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Story on page 24

Photo: Kaye McArdle

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Season's Greetings!

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President's Report

I cannot believe how quickly the year has gone by — Christmas is once again upon us. I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a bountiful honey harvest.

From what I have been hearing around the country, the honey flows seem to be beginning two to four weeks early. This has in some cases caught beekeepers out with their varroa treatments. Some, I hear, only had treatments in for a couple of weeks before they had to remove the treatments for the honey flow. South Island beekeepers must be thanking their lucky stars that they do not have to face this dilemma like their North Island counterparts.

AFB outbreaks

The Management Agency has been notified of several outbreaks, but one in particular has been of concern to us — not because of the outbreak itself, as this has been dealt to within the AFB National Pest Management Strategy (AFB NPMS), but the consequences upon those involved.

To lose all your hives due to an outbreak is devastating, and I really feel for that person, as I hate to have to kill my bees when we find an AFB case. In saying that however, I support the goals of the AFB NPMS. In this case there was also a party that was looking to buy the beehives in question. The prospective buyers also have had a difficult time of it with spending time looking for AFB and their potential loss of earnings.

As a result of this outbreak, the Management Agency will be discussing whether to write a set of guidelines for the selling and buying of beehives. If you happen to be employing someone to manage your beehives, also remember to have something in writing that will protect both parties should there be a problem at a later date.

Review of submissions received on the Import Risk Analysis of Bee Products

I have just received a copy of the review of submissions. It was pleasing to see that MAF received a number of submissions, including a submission from the NBA and the Bee Industry Group, as well as from several individual beekeepers. MAF also received a couple of submissions from Australia in favour of the risk analysis.

The outcome from this review is as follows: **"As a result of this review of submissions, MAF considers that the conclusions of the risk analysis are valid, and that an import health standard can be developed for honey bee products".**

The bee products considered were honey, chemically extracted propolis, pollen, royal jelly, beeswax that has been held in molten form for at least two hours, and bee venom.

On reading the review of submissions, I am unhappy about MAF's conclusions, and the very narrow scope under which the risk analysis was conducted. A number of submitters made reference to the economic effects or possible residue problems with imports. MAF's response to these and many other issues was "This issue is beyond the scope of the risk analysis".

Several submissions raised questions about the residue or chemical adulteration and extension of imported honey with fructose. MAF responded: "Chemical residues are not a biosecurity risk, and so are beyond the scope of this risk analysis. NZFSA is aware of this potential issue and will act appropriately".

The Executive Council will be having further discussions on what our next moves should be; for example, meeting with Ministers to voice our concerns and approaching NZFSA for their proposed monitoring programme for imported product.

Above all, it is time that our industry became proactive in marketing of our product, so as to lessen the impact of imported products. We are likely to have a discussion session at Conference in 2006, but we need to be acting sooner rather than later. Your future may depend on your actions now. Can we get beekeepers to commit to funding a generic research and marketing programme on a voluntary basis? We would like to have some feedback on this issue.

Research Consortium Meeting, Ruakura, 9 November 2005

Jane Lorimer and Jim Edwards represented the NBA at this meeting, which covered the following issues:

a) Foundation for Research, Science & Technology (FRST) workshops and funding

Dr Stephen Lorimer of Crop & Food Research outlined the results of a series of workshops that FRST had run with researchers regarding the funding round for the 2006–2007 year. Stephen identified four funding streams from FRST from which the NBA and researchers might be able to obtain funding for the research projects that were identified:

1. PQA (Product Quality Assurance): $19 million is available for projects where research is seeking incremental changes for the industry. For example, research on queens and medihoney may fall in to this category
2. SPS (Sustainable Production Systems): $3 million is available from this funding stream
3. Innovative Foods (includes dietary supplements): this category has $5.2 million available, geared towards new international market opportunities
4. Niche Biological Products: $16.5 million has been appropriated for projects such as cosmetics, queens, wound dressing.

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

Other FRST funding sources include:

- NERF (New Economy Research Fund), which has available $3.9 million to invest on basic research focused on New Zealand strengths (e.g., native monofloral honey)
- Technology New Zealand (TechNZ), which will provide up to $3 million over four years, led by groups or businesses (e.g., Betta Bees or NBA or Comvita, etc).

b) NBA outlined its research priority list.

c) Some discussion was held on researcher ideas for research.

d) Stephen Lorimer from Crop & Food Research and Tania Smith from the UNILink Research Office at the University of Waikato outlined a possible structure that may ensure that this group continues to move forward. Stephen and Tania are suggesting that a person from outside the researchers or industry organisations should be employed to be the co-ordinator so there are no potential conflicts.

Currently the NBA has Jim Edwards in the role of chairing these meetings and receiving input etc. Jim and I felt this would be a good way to ensure we are in one of the driving seats, and beekeepers could then see that the NBA wishes to see progress for the industry as a whole.

Stephen and Tania envisage that this arrangement could eventually work most effectively as an Incorporated Joint Venture, with some funding from the shareholders. Shareholders could include the NBA, the Active Manuka Honey Association, Crop & Food Research, HortResearch, Comvita, Arataki, Woodlands Apiaries, etc. If conducted well, there could be a return for the shareholders from intellectual property (IP).

This idea is to be run past all the organisations that are around the table at the moment to see if they agree in principle, or would rather continue with the more informal arrangement that we currently have. Buying into this type of arrangement would, of course, be subject to specified terms of reference that would need to be agreed to, and the level of funding that the 'shareholders' would need to contribute. From discussion it sounded as though some funding may be available to help to set this up.

The timeline for responses to this idea was 25 November. I said to Jim that the NBA has been thinking along similar lines; that is, to set up a 'shell company' for the antioxidant project. This research proposals idea being proposed is comparable but would be functioning at a different level. However, it may still bring money and membership benefits back to the NBA and to its members through benefits gained from the research.

e) Four or five key areas were identified for which the group may put in funding bids. In most of these areas there is more than one research group involved. For example, the University of Waikato and Crop & Food Research are conducting research in the products area, and we hope that they will be able to work together on putting a proposal together for a funding bid; and Landcare and HortResearch are conducting research in pollination. The areas identified were:

- Pollination
- Management (e.g., Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids issue, chemicals, nutrition)
- Diseases
- Products: food and non-food

The researchers will be getting together to put forward some proposals for research. The NBA will be trying to put together a list for the Management areas that we would like to see funded. Stephen Lorimer will be sending out a template to assist us.

The next step will be to approach Trade and Enterprise and FRST with our proposals to see if they are likely to get support. This is set for sometime around 15 December in Wellington. If we can organise the day correctly, then we may also be able to fit in meetings with other key government people.

The profile document for the industry will be a key tool in the lobbying that will be carried out. Jim Edwards has obtained some of the base data that has been collected, and will now look at how the document can be put together. We certainly realise that we do not have all useful information, so the profile document is likely to be expanded upon as we obtain reliable data.

Tasmania visit

At the end of October (seems like eons ago), Tony and I were invited to speak to the Tasmania field day held at the Cressy Research Station, not far from Launceston. We had not set foot in Australia before, but had been told that Tasmania was a nice place. We were not disappointed, and would like to go back to visit for an extended period of time. Peter and Maxine Ewington were our hosts, and took us to visit a game park to see their native wildlife — the Tasmanian devil and of course Koala — and then on to visit one of the larger beekeepers in Tasmania. Their outfit was a credit to them.

We tasted their delicious Leatherwood honey, produced in copious quantities. Their only problem is that it fetches only about $2.00 per kilogram.

While at their field day, we spoke on the effects of varroa on our business, as well as our AFB Pest Management Strategy. They could not comprehend our policy of burning infected colonies to try to eliminate AFB, as they have been so conditioned to treat the disease, even though we tried to tell them that AFB was primarily spread by beekeepers.

Having experienced the fantastic hospitality of the Tasmanians I am now looking forward to attending Apimondia in Melbourne in 2007.

- Jane Lorimer

[Photos on page 6]

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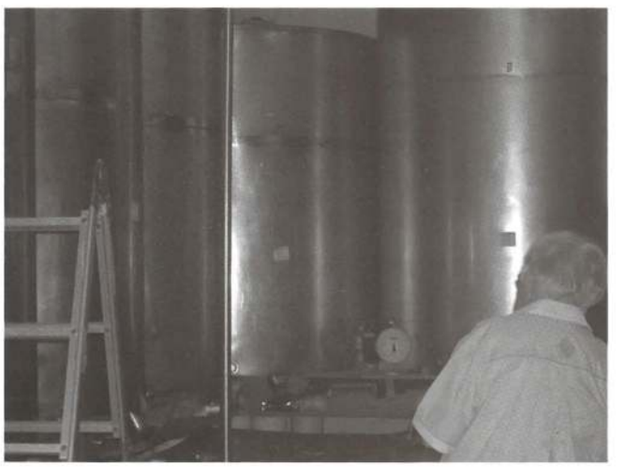
Photos from Tasmania visit October 2005

Outside the R Stephens factory: a very neat and tidy place and a Beequal-standard premises.

