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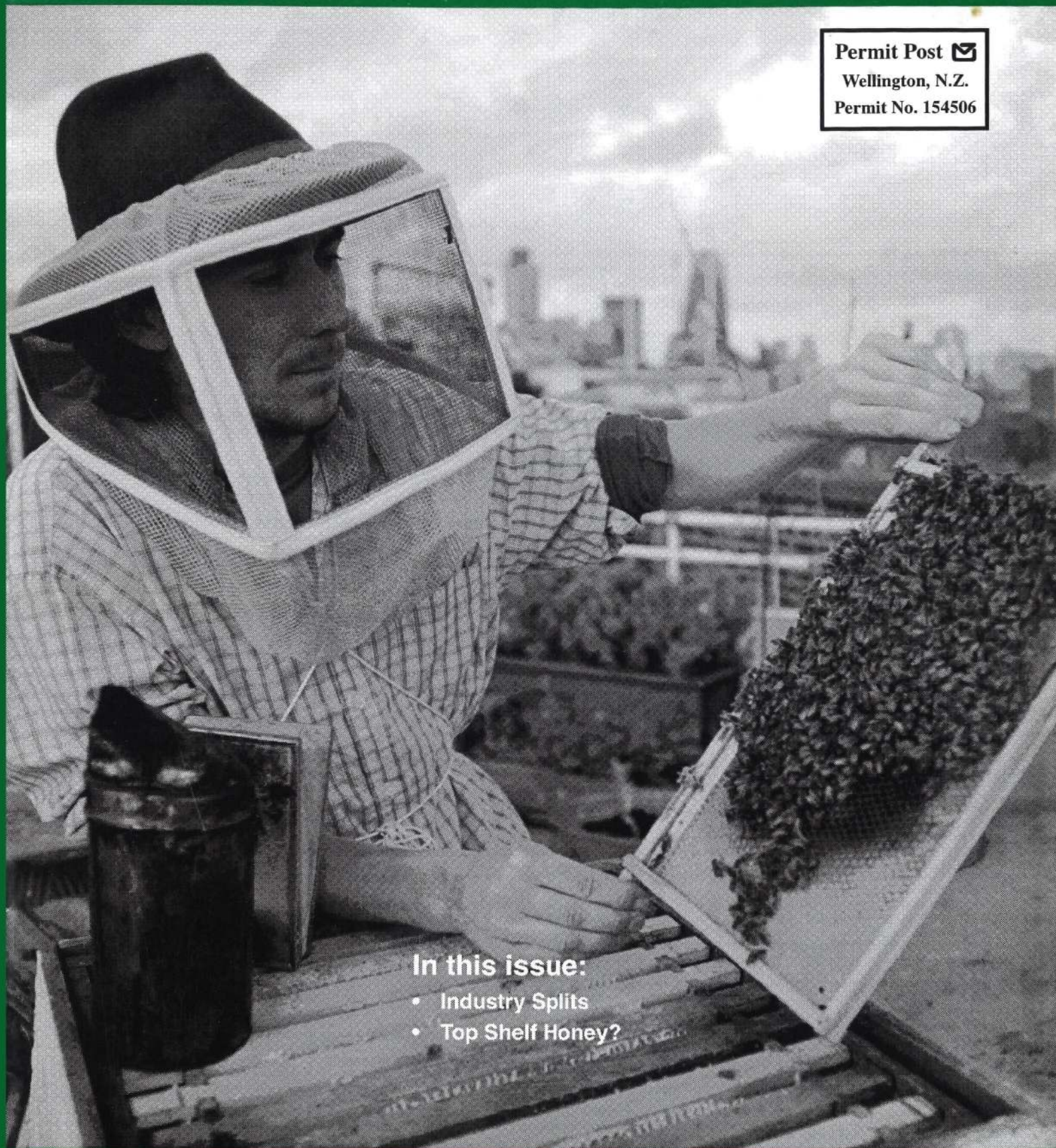
The New Zealand

# BeeKeeper

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**In this issue:**

- Industry Splits
- Top Shelf Honey?

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Association of New Zealand Inc.

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# Start of a new era for NBA?

By Jane Lorimer

**The year 2003 will be entered into the history books of the National Beekeepers Association as the beginning of another era.**

It may not be a "new" era, however, as I understand that the association was funded under a voluntary levy in the distant past. Some may argue the change occurred with the "No" vote for the Commodity levy in 2002. But at which point in time this happened is irrelevant – it has occurred.

The events that followed the special meeting on December 19, 2002, are the ones now affecting the executive and how the association runs. The resignations that occurred brought to the forefront a debate on whether the executive can continue the way it has been running the organisation.

There was never any doubt about the continuance of the National Beekeepers Association as it is an Incorporated Society and there was never a directive from the members to wind it up. There was, however, debate over the lack of a quorum for the executive.

We sought advice from a number of learned individuals on how the executive handled the issue and have received a number of differing opinions as to whether the executive handled the situation correctly. Those we spoke to in the Ministry of Economic Development (which oversees the Incorporated Society Act) say that we have acted correctly.

The association solicitors say that "it could be debated", as it is not stated in our constitution as to how resignations should be handled. Others have stated that we should follow the way resignations have been handled in the past.

This is what we have done: Put the resignations before the executive before they were accepted.

Given the uncertainty of the current situation, the executive has discussed the need to hold an early election so that the executive is once again an elected body. The NBA would then need to hold another special meeting so that the members can ratify what the executive has done to this point in time. We would certainly like some feedback from members on this.

The executive has co-opted two South Island members to replace Don Bell and Lin McKenzie. They are Roger Bray, and Don Stedman.

