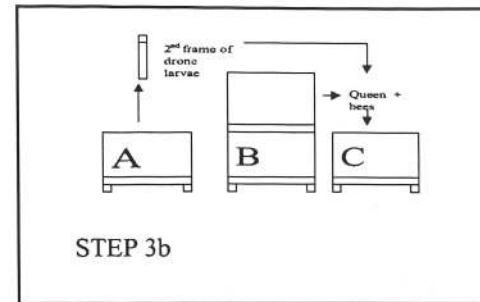
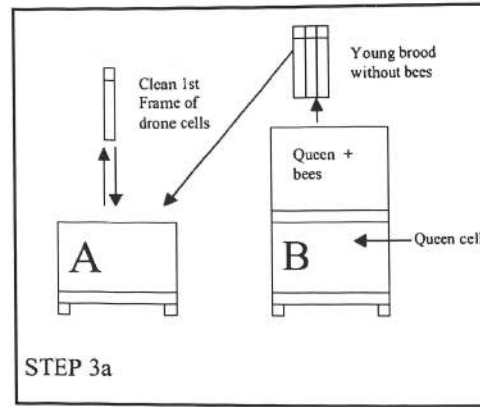
- In colony A, shake all the bees off the combs with brood except the drone comb, and put the brood in the other colony (B), after first checking for AFB.
- Put a second, empty drone comb in the centre of the brood nest of colony A.
- Put the queen in colony B above a queen excluder in a further super with empty combs.

Colony A now only has a single frame of uncapped drone larvae and an empty drone brood comb, while colony B has a two super brood nest plus a third super containing the queen.



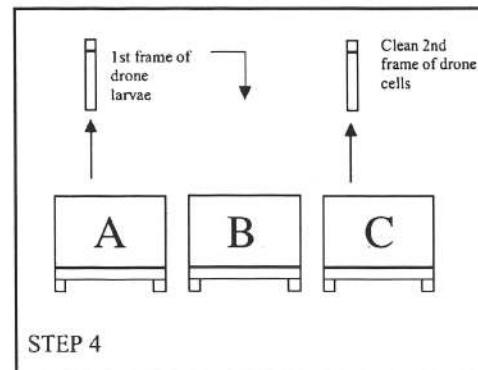
Step 3 (one week later)

- Remove the comb that now has capped drone brood (and mites) from colony A (the comb that contained uncapped drone larvae the week before). The comb can be uncapped with a knife or cappings scratcher and the drone pupae can be removed from the comb in a small hand extractor, washed out with a hand spray nozzle attached to a garden hose, or simply shaken out on the ground. Drone pupae make excellent chicken feed.
- Put this cleaned comb (or another clean drone comb) into the centre of the brood nest of colony A.
- Shake all the bees off of the new brood that has been produced above the excluder in colony B. The brood is all too young to contain any mites. Move the brood to colony A, after first checking for AFB.
- Take the bees and queen from the excluded box in colony B and make a broodless split (colony C). Shake all the bees off of the second drone comb in colony A (now containing uncapped larvae), and put it in the centre of the super of colony C.
- Put a protected queen cell in colony B.



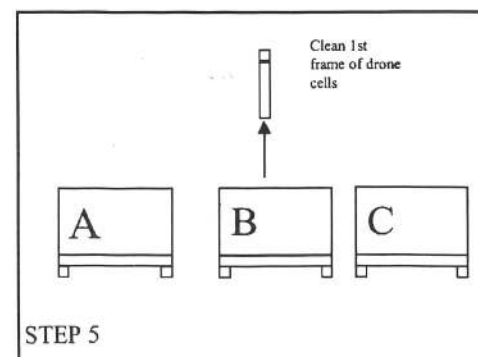
Step 4 (one week later)

- Shake the bees from the drone comb containing uncapped drone larvae from colony A, and place it in the centre of the brood nest of colony B.
- Remove the comb that now has capped drone brood (and mites) from colony C and destroy the pupae (see Step 3).



Step 5 (one week later)

- Remove the comb that now has capped drone brood (and mites) from colony B and destroy the pupae (see Step 3).