Mating nuc yard outside the factory.



One of more than a dozen holding tanks for the Leatherwood honey that they produce.

Packing and labelling machine.

Packaged product ready for sale. At the back of the photo are some wooden crates that have plastic liners that they use to store honey in bulk rather than using drums.

Semi-truck used for shifting large numbers of hives to the Leatherwood forest. All hives are shifted with the honey supers in place. They use half-depth supers and hives are stacked up to 14 boxes high.
Photos by: Jane Lorimer

Deadline for Publications

NB: No issue in January 2006 — Happy Holidays!

February 2006 edition: 13 January 2006

(NB earlier deadline as the February issue will be published earlier in February)

March 2006 edition: ***10 February 2006***

All articles/letters/photos to be with the Editor via fax, email or post:

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Secretarial Snippets

The year is rapidly drawing to a close amidst frenetic beekeeping activity. Good to see that beekeepers still have time to consider the NBA — I am still receiving requests for membership and magazine subscriptions. However, I have also had about 30 of the October magazines returned as "Gone no address". The bulk of the labels for the October and April issues are printed from the list of registered beekeepers. For this reason it is important that address changes are notified, particularly to AgriQuality.

I have found time in the past month to talk to a group of schoolchildren about bees and beekeeping. It was in fact an entire school — all 12 pupils of Kinohaku School, about one and a half hours west of Te Kuiti. They are great kids who have the good fortune to go to school in a wonderful location overlooking the southern arm of the Kawhia harbour. I took along the components of a beehive and assembled it as I talked to them. They asked some amazing and insightful questions. What impressed them most was the caged queen with her escorts. One small boy was not going to let go of it; he was mesmerised. I wonder if he might be a future beekeeper!

Another reminder that next year the NBA conference will be in the Waikato, with celebrations to mark the centenary of the branch and of commercial beekeeping in New Zealand. I am looking forward to receiving your photographs and written material that relates to the past 100 years, also the business history contributions. I will be reminding you again in 2006! Meantime I wish everyone a joyful Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

- Pauline Bassett, Executive Secretary

NBA Library Report

The NBA Library recently purchased several books and pamphlets which are now available for loan:

- *Fat Bees Skinny Bees – a manual on honeybee nutrition for beekeepers,* by Doug Somerville
- *Introduction and early performance of queen bees*
- *Improving queen bee production*
- *Successful introduction and performance of queen bees in a commercial apiary*
- *Update on research to control small hive beetles.*

The last four titles are published by the Australian Rural Industry Research and Development Corporation.

- Chris Taiaroa
Hon. Librarian

AFB NPMS Management Agency Manager resigns

It is with regret that the NBA Executive Council has accepted the resignation of James Driscoll from the position of American Foulbrood National Pest Management Strategy (AFB NPMS) Manager. Due to the demands of his other business and family commitments, James has advised that in February 2006 he would like to hand over the reins to a successor.

As the Management Agency, the NBA had struggled to address the responsibilities of the AFB NPMS with volunteers from Council members and other NBA members in the past. The introduction of a paid Manager has proved to be the correct solution.

James has brought enthusiasm and understanding of the bee industry to the new position and has helped to build a solid platform on which to run the strategy. James has had a large number of tasks to complete, which include developing the five-year Operational Plan and setting up the accounting package so the AFB NPMS is completely separate from the NBA, as well as the day-to-day management of the strategy on a part-time basis.

Due to James' diligence, the Management Agency is now fulfilling the wider role and instructions as laid down by Government in the Order in Council and the Biosecurity Act. His tremendous ability to work with beekeepers, contractors, Government officials and the NBA Executive to achieve the aims of the strategy will be sorely missed. We are most grateful for his assistance over the last two years, and wish him all the best in 2006 and beyond. We hope, however, that we are not going to lose him completely from the industry as he continues to enjoy his hobby beekeeping.

Advertisements seeking applications have been made and by the time you read this the NBA Executive will be considering the applicants for the position, so that the new Manager can have time with James in February and take over the reins.

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VARROA AGENCY INC

Varroa Agency Incorporated News

An update from chairman Duncan Butcher, November 2005

Education and the importance of record keeping

The VAI has been busy over the last couple of months progressing the education part of its role, to increase New Zealanders' awareness of biosecurity and keeping the South varroa free.

You may have heard VAI Board member Steve Olds talking on Newstalk ZB about the importance of checking cars and loads for stray bees before crossing the Cook Strait — this is part of an ongoing advertising approach the VAI is taking to increase awareness prior to Christmas.

At the same time, I've been talking to New Zealand media to make sure they understand the role of the VAI, the Pest Management Strategy, and the 'Keep the South Varroa Free' approach. The VAI sponsored a Biosecurity Journalism Award in October to increase awareness, and I attended a very successful award presentation function and media briefing in Wellington in October — an excellent opportunity to meet and brief many of New Zealand's rural journalists. Congratulations to Lester Thorley of the *Waikato Times*, whose coverage of the foot-and-mouth disease hoax at Waiheke Island earlier in the year won him the *Keep the South Varroa Free Biosecurity Journalism Award 2005.*

It's also been good to catch up with media in the provincial centres as we tour the South Island for the consultation meetings.

You also may have noticed media coverage of Dr Mark Goodwin from HortResearch's study into the effect of varroa on pollination of crops and plants in the North Island, including coverage on TV3 News early in November. Pollination is becoming more of a problem as bee numbers drop, and I used this point to drive home the importance of border control and biosecurity to keep the South varroa free. We've got people talking about it.

Coming up, we would like to target travellers coming South at Christmas, and are continuing to work alongside the inter-island transport industry to increase understanding of their responsibilities.

Record keeping

A reminder to beekeepers about the importance of record keeping. Beekeepers are legally required to keep records of the movement of their hives, within and between apiaries. You have to keep a written note of where the hives were, where they were moved to, the date of the move, and the date beehives are sold or disposed.

The reason for this is that in the unlikely event of varroa establishing in the South Island, Biosecurity New Zealand will be able to track the sources and the spread, making options for eradication easier.

We appreciate you help working with us to keep the South varroa free.

Another recipe for queen candy

Readers may have noticed the queen candy recipe in the October 2005 issue as part of Pauline Bassett's 'Secretarial snippets' article (page 4). Here's another recipe from Gary Jeffery which came from Frank White, a queen breeder from Kamo.

Ingredients:

10 cups of white sugar
3 cups of water
Small teaspoon of tartaric acid

Stir and bring to the boil. Once boiling, reduce heat to simmer for 35 minutes.

Use invert syrup — heat and mix with icing sugar until firm and still slightly sticky. Leave overnight in a plastic bag. Then add more icing sugar if needed to fill cages.

Keep cages once filled in a sealed container to stop the candy from absorbing moisture from the air.

Termination of Foundation-funded wasp research

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18 November 2005

Introduction

Beekeepers have long regarded wasps as a major enemy of bees, and many apiarists contributed financially and through the supply of wasp combs to our biological control effort over 25 years. However as from 1 July 2005, the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) has ceased funding research on wasps, and as far as I am aware there is now no Government-funded wasp research in New Zealand. Through the late 1980s and 1990s, wasps received a huge amount of publicity because of their high numbers and the problems they caused. Now that research has ceased, it is time for an evaluation of the efficacy of the research and its impact on wasps, and thus whether expenditure in different areas was appropriate.

Initial research on biocontrol of wasps by Entomology Division, DSIR

Research on wasps in New Zealand actually began soon after the German wasp *Vespula germanica* was known to be established in the country in 1945. After completing excellent research on the biology of the species in its new environment, C R Thomas, who worked for Plant Diseases Division of the old Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), suggested that *Sphecophaga vesparum burra* (as *Sphecophaga burra*) was probably the most promising of the parasites of *Vespula* if biological control was to be considered (Thomas 1960). However, nothing was done until I visited Dr Roger Akre at Washington State University, USA in 1978, when he promised to send me without cost, *Sphecophaga vesparum*, subspecies *burra*. At that time I was employed by the Entomology Division of DSIR, and during 1979 four shipments totalling 798 cocoons containing immature parasitoids were received by me and my technical assistants at the Canterbury Agriculture and Science Centre, Lincoln. After much experimenting we were able to breed the parasitoid on larvae and pupae of the German wasp, but only in small numbers. Of course until 1983 only the German wasp was known to be present in New Zealand, and because it also was not present in North America, it was not a known host of *S. v. burra*. Although we released a few of the parasitoids into nests, there was never any sign that the subspecies had established (Donovan 1983, Donovan and Read 1987).

The German wasp was thought to have originated from Europe, so in 1980 we began importing a second parasitoid, *Sphecophaga vesparum*, subspecies *vesparum*, which was known to attack it in Europe. Six shipments totalling 8,804 cocoons were sent from Europe during 1980–1981, and after much trial and error, we managed to breed the parasitoid for three consecutive generations, but numbers were low. By January 1984, nests of the recently discovered Common wasp, *Vespula vulgaris*, started becoming available in and around Christchurch, and from then on our parasitoid breeding success increased dramatically. By July 1985 we had bred the parasitoid for 13 successive generations, and had produced about 1,500 overwintering cocoons and several hundred adults. Following the experimental releases of parasitoids into wasp nests in the field, large-scale production of cocoons commenced in late 1986, and by September 1987, 31,080 cocoons had been stockpiled.