With the resignation of the elected president Don Bell, I now find myself in the position of acting president – certainly a position I did not envisage for myself this time last year. However, I am now looking forward to it, seeing it as a challenge to lead the association in a time of some uncertainty, due to the fact that we have no idea of future membership numbers or what our funding base will be.

You can now choose to belong to the National Beekeepers Association, be independent or join another organisation. The members will need to keep the executive informed as to what they believe to be important and the executive will need to listen and act.

The retention of members will depend on how well the executive performs. However, the association will only survive if members also contribute by being involved on the committees and in the specialty groups.



Jane Lorimer

Members will need to realise that although I am committing myself to the president's role, as a volunteer I still need to ensure our own beekeeping business comes first. I am lucky that Tony is very supportive of me and the continuance of the association.

As acting president, I will be endeavouring to move the work to the committees, so that the executive takes on more of a governance role. I would like to see specific jobs given to the committees – with terms of reference and a budget. The committees would then work out how to complete the task within budget and bring their proposals to the executive for ratification.

## Future of the association

Tony and I recently flew to Dunedin (at our own expense) to attend the Southland/Otago field day where we talked to members about the association. I received some criticism, that the executive had overstepped the directive from the special meeting in Wellington, which was: "that the association continues until the members have had time to consider further the restructure options and come back to a special meeting".

Regarding the actions of the executive since that special meeting, we must remind you that the NBA has certain statutory obligations to meet, irrespective of how the organisation is funded. The main responsibility is being the management agency for the Pest Management Strategy with a five-year review to carry out. We have appointed a review committee, and I understand that members can have some input into the review process.

The executive has also felt that communication to members should be a priority, irrespective of whether we remain a stand-alone organisation, or if members eventually decide to piggyback on another organisation. In the past, the lines of communication have not been as good as they should have been. We now intend to implement several strategies to ensure an improvement and hope there will be plentiful two-way communication.

The down side of this will be taking longer to get a consensus of opinion before issues can be acted on. Therefore, we ask that when you are consulted on any issues you respond as soon as possible, so the executive can act on the consensus of opinion.

It should also be noted that the *New Zealand Beekeeper* magazine is the official journal of the association. We intend to keep it printed, and hopefully subscription numbers will allow its monthly publication to continue.

We would also like to get information out to members on a regular basis. This may be via e-mail, or fax to those without e-mail access. The communication could be on a range of issues, ensuring members can contribute their points of view.

We are currently negotiating with an individual keen to set up a Web site with a page accessible to members only.

The executive would like to see more discussion and debate about the restructuring of the organisation. We hope this will be in the magazine so that all members have access to the same information. I would like to see a committee prepare a proposal prior to the annual conference. At the special meeting in Wellington, the chief executive officer said it took Federated Farmers two years to complete its restructure.

Members who have not paid their subscription by March 31, 2003, will lose contact with the association and the right to contribute in decisions made about the future of the NBA. Subscriptions are based on apiary numbers (see the above

### Subscription Rates to the NBA for the 2003 year

0-3 apiaries	\$75.00 plus GST	\$84.37 total
4-10 apiaries	\$100.00 plus GST	\$112.50 total
11-30 apiaries	\$200.00 plus GST	\$225.00 total
31+ apiaries	\$400.00 plus GST	\$450.00 total

chart subscription structure) and are payable to: the National Beekeepers Association, PO Box 234, Te Kuiti.

– **Jane Lorimer**  
Acting President

#### Front Cover:

**Steve Benbow from the London Honey Company attends to one of his rooftop hives. (Story on page 19).**

## **NBA appoints new publications committee**

A new publications committee has been appointed for the National Beekeepers Association, comprising Frank Lindsay (chairman), Fiona O'Brien, (secretary) Bob Blair (NBA portfolio holder) Trevor Cullen and Allan Richards.

At our first meeting, we resolved the magazine will continue for everybody until March and thereafter to NBA members and subscription holders only.

As a committee, we looked at the content and resolved to become more involved in gathering information and will encourage other groups and branch members to submit script and new items to the magazine. We also resolved we would publish deadlines and stick to them so the magazine is out in the middle of the month.

**Articles and news items, etc, can be submitted to Fiona via her e-mail: [beeline-apiaries@xtra.co.nz](mailto:beeline-apiaries@xtra.co.nz). or posted to 364 Wharepuhunga Road Te Awamutu 2400.**

This will be Angela Crompton's last magazine as editor. The committee wishes to thank Angela for all her work over the past two years. It has been a difficult task for her, being a non-beekeeper to put together a technical magazine with all the problems associated with obtaining enough script to make it interesting and informative. We wish her well and recognize a job well done.

– **Frank Lindsay**



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BK125

# Plans form for phase II in varroa management



By Paul Bolger

A discussion document on long-term varroa management was released by the Varroa Planning Group in December last year and since late January, meetings have been held in the North and South Islands seeking feedback.

The meetings also aimed to encourage people to prepare written submissions on long-term varroa management (closing date: February 28, 2002).

The document proposes a pest management strategy (PMS) for varroa be put in place. It would attempt to slow the spread of varroa, but unlike the current government-funded programme, not attempt to mitigate its impact in areas where it was already established (through education, research, etc).

The document proposes a primary focus would be to keep the South Island free of varroa by continued movement controls and raising public awareness of these controls. Backing that would be an intensive surveillance programme, aimed at detecting any varroa incursion while it could still be eradicated.

Responding to a South Island varroa incursion is not inside the scope of the PMS, but it is envisaged government-funded action would be triggered by the early detection of an infestation.

A secondary objective of the proposed PMS is to maintain movement controls within areas of the North Island still significantly free of varroa.

The document proposes all measures be funded by the beneficiary industries. For example the South Island programme would be funded by South Island beekeepers, growers and farmers.