Check colony B for a new laying queen.

# Letters to the Editor

## Giant step backwards

As we all try to manage the destructive presence, or prepare for the imminent onslaught of varroa, spare a thought for another hot topic that has a huge impact on the economic viability of our beekeeping futures. I mean the money (levy) we pay annually to the National Beekeepers Association to: (a) register us, (b) administer the Pest Management Strategy, (c) promote our interests in Government and other circles, and (d) promote hive products in the market.

Four years ago, after 10 years of extensive consultation, we changed the levy based on hive numbers in favour of one based on apiary sites. That law change included a "sunset clause", requiring us to review the site levy this year, and the 2000 NBA conference voted by a slim 2.6% margin to try and seek an even more equitable levy system, if possible, for the future.

So, the NBA has had a sub-committee beaver away on ideas to be voted on at the 2002 conference. To date, I understand they are promoting the concept of a double levy: (a) a flat tax on each beekeeper for registration, plus (b) a levy based on hive numbers to finance the PMS and all other NBA activities. Talk about a giant leap backwards!

Firstly, flat taxes are regressive and hurt most those least able to pay (i.e. little people). I am not just talking about the commercial vs. hobbyist beekeeper split, but even smaller commercial beekeepers who are saddled with the extra burden of a subsidy for their larger cousins.

Secondly, why would we head back to a decrepit hive levy system that after 10 years of extensive consultation we had decided to abandon? If this is the best that can be placed before us for the 2002 conference then I urge all beekeepers to get along to their NBA branch meetings (see back cover for details) and express their displeasure. It will also be pivotal to attend the branch's conference remit meeting later in the year and vote against anything that proposes flat taxes and/or a return to the bad old days of a hive levy.

Keep it simple, keep it fair. Keep it at the present apiary site levy!

- Mark Horsnell  
Auckland

## Changing times

I remember when beekeepers were renowned for their individuality and independence.

Now we are being bulldozed into conformity. For a start, we are forced into a disease conformity programme, but it is unlikely to succeed in its present form, regardless of enthusiasm and good intentions.

To add insult to injury, we are now placed under the Food Products Act. I didn't know our queen bees were eaten, but they must be, as we have to pay \$150 a year to be allowed to export them under this act.

Then we have the requirement to fill in a form for all honey removed from hives to guard against a problem that doesn't exist. Apart from the Tutu problem (see page?), which has been managed quite adequately under the previous system, there is really little real risk related to our product. We produce a product which is, in essence, an antibiotic but we will be expected to treat it the same as those products like

chicken or shellfish, which do present real health hazards if handled incorrectly.

Obviously, we want to produce a product that is produced in hygienic conditions and be well received by the general public, but surely we can ask Government for less regimentation..

We will soon be told we have to meet certain standards if we are to sell our honey as a particular floral source. When someone sells rewarewa as manuka to get the higher price, surely it is fraud, but do we need more than normal consumer protection to deal with this? Recently, I bought a new brand on the market reputedly having at least 70% manuka pollen. It is a pity they did not put some manuka honey with it as well. Perhaps we need to re-establish the Honey Grader as the arbiter when honey sources are in doubt.

Far better than reliance on pollen analysis etc. Flavour is the most important criterion. Then we may see manuka and kanuka selling on their own merits.

Anyway, food for thought . . .