Funding for research conducted by Entomology Division, DSIR

Until 1987 all costs of the parasitoid programme had been carried internally by the Entomology Division of DSIR. The funding system then in place was that each year DSIR was given a lump sum that was divided between the Divisions to be spent on what was thought to be most important. There seem to be no records of the amount spent on wasp biocontrol, but a conservative estimate is about $100,000 per year, so up to the disestablishment of the DSIR in mid-1992, the total spent would have been about $1,300,000. Back then we were not allowed to earn any funding, as this would have meant that an agency of the State funded by taxes would have been in competition with private enterprise. However, by 1987 the State appeared to be running out of money, and the wheel started turning to the point where we began to be required to bring in money to keep our jobs and to further our research. So in 1987 we asked the public at large for contributions towards our parasitoid programme, on the basis that for every $5,000.00 plus GST we would supply 1,000 overwintering cocoons of the parasitoid.

Our programme was given a big boost when in November 1986, one parasitoid cocoon was found in an overwintered German wasp nest in Christchurch, and even more so when in May 1988, two Common wasp nests at Pelorus Bridge, which were 33 m and 625 m from parasitoid release boxes, were found to be attacked. Because of the dissolution of the DSIR in mid-1992, detailed records of the amount of money contributed by the public have been lost, but from 1986 to November 1992, at least $434,000 was received. Of this amount, beekeepers contributed several tens of thousands. By the late 1980s we had re-imported *S. v. burra*, and by late 1992 I had nearly finished an application to MAF for permission to field-release it.

Research on wasp ecology by Ecology Division, DSIR, and funding

By about 1985, Ecology Division of DSIR initiated research into the ecology of wasps, and especially into the Common

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wasp as it continued to invade much of the country. Funding probably amounted to several hundred thousand dollars each year. If a conservative estimation is $200,000 per year, then by mid-1992 when the DSIR ceased to exist, at least $1,400,000 would have been spent on wasp ecology.

Interest in wasp research by other researchers

Because of the huge publicity about wasps through the late 1980s, and the general feeling that surely more funding would follow, many other researchers were trying to initiate their own research programmes. Wasps were even mentioned in the Budget of July 1990, where wasps and possums were together allocated $5,700,000. (Our biocontrol programme was promised a million dollars, but we saw not one cent of it). My notes from many meetings, which often involved up to 20 people, show that chemists wanted to study pheromones and poisons; mathematicians wanted to produce models that they claimed would foretell the future of wasp population growth and interactions with parasitoids; insect pathologists suggested the investigation of bacteria and other microbes to kill wasps; and yet others promoted the importation of nematodes that would sterilise queen wasps.

Changes in science organisations, and funding procedures

After the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) was established in 1990, if one was lucky, funding for research was allocated through a competitive bidding process. If a bid was unsuccessful, staff were laid off. In mid-1992 the DSIR, parts of MAF, Forest Research and other organisations were disbanded, and from staff not made redundant in the process, 10 Crown Research Organisations (CRIs) were formed. The CRIs were to undertake research, but were to operate commercially, with the aim of making profits and paying dividends to the Government. Wasp researchers were assigned to Landcare Research Ltd. However, I was made redundant from Landcare after four months, and my experienced technical officer Mr Peter Read, who had been with me since before we started wasp research, was made redundant in mid-1998. Only wasp ecologists remained, most of whom originated from the wasp ecology programme within Ecology Division of DSIR.

Wasp biocontrol research by Donovan Scientific Insect Research, and funding

Fortunately for me, FRST decided to fund me to continue my biocontrol research, and from mid-1992 to mid-2005 I received $354,000, or an average of only $29,500 per year. In each bidding round, which occurred every two to three years, I bid for more but was never successful. During the early 1990s, Landcare denied me access to the *S. v. burra* which was virtually ready for field release, so with my new funding I re-imported my own colony. Landcare then agreed to a joint programme, and we subsequently made the first releases in late 1996. This was four years later than releases would have been made had the old DSIR not been disestablished, and if Landcare had cooperated earlier. In 1996 I imported a new species of parasitoid, *Sphecophaga orientalis*, from Israel, which was subsequently released in Canterbury, Murchison, and Palmerston North during 1997 and 1998 (Donovan et al. 2002).

Wasp ecology research by Landcare Research Ltd., and funding

From its inception on 1 July 1992, to 30 June 2005, Landcare received $5,001,000 from FRST for wasp research (letter to me of 5 October 2005 from Ian Whitehouse, Chief Operating Officer – Research, Landcare Research Ltd.). According to Dr Geoff Hicks, Chief Scientist, Department of Conservation (DoC), Landcare was forwarded over $197,000 by DoC from 1987 for contracted research (letter to me of 20 October 2005). In response to my request to Ian Whitehouse for details of the outcomes of Landcare's FRST-funded research, he listed "models for predicting wasp dynamics, field survey and monitoring methods, biological control using *Sphecophaga*, understanding of wasp impacts in beech forest ecosystems, outcomes of wasp control, and wasp baits and toxins". Another source within Landcare reports that some bait research has also been funded commercially.

Total funds spent on wasp biocontrol, and outcomes

The total amount spent on the importation of wasp biocontrol agents by Entomology Division of DSIR of $1,734,000, when added to my funding of $354,000, is $2,088,000. The results are the importation, propagation and field release of three wasp biocontrol agents, of which at least one is known to be

well established and killing wasps in several areas, and which is spreading. As at least one parasitoid is the only new agent out there that is killing wasps, there is a major possibility that it may have contributed to the recent widespread decrease in wasp populations (Donovan et al. 2002). The establishment of at least one parasitoid is the only concrete, widespread, self-replicating, permanent, at no-further-cost measure that is killing wasps.

Total funds spent on wasp ecology, and outcomes

If we total the estimated $1,400,000 of Government money spent on wasp ecology by Ecology Division DSIR which became part of Landcare, the $5,001,000 from FRST spent by Landcare, and the more than $197,000 allocated by DoC to Landcare, we have a total of at least $6,598,000. For all this, there is nothing out there that is killing wasps, apart from possibly some poison baits, which require a great deal of human input. In any case, commercially manufactured poison baits have long been available off the shelves of hardware stores. The most tangible result of the wasp ecology research is 54 scientific papers, which together present a lot of information on wasp ecology. None of this information was useful to the biocontrol programmes. Indeed, many of the interpretations of *Sphecophaga/Vespula* interactions, and the 'predictive' models, were counterproductive to the biocontrol programmes.

Comparative evaluation of the outcomes of wasp biocontrol and wasp ecology

An evaluation of the cost of the biocontrol programmes and wasp ecology programmes shows that three times as much was spent on ecology. The mean cost of introducing each of the three biocontrol agents was $698,000, and at this rate the $6,598,000 spent on wasp ecology could have funded the introduction of more than nine new biocontrol agents. Biocontrol theory says that the greater the number of biocontrol agents introduced, the greater the stability of control of the target organism at a lower level. From the point of view of controlling wasps, it is very obvious that spending the huge sum of $6,598,000 on wasp ecology has been a tragedy for our natural ecosystems — and beekeeping — when for just some of this money we could have established more biocontrol agents, and so have greatly increased the possibility of permanently further reducing wasp numbers. Beekeepers can be assured that money contributed by them was spent directly on the production of more wasp parasitoids. It is a real pity that the same cannot be said of our taxes that funded wasp ecology.

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NIWA's Climate Outlook: November 2005 to January 2006

Atmospheric circulation patterns over New Zealand during November–January are likely to be more anticyclonic than usual, with enhanced southwesterly airflows over the North Island, and more frequent southerly quarter airflows over the South Island.

Sea surface temperatures around New Zealand are expected to remain slightly above average to the end of January 2006. Air temperatures are expected to be average or above average in all regions of New Zealand.

Rainfalls are likely to be near normal in all regions, except for normal or below normal in the east of the North Island. Normal soil moisture levels and streamflows are expected in the North Island. Generally dry conditions are expected in the South Island.

The end of the golden weather, or so some beekeepers think

Jim Sim (NZ Food Safety Authority) and a group of assessors visited our honey house recently to see the equipment and familiarise themselves with the workings of a honey house so they could match their Bee Products Code of Practice to an actual set up. We extracted some of last season's honey so they could see everything working.

We live in a Wellington suburb and our honey house is under the house, a compact 5 x 3 metre room off our old garage. Incoming supers are stored in the old garage area before going into the hot room. There's not much room in the honey house, but it's designed to work with two persons in the room if I remove everything not connected with extracting. We used to hire a storage unit for miscellaneous items but at $2,000 a year it got a bit too expensive, so old frames and supers, honey drums and bits of gear have gradually taken over the front of the section as the season has progressed. Not a good look for a suburban area, but we are slightly hidden and my neighbours are very tolerant.