Submissions on long-term varroa management should be addressed to: Varroa Planning Group, PO Box 2526, Wellington – Attention Paul Bolger and were due by February 28.

## Industry organisations and MAF

Beekeepers have been asking how MAF will deal with more than one group attempting to represent their collective interests. Two bodies will clearly make it more difficult for MAF to engage with the beekeeping industry on a whole range of issues. However, multiple representative groups have been managed in other industries, and MAF will endeavour to work closely with both groups.

## Surveillance

The last surveillance round carried out under the government-funded varroa management programme is planned in both the South and lower North Islands. Because the amount of funding available has decreased, the number of apiaries sampled may have to be reduced. Beekeepers with apiaries selected for testing will be contacted with more information.

- The discussion document can be viewed at the MAF Web site under <http://www.maf.govt.nz/varroa> and the NBA Web site: <http://www.nba.org.nz>

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## Nothing standard

*In the back of every bee yard is a pile of rotting nuts,  
A hundred different pollen traps and some bee collecting suits.*

*A ford V8; an apple crate, a mountain of floors and lids,  
Old square boxes, used for huts and tunnels by the kids.  
And machines of all descriptions littering the ground,  
Rusting in amongst the supers, not one in 10 of which is sound.*

*We just have a fire heap, for anything not standard,  
And the odd interesting or potentially valuable bit of gear  
To be absolutely candid.*

– Peter Berry

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## Laboratory for honey bee virus study

HortResearch is opening a new laboratory to discover how many of the 14 known viruses of European honey bees are present in New Zealand.

Now that the virus-spreading varroa mite is here, HortResearch aims to find out which viruses are likely to become economically important. Recent research suggests that even colonies severely infested with mites can survive, provided certain key viruses are absent.

A study in 1988 found nine of the known bee viruses in New Zealand and an initial study last summer found five viruses. More detailed work this year will focus on identifying the damaging infections associated with varroa.

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## Some thoughts from a new member

# Obstacles on the path to change

As a new member of the National Beekeepers Association, I saw some strong differences of opinion about its future when I attended the special meeting in Wellington on December 19.

However, under the able chairmanship of Doug Kidd, the meeting unanimously passed some sensible resolutions that appeared to provide a sound basis to move forward in a rational and constructive manner. It has therefore been surprising (and disappointing) to hear there has been continuing controversy and acrimony since the special meeting.

At the request of some senior members of the NBA, I have examined material that has circulated since the meeting. The following comments must not be regarded as an authoritative, legal opinion. I imagine there is ample case law and common law covering situations such as this, and an independent, competent solicitor could no doubt quickly give clear answers to the legal and constitutional issues.

My first comment is the current situation in the NBA is certainly a little messy. However, in my opinion it is not a constitutional and legal crisis and attempts to portray it as such are mischievous and destructive.

### Current status

I can find nothing in the Incorporated Societies Act to suggest the legal status of the NBA is under doubt because of the current situation. The Act provides that a society may be wound up voluntarily by its members, or by an order in the High Court. Grounds for the latter are:

- (a) *If the society suspends its operations for the space of a year; or*
- (b) *If the members of the society are reduced in number to less than 15; or*
- (c) *If the society is unable to pay its debts; or*
- (d) *If the society carries on any operation whereby any member makes any pecuniary gain contrary to the provisions of this Act; or*
- (e) *If the High Court or a Judge thereof is of the opinion that it is just and equitable that the society should be put into liquidation.*

There is nothing to suggest the status or existence of a society, or its power to act, are under threat because its executive falls temporarily below the number required for a quorum.

### Executive resignations

There seems to be an issue as to the status of a resignation between it being lodged and being actioned by the executive. Some people seem confused about the powers of the president and executive to accept or reject a resignation.

Firstly, neither the president nor the executive have the power to reject a resignation. That would involve compelling a person to remain against their will.

If a resignation is handed direct to the president or secretary (or any other executive member), the recipient's responsibility is limited to taking it to the rest of the executive for action and formal consideration.

That the former president Don Bell reportedly accepted Gerard Martin's resignation, but did not do so formally, and apparently accepted Lin McKenzie's resignation, can mean no more than he received and acknowledged them, prior to passing them on to the executive for consideration and action.

It seems to me perfectly in order and normal practice for either the president or the full executive to try and persuade a person to withdraw their resignation, until it is formally received by the executive and so recorded in the minutes. Even at that point, it would be in order for the executive to make a further approach to ask the person to reconsider before formally accepting the resignation.

I believe the point at which a resignation becomes irrevocable is when the executive formally resolves to accept it, and takes action under the rules to appoint a replacement.

### The quorum issue

My interpretation on the resignations issue is: Gerard Martin submitted a letter of resignation before the special meeting, but was later asked by the remaining members of the executive to withdraw it. He did so, presumably influenced by the outcome of the special meeting. In contrast, Don Bell and Lin McKenzie submitted their resignations following and presumably because of the special meeting. In those circumstances, there was little point in the executive asking them to reconsider, and it accepted their resignations, leaving the executive with a sufficient quorum of four.

Gerard was democratically elected to the executive. In the current situation of change, it is preferable as many elected members as possible remain on the executive, to reflect the will of the membership at large. Gerard's decision to withdraw his resignation should be seen as a welcome retention of the status quo.

### Replacement executive members

Rule 16(f) provides that, if a casual vacancy occurs in the executive, the remaining members may appoint a person holding the appropriate residential qualification. There is no mention that a quorum is required for this purpose.