- Gary Jeffery  
Westport

## NBA summarises its submissions against imported WA honey

- a. Allowing import of honey from other countries and regions, including Western Australia, will place the objectives of the American Foulbrood Pest Management Strategy (AFB PMS) at risk from the introduction of European Foulbrood or other organisms affecting bees.
- b. The NBA considers a full analysis of the Western Australia state government response to the matters raised in the Technical Critique must be commissioned and provided to interested parties before this matter proceeds further.
- c. MAF commissioned research on the efficacy of heat treatment for EFB sterilisation must be subject to scientific review before the Western Australia state government proposal is considered further.
- d. The NBA considers the Western Australia state government's assessment that, under the current rates of surveillance in WA, EFB would be detected within a year, must be subject to further scrutiny. Any delay in detecting EFB would expose New Zealand beekeepers to an unacceptable level of risk that EFB could spread within New Zealand during that time.
- e. Because Western Australia has a land border with the rest of Australia and allows the import of heat-treated honey from other Australian states, Western Australia is more likely to have an outbreak of EFB in the future than New Zealand. Honey imports from WA would present a new level of risk to beekeepers in New Zealand.
- f. The NBA considers there is an unacceptable risk that honey from the Australian states where EFB is present may be exported to New Zealand, via Western Australia.
- g. The NBA considers a risk assessment should be undertaken of other bee diseases or pests that could be imported with honey from Western Australia, including *Paenibacillus Alvei* (*P. alvei*).

# Loose border controls leave NZ open to invasions

## Beekeeping

By Peter Berry

Another find of an imported bee product with high levels of contamination from European foulbrood spores has led me to write this article.

This time it was Chinese royal jelly. It would be interesting to know the percentage of royal jelly in it. For all I know it may be 100%, but products coming in legally yet are contaminated or adulterated with other bee products are an obvious threat to our industry.

EFB is a brood disease that kills the larvae when they are four or five days old, usually striking seasonally when the bees are at the peak of their spring build up and again in autumn. In most overseas countries it is regarded as a fairly minor sort of pest but it has two major complications associated with it:

The first is the regular feeding of antibiotics to suppress it. Leaving aside other considerations, like the abuse of antibiotics, it masks AFB then spreads throughout all hives, making it difficult to stop using antibiotics in the future.

The second is the epidemic effect of an outbreak of EFB as it spreads through a susceptible population not previously exposed to it, i.e. your hives and my hives, as graphically illustrated by what happened in Australia.

We are also faced with a political situation whereby gaps are left in our borders to a lesser or greater degree through which too much suspect material is slipping all the time. It only takes one thing to slip through, as we know to our cost.

To compound, this we have a stupidly-rigid system in place making it almost impossible to deal with any unusual incursions in a timely manner, with compensation provisions so restrictive and miserable that it is only the very public-spirited who ever report anything. The rest are too scared to lose their business though MAF quarantine regulations assuming, with some justification, they will never recover their losses.

It is a little hard not to feel hard done by when anything can slip through our borders but if we want/need/are desperate for some treatment or cure, we can nail our left foot to the floor and run around in circles.

Goodness me, I do sound slightly miffed don't I? But that is exactly the situation we would find ourselves in if we get an outbreak of EFB. It is not a slow-moving bug like varroa but would spread though the country with the speed of chalk brood. Unlike varroa, we would eventually get over it, but the damage to our industry on top of varroa would be crushing. It would probably be impossible to effectively pollinate kiwifruit and all other crops would be severely affected.

Many, if not most hives would be severely weakened if not killed, especially during the spring build up. So, the best thing we can do is keep about EFB out in the first place.

Western Australia's application to send its honey to New Zealand rings alarm bells. EFB will assuredly spread to WA but it will not be picked up until it is widespread enough to have infected some of the honey they wish to export here and it will be too late to put the lid back on the hive. Why should our industry and the kiwifruit and pip and stone fruit growers be put at risk for a political nicety, especially when the spread of EFB to Western Australia has to be seen as inevitability rather than a possibility?

So, political pressure and vigilance are the first step. Keep an eye on those with their noses in the public trough and have an ear out for possible biosecurity breakdowns and illegal importations.

The other thing that we can do is look out for EFB in our own hives. It can look like a raft of other things but if in doubt, send in a sample. If you haven't seen a hive showing some, if not all of the effects of EFB, then you probably haven't got many hives or haven't had hives very long. You should particularly send samples in if a number of hives seem to be coming down with it rather than just one hive which may have a failing queen.

If any exotic incursion does occur as the result of bees coming into the country, we are far likely to get a whole package of nasties in one go. EFB could just be the burr comb showing up on the top of the hive. We were lucky (if that's not an oxymoron) to only get varroa from the last round of imports.