My honey house

Having been around for quite some time, most of the equipment in the honey house is stainless steel; however, our extractors are quite old and have steel inner workings. The equipment works well but the inner surfaces are showing signs of wear.

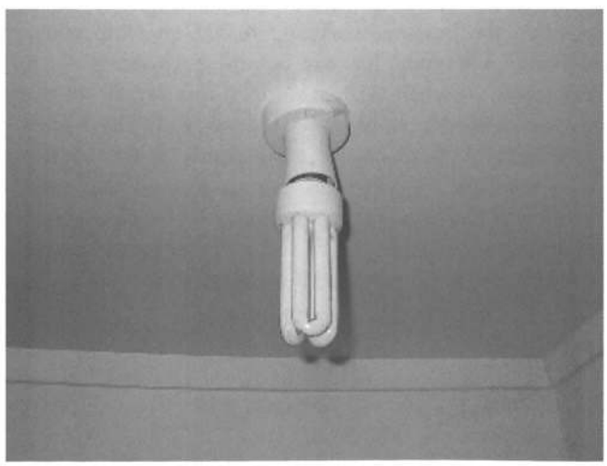
We all have an understanding of the Hygiene Regulations that we have to work under, which are administered at present by the local council for health and hygiene certification purposes. Honey is generally considered to be a healthy product that does not support organisms, so local authorities have taken a fairly lenient line when dealing with beekeepers.

Our local authority is more switched on than others and has gone halfway into a HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) system. The inspectors were interested in the paperwork to see that we were adhering to our cleaning schedule; what chemicals and sanitizers are used (everything, including the walls and ceilings, are sprayed with a sanitizer before we commence extracting for the season); that there is a qualified person with a food safety certificate; a first aid kit is available; that the room was sound and clean; and that the hot water temperature was at 63 degrees centigrade. (The latter is a bone of contention with us, as hot water and propolis make one awful mess to clean up). Generally I left something minor undone for the inspector to spot and after agreeing to fix/clean it he was satisfied. A half-hour visit and we got an excellent certificate. Anything outside the extracting room didn't really count as long as everything was tidy.

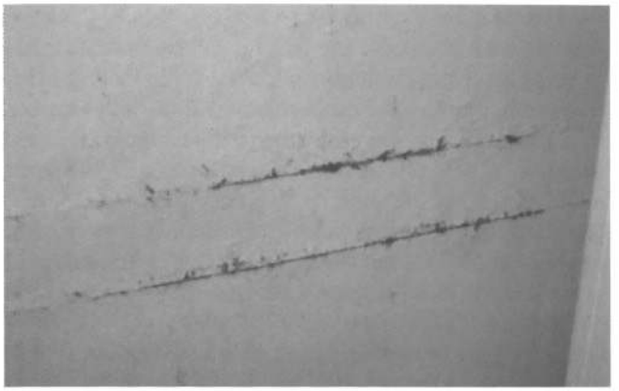
Under the Code of Practice the key changes are that "we" are responsible as the operator for compliance, and we need to be able to demonstrate that we know the rules (which have existed since 1976) and are taking steps to ensure we comply. As Jim has said, there will always be grey areas that are open for discussion and negotiation.

Instead of being told what to do under the old system, we now have to put pen to paper (follow the template), note everything that's not up to standard and agree with NZFSA on a timeline to get everything corrected. This shouldn't be an arduous task as we wouldn't have got a health certificate if our plants were not at the minimum standard, but this is quite a change for some beekeepers.

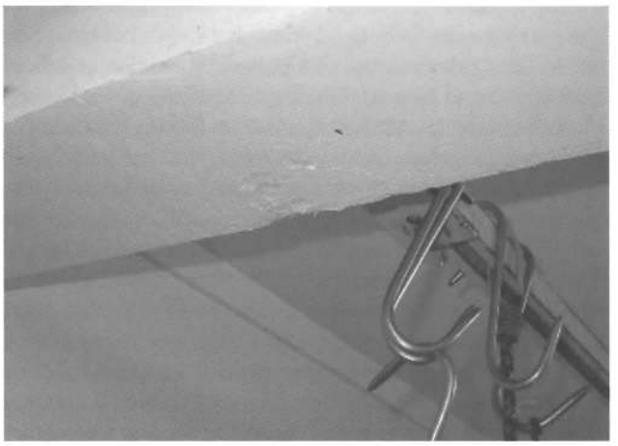
Well it didn't take too long for Jim's health inspector's experienced eye to spot a few things that needed tiding up. I pumped him for the information but he said it's not their role to tell us what needs correcting: it's ours to note that down. Some of the things he spotted included: a couple of honey drums with the covers lifted off by the recent winds; a light left uncovered; bubbling in the chipboard door near the sink; dents in the gib board lining where supers had fallen against the wall (surfaces have to be moisture proof); the powder coating/paint wearing off the internals of the extractors; and paint tins, solvents and assorted stuff on a shelf above uncovered honey supers waiting to be extracted. All had the potential for things to drip or fall onto the honey frames, and which Mary-Ann had been at me to clean up.



Lights should be covered so that glass will not go into the product if it is broken.



Bubbled chipboard door near the sink.



Worn plaster and steel painted tiebar.

We then went on to discuss bee stings, the likelihood of getting a sting, what to expect and what safety precautions the assessors should take. For those who go the COP route, the assessors will be there when you are extracting, so it's important that they are comfortable with a few bees flying around outside.

After they left, I started making a list of things that need attention. This is basically the only difference between the present council hygiene set-up and a Code of Practice. You just need to make a few lists of the things you all automatically do now.

- Frank Lindsay

From the colonies

Auckland Branch

The pollination hives are all in, and things have come back to normal somewhat before we have to get them out again (much to the relief of my back).

I had a bit of a rude awakening with the opening day/night of it. Brian says these are the heaviest the hives have ever gone into the orchards, with the nectar pouring in over the last few weeks with all the fine weather. All up we shifted nearly 600 hives, being awake at the dawn chorus on a couple of occasions. It's amazing what you can do on pies, chocolate bars and energy drinks. *[Editor's note: try the low glycaemic index (GI) suggestions made by Fiona O'Brien in her article last month and see what further wonders you can achieve!]*

The weather behaved itself with only one night of rain on the last night of shifting, making things a lot more pleasant. I got into the honey sites a few days ago to check how they're going and couldn't believe the amount of honey on. New foundation put on just before we started pollination has been completely filled in some places, especially the carnica hives which really seem to be getting stuck in. We ran out of boxes some time ago and have been frantically making up more trying to keep on top of the flow. The hives are looking good at the moment with lots of bees and the swarming has slowed down a bit with the flow being on.

The flower on the Manuka, cabbage and Rewarewa have been holding out and the Kanuka has just started to flower over the last few days in places, so there's plenty of food source around. I'm pleased we're upgrading the extracting shed this season, as it looks like it's going to be busy.

- James Harrison

Waikato Branch

Can somebody please tell me what ever happened to the warm weather, as I sit here typing in a skivvy, long pants and a beanie. Many of us are on the gentle slope of removing bees from orchards during rain, hail or shine, and sleep — what is that?!

Speaking of sleep I had a dream, or was it a nightmare? Instead of the normal five hives across the truck, two high, eight rows back, in my dream we now had the capacity to take eight across, three high and still eight rows. So instead of 80 hives I now could take 192 hives, which reduced my speed to 50 km per hour. Although my load was over width, I didn't need to use my oversize/dimension indicators to tell the other drivers who followed me, and there were a fair few behind me with their lights on because the fog was down very heavily as we drove along the back road following the river. There was no way I could pull over as the road wasn't designed for me and my road grip tyres, as they would bite into the side of the tarseal and pull me off. I could have used the last three side roads to divert onto and let a few of the cars and trucks behind me go, but I was having too much fun looking in my rear vision mirror at the cars behind the truck following me, trying to outmanoeuvre each other and pass three abreast. I managed to hold that truck at bay for at least 10 kilometers and then she had the audacity to blast her horn at me when she finally got past me on a clear patch of road away from the river. I tried to hold her back with my tyres over the middle white line, but she was gone, turbo and all.

Brrrrr … goose bumps as I awakened from my dream. The trouble was, only part of it was a dream, the bit about the truck being able to take more hives (thank goodness). The real part was that I actually had been following a large contracting tractor. I had ten kilometres to ponder how I drive and how I can make it safer for both our crew and I. I didn't have bees on the back this time but with pollination season underway I usually do, so have to think more carefully about where I place my vehicle and the people who follow, pass and put us all in a dangerous position. Should I have pulled off and let all the other traffic have a go at passing the tractor? The piece of road I was driving is notorious for accidents. The two of three vehicles ahead of me that got passed just missed oncoming traffic, so perhaps I helped hold some risk takers at bay. I guess the biggest thing about being a truck driver is being alert for hazards, leaving enough space between you and the person in front and realising that it takes twice as long to pull up than a car. Of course there are many other things to be thinking about as well. This is not the first contractor I have followed and it won't be the last; all I can tell you is that in the Bay of Plenty the tractors 'shrink' and that the ones in the Waikato are getting bigger and wider with each season. I do know that the traffic department is playing their part in keeping them in line.