— Keith Garratt

Environmental planning consultant

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# Federated Farmers has room for Beekeepers

**“Becoming an Industry Sector Group of Federated Farmers is the only way to go with the demise of the NBA as we know it,” MILTON JACKSON wrote in the December issue of *Buzz Sheet*. The former NBA Hawkes Bay president is now a member of the recently-formed Federated Farmers New Zealand Bee Industry Council and he describes the benefits of becoming part of that organisation.**

Becoming an Industry Sector Group of Federated Farmers would let us follow our own rules, under the guidance of its umbrella constitution.

Although integrated into the federation and operating under its national constitution, we will go about our business with a high degree of autonomy, managing our own affairs and maintaining our identity.

An industry group manager will be selected and appointed by us and our president will be eligible to be elected to the national board and have a seat on the national council. Provincial branches could continue running their affairs or be integrated into the federation's own provincial structure. Whatever option chosen, administrative support for branches is available through the federation's administrative staff.

The group's assets would be ring-fenced and managed by beekeepers, but annual funds would be allocated. Smaller groups receive some cross subsidy from larger groups, maintaining a unified voice for all and providing strong representation at all levels.

Other industry benefits with Federated Farmers include:

- Service information through 0800FARMING.
- Free subscription to *Straight Furrow*.
- Weekly e-mail updates on Federated Farmers' activities.
- Access to four resource centres (in Hamilton, Palmerston North, Christchurch and Dunedin).
- Secretariat activities for the industry group.
- Employment and legal advice.
- FMG insurance.

Membership fees for industry group members are negotiable and dependent on other funding streams, such as commodity levies.

At December 31, 2001, the federation had 16,673 financial members, governed by an elected national board. An administration council comprises provincial presidents, provincial delegates (on a ratio-to-membership basis) and the chairpersons of industry groups.

In December 2002, there were six industry groups with specific sector interests within 23 provinces, which advocate for their general interests.

An executive policy director, five general policy managers, three industry group managers and 17 policy analysts lead the federation's policy team. Team members are spread throughout the provinces and have a strong base in Wellington. Federation lawyers, analysts, field and administration staff can provide direct support and advice to

individual members who telephone 0800FARMING. A field staff of 11 operate throughout the provinces.

Administration is based in Hamilton, with satellite support centres in the other three cities mentioned above. Over the past two years, economies of scale and strategic restructuring have led to administrative efficiency gains of 27%.

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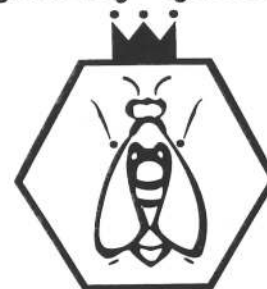
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## From the colonies



### Bay of Plenty

A voluntary membership levy is one of the best things to happen to the National Beekeepers Association. Everyone who pays now must actively want to belong – which can only give things a positive spin. This branch is giving the NBA as much support as we can.

Few members were interested in joining Federated Farmers, which has never seemed to take beekeeping issues seriously. Maybe things would be different if it was representing a horticultural rather than agricultural industry.

Good things are happening this season in the Bay of Plenty: Beautiful, fine weather has helped produce beautiful honey, with flows anything from 40kg to 60kg per hive. Compared to the average 7kg per hive in 2002, the tide seems to have turned for the industry, especially with good prices being paid for honey now.

Pollination prices are likely to rise, too, with fewer beekeepers competing for business. The incursion of the varroa mite has driven many people out of the industry and there are no more wild bees competing for nectar sources.

The next Bay of Plenty NBA branch meeting will be held in April.

– **Bryce Hooten**  
Matamata

### Marlborough

Local members have given nearly 100% support to Federated Farmers and its new honey industry council members, who includes Marlborough beekeeper Darren Clifford

Decisions will be made about how the Marlborough NBA branch might reconfigure at its annual general meeting in March. Hopefully, a well co-ordinated, cohesive industry can be maintained.

Cohesiveness was failing under the former NBA structure, as huge gaps divided the way many NBA members wanted their organisation run and how it was being conducted. Maybe South Islanders have to prove that Federated Farms is the way to go and eventually North Island branches will come and join us.

Some North Island beekeepers earn much of their money from crop pollination, but honey production is the mainstay of others, as it is in the South Island.

Honey output in Marlborough this year was a huge improvement on last year, when flows were down to around 15kg-20kg a hive. Some places have been patchy and the whole region is now very dry, but there were some good, hot runs before Xmas.

– **Will Trollope**  
Blenheim

### Poverty Bay

This year, beekeepers here are busy with the demands of coping with an exceptionally good crop of honey.

With only two beekeepers operating extraction facilities, there is a huge backup of honey waiting to be processed. Much

of the local honey crops are in rented freezer space, awaiting extraction.

Hives which went straight into honey flow have out-produced those which went on to honey after pollination – by an average 20kg to 30kg in many cases.

After honey removal, most Poverty Bay beekeepers intend monitoring for varroa, which is close to the northern and western borders of the region now. Many of us are suffering from the apprehension associated with the imminent arrival of that threat. There is a feeling of gratitude though, for our associates north of the line who have co-operated with the Government's movement control policy and delayed the arrival of the mite to this (and other) areas. The resulting benefits to us have surely been at a cost to them.

We are relying on our friends who have had the mite, for advice as our turn gets ever closer, and without exception that information and encouragement is generously given. We owe them a lot.

When the "dust settles" after the demands of coping with the pressures of honey harvest branch members expect to be able to give the political issues regarding the National Beekeepers Association the attention they urgently require.

– **Peter Burt**  
Gisborne

### North Otago

A branch meeting has been organised for February 26, when members will vote to join Federated Farmers or be part of an independent National Beekeepers Association.