### Identifying European foulbrood

If EFB is wide spread, brood combs in a hive take on a pepper pot appearance with many uncapped and diseased cells mixed with normal cells.

Infected larvae turn yellow, then brown and die, twisted against the side or slumped in the bottom of the cell. They always die before becoming pupae.

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(Lin McKenzie, Ranfurly)

# Project aims to expand options for NZ beekeepers

Helping beekeepers strengthen their businesses so they can survive and prosper post-varroa, is the goal of a three-year project for the National Beekeepers Association.

In recognition of the extra costs beekeepers face to manage varroa, alongside the continued demand to satisfy regulatory and market demands, NBA vice president Lin McKenzie developed an application to obtain funding from the MAF Sustainable Farming Fund, set up to support projects contributing to improving the financial and environmental performance of the land-based sectors. The New Zealand Honey Trusts and allied industries will provide additional funding.

If the industry's leadership is enhanced and beekeepers' business management, production and marketing skills are improved, additional income may be generated to help beekeepers meet the challenges of the future.

A project management committee was selected to include people with a wealth of experience in the beekeeping industry, as well as those from other sectors who can help develop better systems for working with allied sectors. They are:

**Chairperson Ivan Dickinson**, PO Box 55, Milton, 9250, [busybees@xtra.co.nz](mailto:busybees@xtra.co.nz), ph: (03) 417-8239, fax (03) 417-8236;

**Lin McKenzie**, PO Box 34 Ranfurly, [Lin.mckenzie@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Lin.mckenzie@xtra.co.nz), ph (03) 444-9257 or (0274) 357-970;

**John Acland**, Mt Peel Station, South Canterbury;

**Neil Barton**, Kingsdown, via Timaru;

**Fergus McKenzie**, Balclutha;

**Andrew Stratford**, Te Puke.

The Agribusiness Development Group has been selected as the project managers. They are:

**John Manhire**, [jon@agribusinessgroup.com](mailto:jon@agribusinessgroup.com) (03) 365-6806 or (025) 487-703 and

**Geoff Mavromatis**, [geoff@agribusinessgroup.com](mailto:geoff@agribusinessgroup.com) (03) 332-4090 or (025) 326-649.

The project has been broken into five activity areas with the following provisional focuses..

## 1. Industry leadership

Goals - For beekeeping industry leaders to understand and effectively use project and strategic planning/ management processes. As well, to have the leadership and communication skills to effectively liaise with and lead the beekeeping industry.

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BK 40

Available for delivery only in upper North Island

- An invitation to tender to undertake six leadership-training courses has been sent out to seven potential providers. It is anticipated that these courses will be undertaken as follows:

- NBA National Executive – March 2002
- Varroa Advisory Group – March 2002
- Branch co-ordinators
- Upper North Island – April 200 (Auckland)
- Middle North Island – April 2002 (Taupo)
- Lower North Island - April 2002 (Palmerston North)
- Upper South Island - April 2002 (Christchurch)
- Lower South Island - April 2002 (Gore)

- If you are interested in participating in one of these workshops please contact your local branch or the project management office. Additional courses will be held in future years.

## 2 Financial monitoring and benchmarking

Goal - To develop a programme in which accurate financial (and other) performance information is annually collected from beekeepers and used for industry development, regional and individual beekeeping performance monitoring, and management through the development of appropriate industry models and benchmarking processes.

- This project will complement the project being undertaken by MBA student Kim van Vuuren on varroa control costs and the potential impact on South Island beekeepers.
- This project will start in March with national surveys, if feasible, in June 2003 and 2004.

## 3. Beekeeping Business Development

Goal - For a systematic analysis of new business options for beekeepers to be undertaken and a process established to

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BK 72

facilitate the servicing of these by beekeepers in their respective communities of interest.

- This will involve the introduction of a process assisting beekeepers to identify and develop new business opportunities.. These could be regionally based.
- Workshops will be held this year to develop and review options. Regional groups will be formed to help beekeepers entry into new business areas or assist them enhance their existing operations.