Interestingly, this pollination season I have learnt all about hydraulics, and how the Ezyloader is fitted with hoses etc. (Does this mean I understand them? Mmmm…) If you have purchased an Ezyloader then please contact me, as I have been talking with other loader users about getting together next year to share experiences and help understand our loaders more. Who knows, for the price of a Freedom Air airfare we may even be able to get the Australians out to do a group once-over and share feedback.

As for the Waikato, over the month we have had little and then lots of rain, and hot and cold spells. Honey is still flowing and kiwifruit hives have now turned around in the Bay and are heading home. Extraction sheds are being 'dusted off', with some having honey already in for extraction. It seems that the bees have been flying to sources not seen from apiaries/yards, with surprises for beekeepers in areas that they thought didn't produce honey, such as Rewarewa. Other honeys include Manuka, Kamahi and the start of pastoral flows. It only takes a peek in the paddocks to see clover, so here's hoping the conditions are right later on. Beekeepers are looking tired; however, I guess thoughts of short breaks at Christmas help to keep everything in perspective.

The Waikato Branch would like to wish all beekeepers a wonderful Christmas and a good start to the new year. We

are looking forward to hosting Conference next year and from February onwards it will be 'watch this space' for updates.

- Fiona O'Brien

Hawkes Bay Branch

The weather has settled and most beekeepers have stopped feeding at least for now. Kiwifruit hives are all in and apart from a few isolated incidents there has been very little spray poisoning in the Apple hives this year. That's the good news — the bad news is the number of hives swarming and the high number of queens failing. Swarming in some areas has been over 50% of hives, despite all efforts of beekeepers, and the number of failing queens is far above normal. Many people have ideas on what is causing this problem, although it is unclear exactly how or if varroa is heavily implicated. It could be the cumulative effects of the varroa treatments, viruses transmitted to the queen by the varroa or a lack of viability in the drones caused by varroa treatments or varroa. I would be interested in any comments on this matter. Of course, it could just be the season, as some hives in some areas are not showing any of these problems (thank goodness).

Moisture levels in the soil are good at the moment, although some rain in the driest areas would be appreciated. Clover is very slow to flower this year and the Manuka has very high levels of native bees competing with honeybees. With luck these problems will sort themselves out and we will have a good year.

- John Berry

Southern North Island Branch

Pollination for Kiwifruit orchards is in full swing in our area, with beekeepers working long hours and feeling stressed. Still, after reading Fiona's article on healthy eating, maybe we will enjoy that cuppa and snack around 1 am to 2 am in the middle of deliveries a bit more. On a fine night it is lovely but if it is cold and showery the cab of the truck is not the most comfortable spot.

The anticipated break in pollen and nectar flow came as usual in late October/early November. Many hives have honey boxes on and ample supplies but always there are apiaries that do not get enough, and so we are either continuing to feed, or back to feeding syrup again.

Because our area covers Taranaki to Wellington and the Wairarapa there are huge differences in hive growth, honey flow, and weather patterns. To date I am not getting reports of unusual problems, so we look forward to a good harvest.

Best wishes for Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year, to all beekeepers.

- Neil Farrer

Canterbury Branch

October and November have been excellent months in Canterbury for the bees, making for easy work for the owners(!), especially compared to last year. The season itself

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is sitting on a knife edge. At this stage it could go either way. Subsoil moisture is at very low levels and pasture growth is relying on heavy dews, frequent short bursts of southerlies, lack of nor'west winds and a good deal of hope. Irrigation wells throughout Canterbury are at their lowest and a lot of wells are being deepened to get adequate water. One wonders when this resource will finally be ruined. This also will impact on the way we beekeepers derive income from hives in Canterbury.

- Brian Lancaster

Otago Branch

The joys of early summer beekeeping. There I was, miles away in the wrong truck with the wrong gear when the text arrived: "Sheryl from Leith Valley called. Your bees have left home and she wants you to put them back!" Bugger! Oh well, at least it was well put. Later that day I did 'put them back', and a miserable little swarm it was too for my trouble. I suspect quite a few beekeepers have had these calls this year.

As I suspected a month or so ago it has been a year for the bush, with 'the dry' fast spreading from Central to the east coast. I think we will see lots of truckloads of bees moving around Otago and Southland pretty soon. On the bright side, it may be all over by Christmas and we can have a summer holiday for a change! Merry Christmas to all.

- Peter Sales

Nelson Branch

Not a lot has changed here in Nelson: the spring has remained hot and rainless and predictably the honey flow is coming several weeks earlier than normal. The spring dew flow has been good, with some beekeepers reporting up to one and a half boxes per hive. As I write this in early December, the Manuka is well into early flower, and we predict that it will be a short flow and burn off early. The borage is also burning off early, and not looking good at the starting gate.

The *Nelson Mail* just reported that the 278 sunshine hours recorded at Nelson Airport last month has made it the fourth sunniest November since 1948. This is the fourth month in a row that we have received lower than average rainfall. (This is not an advertisement for Nelson.) All farmers are settling in for a very serious drought. Takaka is slightly better off and the Murchison area has had enough rain for 24 hours to settle the dust.

The pollination season is virtually completed, and hives are being moved out of the plains where there is very little left for the bees to feed on.

Good luck to the rest of you over the Christmas season, and may the honey flow into your supers while you are sitting back and enjoying your Christmas dinner!

- Merle Moffitt

Report on Franklin Beekeepers' Club field day

The Franklin Beekeepers' Club met on 13 November 2005 at our new apiary in Karaka. Wesley College has allowed us to set up the apiary on a concrete pad next to a disused milking shed, providing excellent inside storage for boxes and other equipment as well as all-weather access around the hives.

Nineteen people attended on what was a rather cool morning, with some showers threatening. Despite the weather, we opened the hives to find some had swarmed. Other hives had little feed. A drone was found suffering from deformed wing virus, but as the hive had since had Apistan in it, few mites were found in the hive. Our hive master, Fann Lottering, delighted in pointing out a newly mated queen with *lingustica* traits, rather than the carnica-cross queens that are in the other hives.

The club also hosted Dr Mark Goodwin of HortResearch in October, where he addressed 20 people on the best practice use of Thymol.

- Stuart Ward

Fann Lottering with new queen. *Photo: Stuart Ward*

Hawkes Bay Diseaseathon Report

The annual check of hives for AFB was held on Saturday 5 November 2005, starting at Arataki Honey Ltd in Havelock North.

Thanks to some good publicity from *The New Zealand Beekeeper* and an article, with photo, in one of our local papers, there was a good turnout of expert beekeepers and those willing to learn. Thanks also to all who helped on the day, and also to Tom Taylor and John Berry, who did the choosing of areas that needed attention.

There were four suspect samples sent for lab analysis but these are not expected to be positive. If this proves correct, there were no infestations of AFB.

As a small sign of appreciation, drivers were each given a couple of petrol vouchers to help to defray their costs. If any drivers missed out this year or last year, be sure to contact Ron Morison.

- Ron Morison

Photo of one of the six hives crowded on to a suburban Napier section. They were all heavy, five-high boxes high, but the bees were very friendly. The owner must be able to keep his neighbours happy with gifts of honey. ***Photo: Ron Morison***

About the Apiary

Everything is flowering and if you pass the hives in the evening, there's a heavy scent of nectar in the air and a continuous hum from the bees. It's all go. The Kamahi and Rewarewa flow has been very good. Now Manuka is starting in the bush areas and the bees are concentrating on collecting nectar instead of swarming. In the waste areas (river banks, road edges, railway lines) blackberry is flowering well and the bees are all over it.

So far it's been a good flow all around and if we continue to get a day's rain every week through December, the flow should continue. As of the last week in November things were very dry in the lower North Island and pastures were turning brown. After six weeks with just a few days of rain we were going into drought. A week of showers and cold southerly winds have turned some areas green again, so there could be a clover flow after the bush has finished flowering.

It's very pleasant beekeeping at the moment. All the worry and work of requeening, swarm control, getting everything ready for the flow is now over and it's a pleasure before we get into the heavy work of extracting in the new year. About all that needs doing at present is to lift the roof off your hives every couple of weeks to inspect the top super. The bees should be up in the top super, drawing out new foundation frames, storing nectar and then capping the frames of honey. If you have any hives where the bees are covering three or more frames in the top super, put on another honey super.

If the bees get too hot they hang out at the front of the hives in the middle of the day, which means they need more ventilation. This is particularly noticeable in hives that have dark-coloured supers. Put a twig under the inner cover to raise it or twist the top super slightly to create a 5–10 mm gap in one corner. This creates a top entrance and increases the hive ventilation. The bees will return inside the hive during the evening and will then keep working during the heat of the day. The main thing to do is give them supers so they continue to collect nectar.