Delegates representing North Otago at the NBA's 2002 annual general meeting in Auckland regretted the small support offered to the executive members or recognition of the industry problems they had to deal with. North Otago would like to particularly thank Lin McKenzie for the work he did and the regular communication he maintained with this branch, keeping members up to date on matters occurring locally, regionally and nationally.

The New Zealand's beekeeping industry future? The varroa mite and how South Islanders will deal with it if it crosses Cook Strait remains a major concern. The geographical terrain does not lend itself to regularly shifting hives to different nectar locations and beekeepers rely on the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to retain a vigorous surveillance programme. The amount of money allocated to varroa control is, well, just a drop in the bucket compared to that spent trying to eliminate the painted apple moth.

The planting of fruit crops is increasing here in the Waitaki Valley so the benefit of bees in the area will be recognised by more than just beekeepers. The conversion to dairy from sheep farming in many areas of southern New Zealand is affecting

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BK2

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the North Island**

traditional honey sources, though. The production of silage for feeding stock strips clover paddocks of their seedbeds. After a few years, only rank grass continues growing. The use of urea fertiliser does nothing to promote clover pasture, either.

This year, however, returns for beekeepers are about average, with hives carrying between 30kg and 40kg of white clover honey. It all came in a big rush, then died out very fast as summer set in and conditions dried.

- **Graham McCallum**  
**Oamaru**

## **Auckland**

Conditions this year have resulted in a great crop of honey with 30kg to 50kg harvests per hive – double that drawn last year.

Branch members are feeling positive with the changes to the NBA, although everyone's aware there is lots to be done, including pest management strategies, export certification and exotic pest disease controls.

The option to join Federated Farmers was considered seriously by many people, but after weighing up all the factors, there seemed more value in retaining an independent NBA. Important areas for the beekeeping industry that Federated Farmers seemed less committed to included research and the direct marketing of honey products. Hopefully, the shift of some branches away from the NBA to Federated Farmers won't result in a major rift in the industry.

In general, the year ahead is looking very positive for beekeepers, with good crops around the country this season, the potential for honey prices to stay high and the demand from Canada for supplies of bulk bees. Good returns lessen the costs of ongoing varroa control, making it easier for Auckland beekeepers to live with the mite.

- **Graham Cammell**  
**Mangere**

## **Hawkes Bay**

Former Hawkes Bay president Milton Jackson has shifted camps and is now a member of the newly-formed honey industry council with Federated Farmers.

I understand why some beekeepers see merit in joining up with Federated Farmers. Its team of lawyers and other trained staff would help small businesses – and it offers programmes for workplace matters like occupational safety and health (OSH).

I hope the NBA can continue as an independent body for the beekeeping industry, but maybe it has been attempting to do too much in recent years. Maybe its strengths are in doing things individual beekeepers can't do for themselves and leaving the larger issues to the government.

The NBA probably needs to downsize and regroup, but decisions shouldn't be made too quickly. The changes that occurred at the special meeting in December were a shock to most beekeepers, but nearly everyone was too busy with hive matters to bother with the political manoeuvrings of the industry.

Although honey volumes are about average, this season has been surprisingly good in Hawkes Bay, considering the wet weather experienced in December – 10 days of constant rain, keeping bees in their hives when manuka and clover flowers were at their peak – and now the extreme dry.

Although getting closer, the varroa mite still hasn't arrived in the region. This month, MAF varroa programme co-ordinator Paul Bolger told Hawkes Bay members about the varroa pest management strategy planned for keeping the mite out of the South Island for as long as possible. The PMS might be extended to slow down varroa's incursion into areas of the North Island it hasn't reached.

Varroa control and other beekeeping management costs are more easily covered with the current high prices being received for honey. Unfortunately, as profits rise, more people are drawn into the industry, reducing the number of available hive sites. And, because honey prices are governed by export prices, a collapse in the overseas markets can result in many beekeepers coming out burnt.

"Answering hobbyists questions" will be a focus of the next Hawkes Bay branch meeting, to be held on March 10 in the Arataki Cottage.

- **John Berry**  
**Havelock North**

## **West Coast**

Nobody from the coast went to the NBA's special December meeting in Wellington but from stories heard since, it sounded "a shambles".

Things have become increasingly complicated for the NBA, as pest management strategies, export certifications and other legal documentation had to be worked through, placing unfair demands on executive members who were virtually volunteering their time to the industry. Added to that stress were the expectations from members wanting more from their association than what they were getting. As beekeepers around the country divide into those staying with the NBA and those seeing greater benefits in joining Federated Farmers, the West Coast branch has not yet decided which group to follow.

With an average 60kg of honey per hive, this season was an average one – but certainly better than last year. Bad weather during spring kept bees in their hives, feeding on the honey stores. Things came right around Christmas and now the season has mostly finished, with beekeepers raising queens and preparing for winter.

Future prospects for New Zealand beekeepers? As long as they continue getting good prices for honey, the industry is bound to keep going, regardless of which administrative body is elected to run it.

- **Gary Glasson**  
**Blackball**

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## Taranaki

Terrible weather in October and November meant nectar sources like Phebalium, boxthorn, barberry, kamahi and rewarewa were not available to bees in hives near the natural bush.

Lovely, fine December weather was good for clover pasture, though, and full supers were reported for urban hives, with some lucky beekeepers enjoying bumper crops.

Manuka flowered well and the prevailing westerly winds helped keep the varroa mites at bay. Infestations in the region have not been as serious as first thought, but beekeepers are urged to draw up their management plans. An important part of those are diaries, where pesticide strip placements are recorded and the dates to remove them are highlighted. Any strips left in hives too long hurries the mites' pesticide resistance.

Members are urged to be vigilant, monitor their hives regularly and, at the mites' first appearance, start treatment. Tell the club, too, so a Taranaki "knowledge map" can be built up.