#### 4. Strategic Repositioning

Goal - For agriculture and horticultural sectors and their stakeholders to have a better understanding of the strategic and economic value of the beekeeping sector to their industries and to establish equitable and effective mechanism to facilitate ongoing co-operation.. To develop two new models of inter industry co-operation adopted by 10% of beekeepers.

- This is an important project area and will focus on establishing new revenue streams for beekeepers, based on the benefits they provide to other sectors. A good precedent of this type of co-operation is seen in the kiwifruit sector.

#### 5. Beekeeper Skill Development

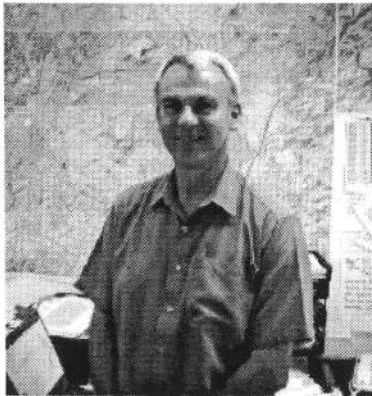
Goal - For beekeepers to understand and adopt competent business skills enhancing the quality of their business management and the quality of their decision-making. This will enable them to identify, develop and implement appropriate responses to significant issues and opportunities

- Training programmes and resources will be developed and delivered through 25 workshops held throughout New Zealand from 2002-2004.

Further updates on this project will be published in the *New Zealand Beekeeper* and on the NBA's web page at <http://nba.org.nz>. For further information, contact members of the project management committee or the project manager.

## AgriQuality appoints new apicultural advisory officer for South Island

Queen-rearing and bee genetics are among the interests of Tony Roper, the recently-appointed AgriQuality apicultural advisory officer in the South Island.



*South Island AgriQuality apicultural advisory officer Tony Roper.*

Although he will be based in Christchurch, Tony is filling the position left vacant by Dave Grueber in Blenheim and will work in the Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast areas as well as in Canterbury with Phil Sutton from Timaru.

Tony has had a lifetime interest and passion for beekeeping, starting as a 13-year-old buying a nuc from the late Ralph Glasson of Blackball for \$5. Tony has kept bees in a number of areas, including the West Coast, Wellington and most recently Rotorua, where he had a semi-commercial outfit involved with kiwifruit pollination and queen rearing. He has recently experienced, first hand, the problems caused by the varroa mite. His understanding of queen rearing and bee genetics leads him to believe that stock selection for tolerance to varroa could hold the key in the long-term battle against the mite.

Tony holds a BSc from the University of Otago, a postgraduate diploma in science from Victoria University, as

well as a BBS from Massey University, majoring in accountancy. For more than 25 years he worked as a computer professional.

Tony and his wife Margaret, who is originally from Christchurch, are looking forward to returning to the Mainland and working with beekeeping and related industries.

## Letter to the Editor

### Quick actions praised

Top marks to the NBA beekeeper at Pauatahanui in finding varroa in the log and to Paul Bolger and his team at MAF for their prompt action in not only dealing with the problem at source, but in tracking the movements of the transport and taking appropriate action along the route travelled.

One wonders what the senario would have been if we had been able to take this type of immediate action (to eradicate) when varroa was first found in Auckland, instead of waiting for central Government to decide what to do. Surely in cases like this it must be better to shoot first and ask questions later.

I certainly hope as AGQuality biosecurity and the NBA executive have all the necessary procedures and government approvals in place for when European foulbrood and tracheal mites or any one of the other pests yet to invade our shores finally arrives, as surely they will.

- Milton Jackson  
Waipawa

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BK 46

Articles published in the NZ Beekeeper Magazine are subject to scrutiny by the association's publication committee but do not necessarily reflect the views of either the association or the publisher.

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## **BRANCH CONTACTS AND MEETINGS**

### **NZ QUEEN PRODUCERS ASSN**

Call: Mary-Anne (06) 855-8038

### **AUCKLAND BRANCH**

24 Andromeda Crescent, East Tamaki

President: Brian Alexander

Phone/Fax: (09) 420-5028

Secretary

Chas Reade

Mobile: 025 772-502

Fax: (09) 634-4376

### **AUCKLAND BEEKEEPERS CLUB INC.**

PO Box 214, Waimauku, Auckland

President: Ian Anderson

Phone: (09) 480-8327

Email: ianderson@clear.net.nz

### **NORTH CANTERBURY BEEKEEPING CLUB**

Meets the second Monday of April, June,

August and October.

