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Dan Iseli-Otto, a Canadian student from Alberta, enjoyed his working holiday as a beekeeper in the top of the South Island.

Photos: John Moffitt

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President's Report

Changing of the guard

The Association has recently undergone a couple of personnel changes. The main change of note to our members is that Pauline Bassett has handed over the Executive Secretary's responsibilities to Pam Edwards.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to Pauline, who has been an immense source of knowledge and wisdom in helping me to steer the Association in the right direction after the changes that occurred in 2002. Pauline came on board as the minutes secretary to our conference calls prior to the change and witnessed some extremely difficult times during this period. Thankfully these times are behind us now and we can build on the positive aspects of belonging to an industry body.

Pauline will now have more time to devote to her family and grandchildren, as well as the projects in which she is involved in the Te Kuiti region. We wish Pauline and John well for the future.

Pam, of course, is Jim Edwards' other half (dare I say better half!). They complement each other in their professional abilities and we believe that employing them as a team will have many benefits in helping to move the Association from strength to strength. Pam, we welcome you to the team and I certainly hope that this is the beginning of a long association with us.

The other change that has occurred is the employment of a new American Foulbrood National Pest Management Strategy Manager. Rex Baynes is based in Lower Hutt and will be employed from the beginning of February. James Driscoll will continue in our employ until the end of February, allowing for a seamless change from one manager to the other. We welcome Rex on board and look forward to working with him in the future to continue to operate and strengthen the AFB NPMS. You can find a profile of Rex on page 7.

Crop prospects

It appears from my conversations with many people over the New Year period that the crop is certainly going to be a mixed bag — from very good in some areas to very patchy in others. The outcome of the overall crop will only be known when it is in the drum.

Risk Management Programmes (RMPs)

Remember that everyone needs to have their RMP drawn up for submitting by April 2006 in order to have it in place for June 2006. For those who are able to fill in the template that the industry developed with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority, getting an RMP approved should not be too great a hassle.

Problems may arise, however, in providing the supporting documents along with the RMP. Obtaining support from those who are well advanced in getting their RMP finished may also be of benefit.

[Editor's note: The NZFSA is currently developing a verification checklist which will appear on its web site http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz when completed.]

NBA supports Inaugural MAF Accredited Person awards

The Executive Council was approached by MAF just prior to Christmas to lend our support to the inaugural MAF Accredited Person Awards, held in Auckland on 22 December 2005. Awards and gifts were given to the company and person who had detected a number of unwanted organisms in containers being inspected at company premises prior to and during unloading. We felt it was appropriate that the NBA support this initiative as a number of our members had lobbied the NBA to urge that the number of containers inspected be increased after the arrival of varroa. You can read an article about the winners of the awards on the NBA's website: http://www.nba.org.nz

Individual winners from left to right: Tony Tyler from Delmaine Fine Foods, Auckland; William Harris from Sims Pacific Metal, Auckland; Ariki Bratton from Kiwibond. ***Photo supplied by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.***

Gift hampers supplied to the winners, provided by sponsors including the NBA. ***Photo supplied by MAF.***

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

All Executive Council members receive a copy of *Biosecurity* magazine produced by MAF/Biosecurity New Zealand, which provides updates on what is being done to manage many unwanted organisms that have found their way into New Zealand (e.g., varroa, didymo, sea squirts). Of interest are reports on the findings of spiders and other unwanted organisms in what were previously considered to be 'low risk' containers. These low-risk containers would not have been inspected in the past.

Keeping varroa out of the South Island

The Varroa Agency Incorporated (VAI) has carried out an education programme over the summer at the Wellington ferry terminals to distribute pamphlets to passengers to raise awareness to try to stop bees being transported over to the South Island.

It was reported that one bee was killed after being found inside a campervan. If not found, the bee would have been transported across Cook Strait. Once again, the Lindsays were involved in this project. Thanks Frank and Mary-Ann: it's good to see that beekeepers are still willing to put some time in to help others.