A build-up of club executive members is needed, with George Jonson and Paddy Fox deciding not to stand for reelection this year. With membership down to a low 51, people are asked to consider nomination, when the AGM is held in April.

On February 24, a meeting was to be held in New Plymouth to discuss long-term varroa management, based on a discussion document, which can be seen at: <http://www.maf.govt.nz/biosecurity/pests-diseases/animals/varroa/>

[papers/pms/varroa-pms.pdf](#) (or by contacting Jeff Stewart, MAF, 04 474-4199). Submissions were being accepted until February 28.

## Franklin

"How to prepare honey and wax" for the Franklin Beekeepers Club honey show will be demonstrated at the March club night. It starts at 7pm on March 23 in the Franklin Arts and Culture Centre.

## Southland

Honey crop may be below average this year, although some areas are better than others.

At the moment, the weather has turned wintry and the flow has halted. It started earlier than normal, and hives had honey on by January 15 – unusual for Southland. Lots of sou'west winds mean ground temperatures have not risen much above 16 degrees.

Bush areas were slow to produce nectar but eventually did well. Early spring queen matings were poor but improved later. Now we are into autumn requeening

A recent Otago/Southland field day was held at Mike and Debbie Vercoe's, Galloway, near Alexandra. A big crowd of beekeepers attended and listened to speakers talk about the important decisions we must make regarding a varroa PMS and the future direction of the NBA.

– **Andy Booth**

**Southland**

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# Fed Farmers forms new bee industry council

Federated Farmers set up an interim New Zealand Bee Industry Council (NZBIC) this month at the request of beekeepers who have signed on with the farming lobbyists after the collapse of their own industry levy.

The move was partly driven by differing interests between hobbyist and commercial beekeepers, beekeepers in the North and South Islands, and beekeepers whose main business is pollination contracts, and those concentrating on producing honey and other bee goods.

Shortly before Christmas, the National Beekeepers' Association (NBA) resolved to retain only voluntary membership after the expiry of its commodity levy order. It also decided not to renew its administration contract with Federated Farmers.

At the time, then-NBA president Don Bell said a large group of the association's members had joined Federated Farmers.

This month, he was one of the five members in an interim beekeepers council established with Federated Farmers. Others are Darren Clifford (Marlborough), Geoff Hantz (Canterbury), Milton Jackson (Hawke's Bay) and Lin McKenzie (Otago). They were to set priorities for the year before a full council meeting in the middle of the year.

Issues identified so far include a mid-term review of the national pest management strategy for American foulbrood disease and the proposed pest management strategy for varroa, the Government's biosecurity strategy and an analysis of the value of beekeeping to the New Zealand economy.

Federated Farmers president Tom Lambie said he was delighted that "a large number of members of the beekeeping industry had chosen to align themselves with the federation".

Last year the nation's beekeepers rejected using a compulsory commodity levy on bee products to run their national organisation and industry-good research.

A majority of the 940 beekeepers polled voted in favour of the industry-good levy, but when the poll was weighted according to how many hives each voter owned, the vote swung the other way.

Under the Biosecurity Act, the industry is expected to face a compulsory levy for all beekeepers, regardless of whether they belong to the association or the federation. It will be used to fund pest control work.

Project manager for the "varroa planning group", Dr Bruce Simpson, said funding for the current government-funded control programme in the North Island was due to expire at the end of June. The planning group, which has representatives of Federated Farmers, growers, Local Government NZ, beekeepers and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, was holding meetings throughout the eastern and southern North Island this month, seeking views on the proposed strategy.

There appeared to be broad support for a pest management strategy to keep the South Island free of varroa, Dr Simpson said, but decisions were required on the separate issue of trying to slow the spread of varroa to areas not yet affected in the North Island.

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BK 69

At present, varroa is largely confined behind a control line drawn from Taranaki to East Cape, although there are about 30 infected apiaries south of the line.

The planning group has proposed a movement control and surveillance programme targeting the East Coast, Hawke's Bay and Wairarapa - abandoning Wellington to the mite's spread.

Continuing a movement control programme from mid-2003 would cost about \$27,000 a year and require industry funding.

"Although it is inevitable that varroa will cover the North Island within the next three years, there may still be significant economic benefits if the spread can be delayed," Dr Simpson said. Written submissions on the proposal had to be in by February 28.

Nine meetings held in the South Island to discuss proposed strategies had been positive, Dr Simpson said. Proposals included a total prohibition on moving bees from the North Island, controls over at-risk goods and on beekeeping and processing equipment moving south, plus an intensive surveillance programme aimed at early detection.

It was expected the mite would eventually reach the South Island, Dr Simpson said. "Provided it is detected early, we are hoping the Government will mount an eradication response but we're still holding discussions with Government on that.

"It is ambitious but there are major benefits to be gained and we think it's worth a try. The big question, of course, is who is going to pay for it."

The varroa planning group has estimated it would cost about \$760,000 a year to implement its strategy to keep the South Island varroa-free.

## Protect hives from rodents

Have you noticed the high number of mice around your apiaries lately?

Every time I'm working in an apiary, I see one scurrying away and when the weather cools they will be looking for winter nesting sites.

I deter rodents from damaging my hives with crushed baits which I put in a wide-mouthed, plastic container under a hive.

Crushing the baits means the rodents have to eat it immediately, rather than taking it away to store. Keep renewing it each time you visit the hive, until it is no longer being taken.

Bait also controls the rat population. Rats can enlarge the hive entrance or chew through a super to reach the bees' winter stores. Some beekeepers nail a strip of flat tin across the front of the bottom board, creating a tunnel to reduce draughts and prevent rats gnawing the super.