Contact: Mrs Hobson

Phone: (03) 312-7587

### **SOUTH CANTERBURY BRANCH**

Peter Lyttle

Phone: (03) 693-9189

### **CANTERBURY BRANCH**

Meets the last Tuesday of every month.

February to October.

Field Day November.

Contact: Trevor Corbett

Phone: (03) 314-6836

### **CHRISTCHURCH HOBBYIST CLUB**

Meets on the first Saturday each month,  
August to May, except in January for which it  
is the second Saturday.

The site is at 681 Cashmere Road,  
Commencing at 1.30pm.

Contact: Fiona Bellet "Oakwood"  
Bradley Road, RD 5

Christchurch. Phone: (03) 347 9919

### **DUNEDIN BEEKEEPERS CLUB**

Meets on the first Saturday in the month  
September - April, (except January) at  
1.30pm. The venue is at our club hive in  
Roslyn, Dunedin.

Enquiries welcome to club secretary,  
Dorothy, Phone (03) 488-4390

### **FRANKLIN BEEKEEPERS CLUB**

Meets second Sunday of each month at  
10.00am for cuppa and discussion and at  
10.30am open hives.

Secretary - Liz Brook

187E Clarks Beach Road,

R.D. 4, Pukekohe

Phone: (09) 232 1111

Mobile: 025 720 761

Fax: (09) 232 1112 Email: liz@pageset.co.nz

### **HAWKE'S BAY BRANCH**

Meets on the second Thursday of the  
month at 7.30pm,

Arataki Cottage, Havelock North.

Phone: Ron (06) 844-9493

### **MARLBOROUGH BRANCH**

contact Will: (03) 570-5633

### **MANAWATU BEEKEEPERS CLUB**

Meets every 4th Thursday in the month at  
Newbury Hall, SH 3, Palmerston North.

Contact: Joan Leckie, Makahika Rd,  
RD 1 Levin

Phone: (06) 368-1277

### **NELSON BRANCH**

Phone: Michael (03) 528-6010

### **NELSON BEEKEEPERS CLUB**

Contact: Kevin

Phone: (03) 545-0122

### **OTAGO BRANCH**

Phone: Mike (03) 448-7811

### **POVERTY BAY BRANCH**

Contact: Barry (06) 867-4591

### **WANGANUI BEEKEEPERS CLUB**

Meets on the second  
Wednesday of the month.

Contact Secretary: Neil Farrer

Phone: (06) 343-6248

### **NORTH OTAGO BRANCH**

Bryan O'Neil

Phone: (03) 431-1831

### **SOUTHERN NORTH ISLAND BRANCH**

Contact: Frank

Phone: (04) 478-3367

### **SOUTHLAND BRANCH**

Contact: Don Stedman

Ph/Fax: (03) 246-9777

### **TARANAKI AMATEUR BEEKEEPING CLUB**

George Jonson

195 Carrington Street

New Plymouth

Email: honeyhouse@clear.net.nz

Phone: (06) 753-3320

### **WAIKATO BRANCH**

Contact Tony: (07) 856-9625

Jan Klausen: (07) 386-0111

Next meeting will be in 2001

(date yet to be confirmed).

### **WAIRARAPA HOBBYIST BEEKEEPERS CLUB**

Meet 3rd Sunday each month  
(except January) at Kites Woolstore,  
Norfolk Road, Masterton at 1.30pm.

Convenor: Arnold Esler.

Phone: (06) 379-8648

### **WELLINGTON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Meets every second Monday of  
the month (except January)  
in Johnsonville. All welcome.

Contact: John Burnet,

21 Kiwi Cres, Tawa,

Wellington 6006. Phone: (04) 232-7863

Email: johnburnet@xtra.co.nz