I'm going through a 10-year upgrading of my bee gear. This year I have bought many replacement supers and put lots of plastic frames in the honey supers for the bees to draw out. A large proportion of these are Manley frames (41 mm wide instead of the standard Hoffman frame, which measures 33–35 mm). I prefer Manley frames as it only requires eight frames to the super and this goes well with my eight-frame extractor. However if you put eight Manley frames into a super, it's a tight squeeze and once the bees have propolised everything, they are difficult to remove. To overcome this problem I now do what a Blenheim beekeeper suggested to me years ago: use six Manley frames with two Hoffman frames in the middle. This leaves a gap between the outside frames and the super wall — problem fixed.

The only small problem with using Manley frames is getting them drawn out evenly when new. Being 41 mm wide, the bees sometimes build brace comb at right angles to the face of the comb. On my next inspection round after putting on a number of new plastic frames, I look between the frames to see if there's any brace comb. I usually find some on one or two frames in each super. I remove the offending comb with a hive tool and then turn the frame end on end before replacing it, so the damaged surfaces of each frame no longer face each other. The bees then continue to draw the frames out correctly. I put the brace comb in the feeder for later recovery and melt down. Some may see Manley frames as a drawback as they are specialised honey frames and cannot be interchanged with brood nest frames. I don't consider this to be a disadvantage as it helps to separate honey and brood frames.

Swarming

Unfortunately a few hives in each apiary have swarmed — the ones I didn't split as I considered they were too small in October to build up early and become a problem. They did build up quickly, packed in early honey and then swarmed, because I didn't get round all my hives quickly enough to give them extra supers after they filled the first one. Most of these hives built a few queen cells along the bottom bars of the top super (I don't use queen excluders) and then the old queen and the field bees took off. They didn't go near my bait hives as I suppose there are lots of empty feral hive cavities around. I'm disappointed but not too worried as I have lots of nucleus replacements that are now going into the second super.

Every hive that I come across that isn't up to the standard of the rest of the hives in the apiary is investigated. I go down into the second super and have a look at a few brood frames. Remove an outside frame and slide the others outwards to create a space in the middle so that the bees are not rolled when the middle frame is removed. Are there eggs and brood in the middle frames? If you find empty queen cells, only sealed brood, and honey in the brood area often indicates a hive has swarmed. (When I inspect I'm also looking for signs of AFB). Spotty brood indicates a failing queen. At this time of the year I don't muck around with weak hives. All get a nuc placed on the third super with two sheets of newspaper to slow down the merging of the bees. However if there's a flow on and the bees are flying well, the bees generally are too busy to fight, so I put a nuc on top of the second super and the new queen is accepted quickly. If you don't want to use newspaper, spray a little air freshener under the bottom bars of the second and third supers, and over the top of the honey super frames to change the scent of the hive. Then put the nuc straight on and replace the honey supers. I let the queens sort things out for themselves, as I don't have time to find the old queen and dispatch her at this time of the year. Failures (where both queens die and are not replaced) are picked up when the hives are inspected to remove honey. These hives are given another nuc or a queen cell.

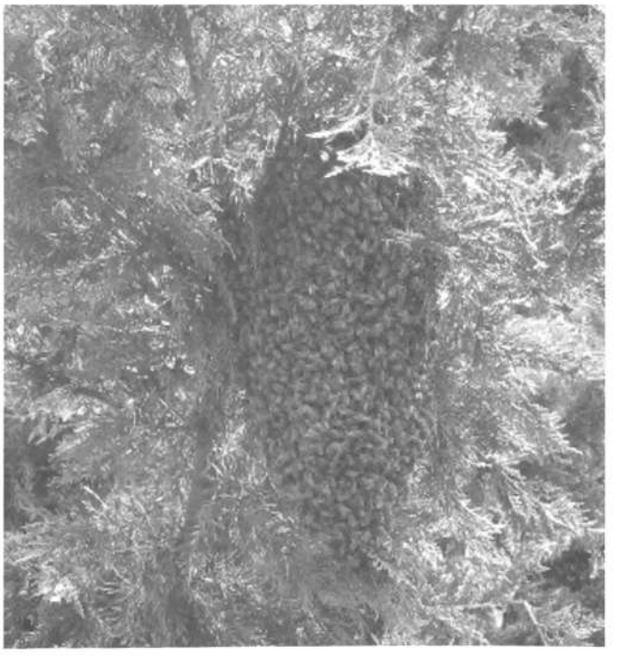
Not all bees are the same. There is the odd hive that behaves differently to others. Some hives store honey in the top super and allow the queen to lay in the supers between. Others 'honey the queen down' to the bottom super early in the

season. (That is, bees normally place nectar in the brood nest during the day, then take it up in the evening when it's ripened. But 'downers' just leave it there, compacting the brood nest and forcing the queen into the bottom super only.) This season a lot more have honeyed the queen down early. It seems to have been a competition between the bees and the queens as to who used the upper brood nest frames and the bees won. Instead of taking the nectar up to the honey supers in the evening, the bees left it in the brood area, filling the cells as the brood emerged. To keep these queens laying I have put another super of mixed foundation and drawn frames above the first brood super and on the next visit, the queen should be laying in them if she's any good.

Since using plastic frames in the brood nest I have noticed that the bees like to fill them with pollen. During the rare times when I go into the brood chamber now, I look at the odd plastic frame. If it has pollen on one side only, I turn the side with the pollen to the outside of the super. If it has pollen in both sides, I move it to the outside (frame position 1 or 10). If the queen comes across pollen sometimes she will not go past it even when there are empty frames outside the pollen one for her to lay in.

You don't have this problem as frequently with wax foundation frames, as the bees draw out the cells to match the position of the frame in the brood nest. It's only when we move things around that we upset the formation of the brood nest. I have noted a similar behaviour pattern with swarms. The bees seemed to prefer wax frames to waxed plastic frames; i.e., no swarms went into the wax-dipped plastic-framed bait hives.

Not where you want to find your bees



How many honey supers do I need?

There are two sorts of beekeeping operations when it comes to honey production. Some beekeepers remove capped honey on a regular basis every two to three weeks, extract it and put the wet/sticky supers back on the hive quickly for the bees to refill. The wet frames stimulate the bees into collecting more nectar. The advantage with this method is that you don't need a lot of honey supers (two or three) and that you keep the honey varieties separated.

I'm the other type. I don't have a dedicated setup or the time to continually extract so I add more supers as the bees move

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Merry Christmas

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank our customers for their business throughout the year and also wish our customers, their families & staff a very Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Please note we close for Christmas holidays @ 3pm on Thursday 22nd December 2005 and re-open @ 8.30am on Monday 9th January 2006.

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into them. My objective is to get four or five three-quarter-depth supers of honey off each hive on a strong flow.

It's risky to simply add supers and hope for the best. If it's not a strong flow the bees move up but only cap honey in the middle frames, creating a chimney effect. This means more sorting at extraction time and can also waste supers that could have just as easily have been on a hive that was filling supers. There are always a few hives in an apiary that find honey when others do not.

In fact I do extract a few apiaries early. I remove early Kamahi and bush sources to make room for Pohutukawa and Manuka, so that when the honey from these apiaries is extracted the honey supers only contain the one variety of honey. The Pohutukawa hives get a lot of new foundation frames for next year's brood nest (this honey comes out of the frames like water) while the Manuka hives are given plastic frames. New foundation frames disintegrate in the pricker, as Manuka honey is thixotropic and difficult to extract.

A pricker (honey loosener) or a roller is rather expensive and are purchased only by those with quite a few hives. For beekeepers who get the odd super of Manuka, the honey can be removed by scraping the wax down to the midrib. The wax and honey then has to be squeezed through muslin or a nylon filter to separate it. For those with mesh filters, the Manuka honey can be persuaded to go through the gauze filter by heating it with a hair dryer. Don't give it too much heat, though, as you may also melt the wax. For very small amounts of honey, heat the honey and wax in a glass jar in a microwave oven. Use bursts of 1.5 minutes on full power at five-minute intervals and the wax will gradually raise to the surface. Again, don't let the honey get too hot as Manuka is easily burnt.

Toxic honey

Just a little reminder to the larger beekeepers. The Tutu shrub *(Coriaria arborea* and *C. sarmentosa)* is distributed throughout most of New Zealand and generally grows on banks and in old streambeds. It provides dull greenish yellow pollen but under certain conditions can produce toxic honeydew as a result of these plants being heavily infested with passion vine hoppers. Previously, areas around the Coromandel and the Bay of Plenty were closed to honey production because the bees were likely to collect Tutu honeydew when no other sources of nectar are available. However, because of its wide distribution and the warm winter, I expect we could see high numbers of passion vine hoppers this year right through the country, rather than just in the usual closed areas.

For the past few years, beekeepers (not MAF) are responsible for ensuring that they do not produce toxic honey. Therefore we should all be monitoring a few Tutu bushes close to our apiaries on a regular basis and recording what we see in a diary. How else can we then sign a declaration that our honey is free of toxins? So be especially vigilant from early January onwards. We don't want to go through a similar situation to that in Australia, where the public lost confidence in store-bought honeys as a result of residue problems a few years ago.