- Frank Lindsay

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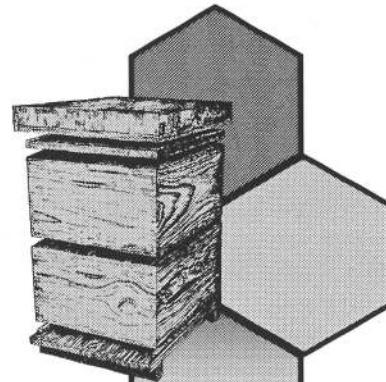
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# Requeening

As soon as another season's honey is harvested, it's time to set hives up for winter.

Requeening and mite control is essential.

Requeen as many hives as possible, ordering early before the breeders switch to producing queens for the export market. Requeening can be done using protected queen cells (if you live close to a queen breeder) which can give you up to an 80% success rate, or by using mated queens after first dispatching the old queen.

If you are going to use queen cells, you will need to make a few extra nucs to make up for those hives that fail to produce a new queen. To improve the success rate when using mated queens, I usually squash the old queen on the surface of the cage so her pheromones are concentrated in one place. If the hive is aggressive or black, I tape off half the grill so the queen can get away from the aggressive bees. If they attack her while she's still in the cage and chew off her footpads, she will be superseded within a month.

If you can't find the queen within 10 minutes of opening the hive (she is usually on a frame of emerging brood), put a queen excluder between the supers and leave the hive for four days. Once you return, look in the super containing eggs. If you still can't find her, move this super away from the hive stand and put the queen cage in the remaining super. After an hour, the old queen will be easier to find, as most of the field bees will have returned to the original hive.

As a last resort, (for those black, running bees) place an empty super on a base, then a queen excluder and the super with the old queen on top. Proceed to remove each frame, shaking all the bees off them on to the queen excluder. When all are removed, smoke the bees, driving them below the excluder. The old queen will be left above it.

## Mites

Beekeepers in varroa-infected areas should be testing and treating hives which are now reaching peak population. After the sixth to eighth treatment is finished, remove the strips and each month continue testing hives until flight activity ceases. Those in acute areas may have to be treated again before winter.

Early control allows the production of at least two generations of healthy bees that have not been "grazed on" by mites. They will be the bees taking the hive through to spring.

Beekeepers below the line and in the South Island must also think about varroa control and adapt their operations for the mite's eventual arrival. Beekeepers in the lower North Island should be checking hives.

There are several ways, but the easiest and quickest is the sugar-shake method. If you find one mite, treat all the hives in the apiary (and notify AgriQuality).

A more comprehensive method is to use strips and a sticky board, which can be left in for 24 hours. Mites reflect light, so hold the sticky boards towards the sun, where light is reflected towards you. Mites appear as round, pinhead objects reflecting light.

The harmless pollen mite, (*Melittiphis alvearius*), may also be in your hives. They are the same colour as varroa mites,

Frank Lindsay



but much smaller and a different shape. If you are unsure what you are looking at, consult another beekeeper or contact AgriQuality.

The old enemy, American foulbrood, is still around and indications are that its incidence is increasing in mite areas. Always inspect hives for AFB before removing honey.

Last year I attended the NBA conference in July, then went on holiday, leaving the hot room (with the heat off) full of honey supers. When I got back, the place was crawling with wax moth. What a disaster.

Apart from the mutilated combs, the fans were filled with moth cocoons and had to be stripped completely. I counted about 200 in one rotation fan. Air circulation is essential to control wax moth.

Things to do: extract honey, remove comb honey, rear autumn queens (you get the best mated queens at this time of the year), introduce purchased queens, produce nuclei, check for BL, wasps and mites.

## NBA co-opts new South Island executive member

I have accepted a position as a co-opted member of the National Beekeepers Association executive, representing the South Island.

As a member of Federated Farmers NZ, I will work with each group for the health and protection of beehives and the beekeeping industry.

For the beekeeping industry to move forward with confidence, it must also reflect on the past to ascertain its present position. As beekeepers, we should recognise the contribution of the NBA and the Government helping us maintain an environment where pests and diseases can be minimised.

The American foulbrood pest management strategy is an area of concern but through a review process, with input from beekeepers, a more robust, cost-effective strategy can be maintained for the future control of AFB.

The future spread of varroa is another important issue for beekeepers to consider and reach consensus on. Without a structured approach and clear messages to the Government and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, we will have no control over the mite and its spread throughout the country.

I am prepared to remain a member of the executive until the next election of officers.

– Roger Bray,  
Ashburton



# Will Envirosols control Varroa mites?

Scientists at Crop and Food Research in Palmerston North are studying the use of carbon dioxide to deliver pesticides into beehives to kill varroa mites.

Known as "Envirosol technology", the carbon dioxide delivery system has been successfully used to control pests in some greenhouse crops. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is funding research for it to be tested in hives using three pesticides, Fluvalinate, Ethyl formate and Thymol.

Project co-ordinator Bruce Bycroft said the fogging created by the carbon dioxide might prove an effective way of killing mites in beehives. The study includes tests on the sensitivity of bees to carbon dioxide and the effectiveness of the different pesticides being used with this delivery system.

Also a part-time apiarist, Bruce Bycroft said the use of Envirosols in hives could become a management tool in chronic varroa mite infestation. If successful, it could have applications in the brood-less winter months to control the mite and help maintain bee populations.

The results of the research are expected mid-year.

For more information contact:  
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Carbon dioxide may be used to apply varroa pesticides, says scientist Bruce Bycroft.

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BK129

# Honey weapon against superbugs

Scientists believe honey may be used as a natural remedy to the hospital "superbugs" which are resistant to antibiotics, the BBC reports.

Last year, the research team from the University of Waikato and Cardiff University in Britain, released a report saying the combination of honey's high sugar content and its syrupy texture would act as a natural barrier to bacteria entering wounds.

The tests could have a major impact on the way hospitals tackle outbreaks of bugs, such as MRSA, which infected 3000 patients in Britain in 2002.

Earlier this year, scientists from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign published research showing honey contained antioxidants beneficial in lowering cholesterol.

The Centre of Bio Medical Sciences in Cardiff has conducted tests on bacteria highly resistant to antibiotics. It had been gathered from infected patients and hospitals.

Project leader Dr Rose Cooper led the two-year research programme, using tests involving pasture honey and New Zealand manuka honey to treat ulcers and abscesses.

## Health-giving

The scientists discovered the high sugar content slowed bacterial growth, while the honey's texture acted as a seal against outside infection of wounds.

In its undiluted form, honey killed off bacteria, which the researchers believe could be linked to enzymes in the bees themselves or present in pollen.

But the so-called discovery would not have been news to the ancient Greeks and Romans, who were aware of honey's health-giving properties.

It was the emergence of antibiotics in the 1950s to kill off infection that led to centuries of knowledge being overridden in the rush to find more modern drugs to tackle infections.

But in recent years, the medical profession has become alarmed at the resistance of bugs to even the strongest antibiotics.

Dr Cooper's research shows there may be grounds for further examination of honey's healing properties.

- **Journal of Applied Microbiology**

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- Short video at [mitegone.com](http://mitegone.com)
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BK130

# Consumers ready for gourmet honey varieties, US survey finds

Longmont, Colorado: "Honey, my way" could be the new consumer battle cry as the honey industry responds to consumer trends and new research shows the product is a much-loved sweetener with room to expand.

A just-completed Usage and Attitude study commissioned by the United States National Honey Board (NHB) shows most consumers enjoy honey on breakfast items and in tea. The study also found they are interested in honey's nutritive aspects and might be interested in new packaging designs to avoid sticky situations.

Of the 825 respondents, only eight percent had never purchased honey, whereas nearly 80% had some in their pantry, said the board's marketing director, Bruce Wolk.

It was hoped to raise consumer interest in honey still further by promoting the many varieties available.

Other industries had increased consumer interest in their products, Bruce said. For example, the wine business has helped shoppers move beyond the options of simply buying white, red or rosé wines. Consumers had learned wine was the product of a variety of grapes with vastly differing characteristics – just as honey is the product of flowers with an even greater spectrum of flavour profiles.

Specifically, red wines are touted as a source of heart-healthy antioxidants. Scientific research shows antioxidants are also found in honey in varying degrees, and darker honeys continue to be a subject of research by the board.

Honeybees produce more than 300 varieties of honey, Bruce said. It was hoped that when consumers became more aware of the differences in honey varieties, they would try new and different uses for the traditional sweetener.

As honeybees collect nectar from different flowering plants, the honey produced from each type of flower has its own distinct characteristics. Because finding "rare" honeys is often like finding rare wines, the board set up a Web site, [www.honeylocator.com](http://www.honeylocator.com), providing a gateway for the culinary sleuth seeking unique United States honey varieties.

"Consumers are demanding more individualised flavour options," Bruce said. Honey also needed more promotion as an affordable, natural sweetener produced by millions of flowers and bees.

- **The National Honey Board is a research and promotion board made up of producers, processors and importers and is based in Longmont, Colorado. It aims to drive the demand for honey through marketing, research, promotion, and advertising.**

## Roof Top Beekeepers

Steve Benbow and his girlfriend Jill Mead (yes that is her real name!) are a couple of talented photographers and beekeepers, who run a fascinating operation on the roof tops around London.

Incredibly, Steve transports hives on a motorbike with a side-car, then moves them to the top of buildings – using escalators and lifts.

The pair are currently working on a "high rise Beehive Book", illustrated with photos they have taken on the Paris Opera Roof and in Manhattan. Great Stuff.

Steve and Jill are currently planning a trip to New Zealand next spring (can anyone help them locate interesting apiary sites on "Down-under" rooftops?)

Any information on quirky sites can be forwarded to Maureen Maxwell, phone (0800) honeyline or ph/fax (09) 411-7953 or e-mail [Maureen@beesonline.co.nz](mailto:Maureen@beesonline.co.nz).

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## Library news

The library is being properly housed this year and, along with the transfer of books, videos and magazines, there will be a complete stock take and evaluation.

The "magazine postings" list continues to grow. Thanks to everyone who return library materials by the due date.

Newly-purchased items to add to your catalogues are:

- Three copies of Kim van Vuuren's thesis: "Varroa control costs and the impact on South Island beekeepers."
- Four small sets of slides in the Wildlife series.
- (569) *Bees: the honey bee*
- (570) *Bees: activities of worker honey bees*
- (1269) *Composition of the colony*
- (1270) *Activities within the colony*

Branches/hobbyist groups may borrow Videos free of charge for use at meetings. DECA material is also loaned at no cost.

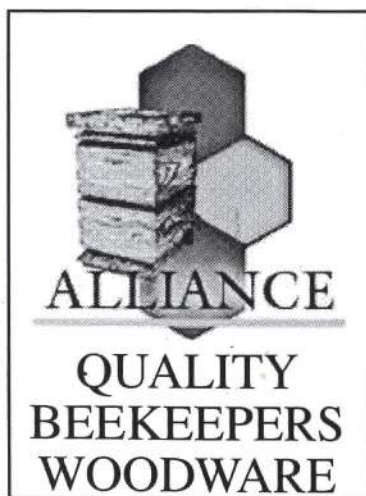
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