Mites (North Island only)

Most hives can go 50 days without treatment before numbers start to build up, but there are areas in Taranaki and the Southern North Island where the acute phase is still at its height. Beekeepers in these areas will have to monitor hives and perhaps get strips into them as the honey comes off in February.

Research from the USA has shown that hives have to produce at least 30,000 bees that are mite free to survive the winter. We are perhaps a little luckier here in that most areas have brood in them all year round and therefore can wait a little longer before treating, but then again this is playing Russian roulette with your bees.

Don't forget to make sure we all use an alternative treatment to reduce the chance that the mites are becoming resistant to Apistan and Bayvarol.

Things to do this month

For those inland and down south (the southern South Island): check feed. Check for failing queens, introduce nuclei, super hives, prepare the honey house equipment, undertake first extraction in some areas, control swarms and weeds. Check for AFB before removing any honey. Fit foundation into comb honey frames.

Have a small break over Christmas and New Year with your family before getting stuck into extracting. All the best for a good honey crop and increasing bulk honey prices.

- Frank Lindsay

Graduation of four Telford students

Four apiculture students graduated from Telford Rural Polytechnic on Friday 25 November 2005. Two students, Cory Rusbatch and Andrew Velman, were awarded distinctions and Phillip Burgess and David Beuke received a pass in the Telford Certificate in Apiculture course.

Cory Rusbatch received a distinction in the Certificate in Queen Bee Rearing, Andrew Velman and David Beuke received merits and Phillip Burgess, a pass in Queen Bee Rearing.

Cory Rusbatch, from Waimate, was awarded the NZ Honey Industry Trust bursary of $3,200. Cory shared the Graeme Clark Cup as joint winner for the best queen bee breeder and won the prestigious SA and RH Findlay Cup for Telford's ideal trainee student.

Phillip Burgess, from Hastings, was awarded the Ecroyd Beekeeping Supplies smoker for most improved student showing effort and diligence and the Airborne Honey Bursary of $500.

Andew Velman from Kaitangata, shared the Graeme Clark Cup as joint winner for the best queen bee breeder.

David Beuke, from Motueka, was awarded the Beeline Supplies $300 Queen Bee Rearing bursary.

All students completed their Telford Certificate in Apiculture Level 3, the Telford Certificate in Queen Bee Rearing Level 4, the National Certificate in Apiculture Level 2 and the National Certificate in Apiculture Level 3, completing a total of 167 credits.

During the course students completed a First Aid Certificate, a Growsafe Certificate, a Food Safety Certificate, passed the industry DECA exam (Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement) as well as completing two weeks' work experience.

- Dr David Woodward
Head of Department, Apiculture
Telford Rural Polytechnic

Isn't it always those quick jobs that turn to custard?

Recently I went to put out 10 mating nucs and pick up a queen for the club raffle. Just a quick job; however, backing out proved to be my undoing.

The track, bulldozed a year ago, was overgrown in parts with sweet peas and fennel — normally something the vehicle can easily push through. But at the top it was a bit too narrow to turn around, so I proceeded to back down in four-wheel drive. During the last 10 metres I felt I was too close to the right-hand edge of the track so I went forward, realigned the vehicle so I had flat ground on both sides in the mirrors, and let the vehicle idle back down the track again. The last little bit had a steep 45-degree incline so I expected the back to dip, but was surprised at the crazy angle the vehicle was in. I stopped and tried to go forward again. Nothing happened, and then I realised the vehicle was rocking slightly. It was only when I got out of the vehicle and put my hand out to stop it rocking that I discovered it was just balancing on the verge of rolling over. I went around the vehicle and found it was straddling a bank. The front left wheel was six inches off the ground and the back was sitting in loose shingle.

Mmmmm — no anchorage to the left as this was a steep shingle ditch, so I couldn't get any purchase to put the vehicle upright here. There was a small whiteywood tree to the right up hill, however, so I put a wire rope on the tree and a towing strop on the bumper and set up my fencing strainer to hold the front steady.

I decided I needed to jack up the front left side of the truck and slide a piece of concrete under the wheel so that it would push the right-hand-side wheel down on to the ground. Up she came but it was still very wobbly, so I forced a super under the tray to hold it steady. When I went around the other side the front wheel was now a foot off the ground — oooooohhh. I slowly unwound the jack but left the super in place for safety. More mmmmm's — I needed help!

The rail workers were working on the line following a recent derailment and used the same access so I waited for them to finish for the day. In the meantime I reduced the number of supers on the left-hand side of the deck to lighten the load slightly.

When they came along, I asked if they could all sit on the right side of the truck to force it down so I could drive out. "We can do better than that," they said, "we have a crane!" Along it came, the driver had a smile on his face and said, "this will be the second one I've have lifted out today". Apparently a worker went to turn a ute around on the rail line and put it down the bank.

Strops were put on either side of the back chassis, and a minute later the truck was sitting at a more sedate angle. The cost: a dozen DB Export. I was very thankful for their help. Just before I left I cleaned away the growth so I could see the track better for next time.

I must admit that this incident did affect me somewhat. I kept finding I was speeding all the time going home – thinking of 'what ifs'.

Moral of the story: get out and look before you proceed backwards. I should know this one. As a young technician I was on a callout to the wharf's phone system. Car parks were hard to find around the wharf, so I drove around the parking area until I found a space I could park in and proceeded to back in, right on top of a railway-switching lever. That removed the exhaust system from the car. No wonder nobody parked there.

- Frank Lindsay

Innovative Flower Arrangement

Kereru School recently had their annual pets day and flower display at which Lexy McArdle (12 years) entered a smoker as the most unusual container for her flower arrangement. Lexy removed the air tube and inserted a cork into the hole to make the smoker watertight. She was highly commended for her idea. Her mother Kaye has just started keeping bees with one hive she received as a present for her birthday. She went to her hive on the morning of the pets day to catch the queen bee so Lexy could take it to school as the most unusual pet. Unfortunately Kaye had forgotten her veil, so dressed up well with her raincoat hood tied tightly around her face and got really hot while she caged the queen and her attendants. At least she had her smoker to keep the bees quiet. The things parents do for their kids is amazing!

The judge from the National Bank did not award Lexy first prize, which we felt she deserved. The prize went to a Leopard fish called Zebra, taken to school by Hattie Holt from the junior room. Kaye is enjoying learning much about bees and queens as she helps Judy Dobson at BeeZone Adventures in Kereru, Hawkes Bay.

- John Dobson

Photo: Kaye McArdle

Letters to the Editor

Dissatisfied with NZ Food Safety Authority policy on Animal Products

Dear Editor,

My company, Claridges Organic, is a newcomer to the bee industry, with a history of only four years marketing bee products overseas and locally. This short history gives me no right to hand out advice on your industry, but I must admit it absolutely astounds me that you have allowed the NZ Food Safety Authority to put such a draconian compliance regime on you. There has been no fight back to speak of, just morbid acceptance. For goodness sake, there is no common sense, or for that matter academic logic, why an extremely low-risk product such as honey should demand such a robust Animal Products compliance regime. NZFSA says that overseas markets require it but as exporters we know this is not strictly true. Overseas governments may have suggested that working toward more traceability would be good, but that is a far cry from an Animal Products compliance regime.

Why on earth have you allowed this to happen to your industry? You don't have to accept what NZFSA has done. You can overturn this if you want to. It's your industry and if push comes to shove, you can get this very substandard bit of bureaucracy changed. It's a democracy we live in and that means public servants are answerable to you and your elected politicians. As this present Government is shaky, some concerted lobbying should tip this into the bin where it certainly belongs.

NZFSA, under the management of Andrew McKenzie, has shown itself in a number of areas to have scant regard to the financial health of business and even less for small business. Your industry in particular is represented by small business so it really is a direct threat to the livelihood of many individual families. NZFSA has a very shallow knowledge and understanding of the bee industry, as shown by their totally inappropriate compliance regime. This must give you an understanding of how little creative thought and care they have put into the health of your business and industry. Don't accept this mean shallow bit of compliance. Write to the man who put this regime in place. His name is Andrew McKenzie, NZFSA, P.O. Box 2835, Wellington, and tell him your thoughts. Don't bother with his underlings as they follow his lead. Bother Jim Anderton with a letter and get your industry representatives to put pressure on the correct people.

From experience in the Natural Products industry, the big players in the bee industry may like this compliance regime as it will put proportionately more pressure and costs on their small competitors so don't rely on them to lead a revolt. They may well come out in support of NZFSA. The bee industry is mostly made up of small businesses, so don't allow this compliance regime to steal your hard-earned money.

- Lawrence Heath
Claridges Organic

NZFSA Executive Director responds:

Dear Editor,

To protect both their consumers and their plant and animal health, countries importing food products require assurances from the government of the exporting country that their requirements have been met.

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority provides such assurances on behalf of the New Zealand Government and as a consequence, New Zealand food exports (comprising more than 50% of our total export income) access the world's most demanding markets.

Protecting the integrity of the certification we provide is a top priority for NZFSA. For the sake of New Zealand's ongoing trading reputation, we must be confident that if we say something has happened, there are systems in place to enable us to verify that. New Zealand's trading partners expect us to have a through-chain system that delivers safety, evidence of control, regulatory oversight and traceability.

Some of the larger domestic customers (e.g., supermarkets) also want the bee products industry to have either risk management programmes (RMPs) or Food Safety Programmes (FSPs) in place because they recognise that their own reputations are dependent on their suppliers.

Consumers also have expectations about all food being safe to eat and the premises food is produced in being clean and hygienic.

The proposed system will address all of these issues. I think it is important to note that NZFSA has spent considerable time and effort to work closely and collaboratively with the bee products industry to develop the Code of Practice and RMP templates. Minimising compliance costs has been a priority. Those who currently comply with the Food Hygiene Regulations and who have reasonable equipment have little more to do than develop documentation and systems, which in some cases could be as simple as keeping a diary.

Those who do not currently comply put not only the entire bee products industry at risk, but also the reputation of New Zealand's vital certification systems. I am satisfied that the joint efforts being made by NZFSA and the bee industry to put in place a credible system is in the best interests of both the industry and New Zealand and is meeting requirements in a cost effective way.

Yours sincerely

Andrew McKenzie
Executive Director
New Zealand Food Safety Authority

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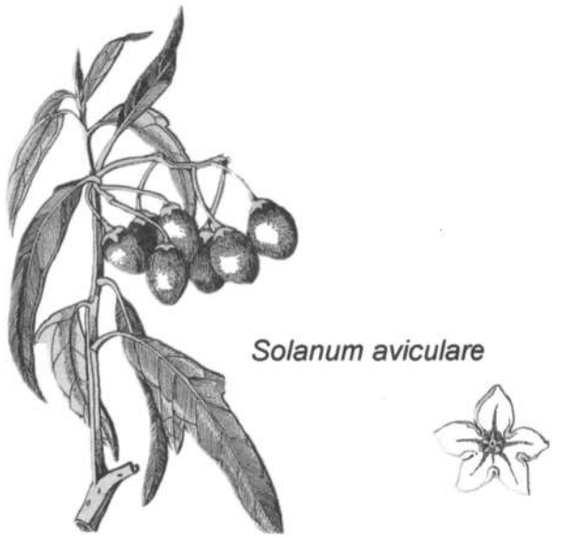
Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand

Solanum aviculare

Maori name: Poroporo



The Poroporo is a soft-wooded shrub up to 3m high. It has dark green oblong leaves with raised veins. The shrub flowers from September through the summer to March, with its lavender to dark purple-coloured flowers. Some shrubs have been known to have white flowers. The nectar from the flowers produces a mild-flavoured amber honey. The berry of the Poroporo is edible when it turns yellow/orange, but is poisonous when green. This plant is also related to the potato and Black Nightshade.

The Poroporo was planted around Maori villages; the fruit, being eaten by the children, has a slightly acidic taste. The leaves were used in the umu, especially when cooking Moa, as it gave the meat a pleasant flavour. The leaves were also boiled to make a poultice for sores or skin complaints.

A decoction of the leaves was used by the Maori as a contraceptive. At Waitara a factory was established in 1978 to extract the chemical from the Poroporo leaf for use in contraceptive pills. The factory was closed down after only three years due to the high variability of the chemical.

Early settlers used the ripe berries to make jam or pies. They called them Maori gooseberries, as they are related to the cape gooseberry and taste similar.

- Tony Lorimer

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Varroa Pest Management Strategy	Duncan Butcher, VAI	5	Jun	8
Varroa Pest Management Strategy - another view	Wayne Hutchinson	5	Jun	15
Varroa research programme update	R Goodwin, M Taylor, H McBrydie and H Cox	3	Apr	18
Varroa South Island levy information from MAF	Ian Govey/MAF	4	May	7
Varroa treatment using a combination of strongly diluted formic acid and marjoram oil	Dr S Berg, Dr S Fuchs, Prof N Koeniger	5	Jun	21
Viruses and varroa	Brenda Ball/reprint Scottish Beekeeper	9	Oct	53
Waikato Branch field day, 21 May 2005	Fiona O'Brien	5	Jun	24
What are geographical indications?	Ministry of Economic Development	2	Mar	18
What's in the future for beekeeping?	Frank Lindsay	9	Oct	55
Will varroa kill your hives this summer?	Mark Goodwin	3	Apr	19

Unusual wasp

Richard Toft of Landcare Research tells me that this is a native golden spider hunter, a solitary species. The female paralyses large spiders and then drags them down into an underground chamber where she lays an egg on them. Her larvae then feed on the paralysed spider.

- Ron Morison

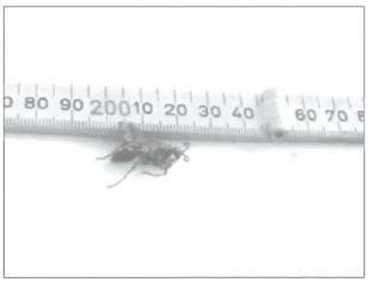

Photo: Ron Morison

Apimondia 2007

Apimondia 2007 will be held in Melbourne, Australia from 9–14 September 2007. The organisers have preliminary information available on the conference web site www.apimondia2007.com. Editors of beekeeping magazines are being kept up to date with developments.

After the success of the World Honey Show in Ireland, Australia has decided to hold another World Honey Show. Entry details will appear on the website at a later date once all aspects have been finalised.

Australians are renowned the world over for their ability to be able to work bees for 12 months of the year in some parts of Australia. Perhaps you know a beekeeper in Australia that you have corresponded with for many years. Apimondia presents you with an excellent opportunity to meet these beekeepers as well as beekeepers from all over the world.

So mark Apimondia 2007 in Melbourne, Australia in your diary and go and have a great time.

Contact: Trevor Weatherhead (Organising Committee)
queenbee@gil.com.au

[Editor's note: any business interested in having a stand at the expo should make arrangements early, as spaces are filling fast.]

Club Contacts & Beekeeping Specialty Groups

WHANGAREI BEE CLUB Meetings: 1st Saturday each month (except January) Time: 10 am, wet or fine (we are keen) Contact: Dave Trinder Phone: 09 433 8566 John Parsons Phone: 09 438 8766 Kevin Wallace Phone: 09 423 8642 (Wellsford)	**AUCKLAND BEEKEEPERS CLUB INC** Meets 1st Saturday monthly at Unitec, Pt Chevalier, Auckland. Contact: Carol Downer, Secretary Phone: 09 376 6376 Email: fairy-angel-peewee@xtra.co.nz	**FRANKLIN BEEKEEPERS CLUB** Meets second Sunday of each month at 10.00am for a cuppa and discussion. 10.30am open hives. Contact: Peter Biland Phone: 09 294 8365
WAIKATO DOMESTIC BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION Meets every third Thursday at 7.30pm. Contact the Club President: Brian Fowles Phone: 07 8438 737 (evenings)	**HAWKES BAY BRANCH** Meets generally on the second Monday of the second month at 7.30pm, Arataki, Havelock North Contact: Ron Phone: 06 844 9493	**TARANAKI BEEKEEPING CLUB** Contact: Stephen Black 685 Uruti Road RD 48, Urenui Phone: 06 752 6860
WANGANUI BEEKEEPERS CLUB Meets on the second Wednesday of the month. Contact: Neil Farrer Phone 06 343 6248	**MANAWATU BEEKEEPERS CLUB** Meets every 4th Thursday in the month at Newbury Hall, SH3, Palmerston North Contact: Frances Beech 35 Whelans Road, RD 1 Levin Phone: 06 367 2617	**WAIRARAPA HOBBYIST BEEKEEPERS CLUB** Meet 3rd Sunday of month (except January) at Norfolk Road, Masterton at 1.30 pm. Contact: Arnold Esler Phone: 06 379 8648
WELLINGTON BEEKEEPERS ASSN 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	**NELSON BEEKEEPERS CLUB** Contact: Kevin Phone: 03 545 0122	**NORTH CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS CLUB** Meets the second Monday of April, June, August and October Contact: Mrs Hobson Phone: 03 312 7587
CHRISTCHURCH HOBBYIST CLUB Meets on the first Saturday of 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: Jeff Robinson 64 Cobra Street Christchurch 3. Phone: 03 322 5392	**SOUTH CANTERBURY REGION** Contact: Peter Lyttle Phone: 03 693 9189	**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. Contact Club Secretary: Margaret Phone: 03 415-7256 Email: flour-mill@xtra.co.nz
ACTIVE MANUKA HONEY ASSOCIATION (INC) Contact: John Rawcliffe Phone: 07 549 4085	**NZ COMB PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION** Contact: John Wright Phone: 09 236 0628	**NZ HONEY BEE POLLINATION ASSOCIATION** Contact: Russell Berry Phone: 07 366 6111
NZ HONEY PACKERS AND EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION INC Contact: Allen McCaw Phone: 03 417 7198 Contact: Mary-Anne Thomason Phone: 06 855 8038	**NZ QUEEN PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION** Contact: Russell Berry Phone: 07 366 6111	

Is your group or Branch missing from here?
Please contact the National Beekeepers Association – inside front cover.