- Jane Lorimer

Deadline for Publications

March 2006 edition: ***10 February 2006***
(NB earlier deadline)

April 2006 edition: ***10 March 2006***

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

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Executive Secretary's swansong

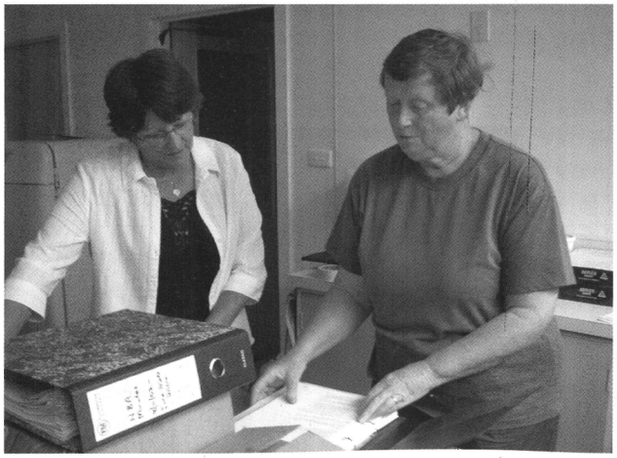
There has been a flurry of activity in my office to mark the end of 2005 and beginning of 2006. It is the beginning of a new financial year for the NBA — this means preparing and mailing out membership renewal notices and magazine subscriptions renewals. It is also a good time for me to step down as Executive Secretary and hand over the role to Pam Edwards. Most of the handover was completed when Pam and Jim visited me for a day to collect a mountain of paperwork and go over the complexities of the role. I am sure Pam will provide an excellent service.

On reflection it has been an amazing three years. You can blame Graham Cammell for my being Secretary in the first place. It was he who suggested I take the minutes of meetings in the final days of the 'old guard' in 2002. After the auspicious meeting on 19 December 2002, Jane Lorimer approached me to take on the Executive Secretary's job, which I agreed to do "at least until the AGM".

By early February 2003 the NBA had 122 members, less than a third of the current membership. In many ways they were pioneering days, particularly from an administrative point of view. All the systems had to be started from scratch and I was on a big learning curve. Along the way I have been fortunate to meet many beekeepers and associates of the industry. Although I have been part of a beekeeping business for almost 30 years, it was not until 2003 that I really started to learn about the industry. For that I thank all of you.

Of course I will still take an active interest in the NBA. I will be involved in conference 2006 in Hamilton (17–20 July 2006) and look forward to seeing you all there. I am also keen to collect your contributions for the beekeeping history display and will continue to remind you about this in the next few months. In the meantime I have our RMP to complete, a pile of overalls to repair and a garden to weed.

- Pauline Bassett



Changing of the guard from Pauline (right) to Pam (left)
Photo: Jim Edwards

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Executive Officer's Report

NBA President Jane Lorimer meets with Hon Jim Anderton

NBA President Jane Lorimer and Executive Officer Jim Edwards spent Thursday 15 December in Wellington to meet with the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon Jim Anderton, and Government officials to discuss the NBA and issues of concern to the industry.

Mr Anderton welcomed the opportunity to meet with representatives of the beekeeping industry and was particularly interested in the state of the industry. There was discussion about the further development of the industry and export potential, especially of differentiated products.

Mr Anderton was interested in the impact of varroa on beekeeping and the effects on pollination. Further discussion covered the importation of bee products and market access conditions.

Mr Anderton invited the NBA representatives to visit him again to present regular updates.

Jane Lorimer (centre) and Jim Edwards (left) at their meeting with Minister of Agriculture, the Hon Jim Anderton (right).

Photos: Paul Bolger

Other officials visited during the day included:

- Jim Sim and Greg Zemke-Smith at the New Zealand Food Safety Authority, where much of the discussion was about the implementation of the Risk Management Programmes and the need for these applications to be registered by 1 April 2006 for products likely to be destined for export. There was also discussion on verification, costs and export certification.

- Christine Reed, Leone Basher and Katie Owen at Biosecurity New Zealand to discuss the concerns within the NBA about the review of submissions on the importation of bee products and the consequent development of import health standards. It was agreed to have a technical meeting to discuss these concerns and that it would likely occur in February.

- Rob Forlong, the newly appointed CEO of the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA), to introduce the NBA and discuss the opportunities to be more involved in matters of mutual interest. We were encouraged to keep in contact with ERMA officials.

Television interview

Finally, Jane Lorimer was interviewed by Catherine Toft of TV One on the trends within beekeeping due to the arrival of varroa, and the impact varroa has had on beekeepers and pollination demand. A report is to be screened which will also include other members of the Association at work and some of their reactions to the impact of varroa.

Following these visits, Jane and Jim concluded that every visit had been constructive and of great value to the National Beekeepers' Association, its members and the industry as a whole.

- Jim Edwards

AUCKLAND AND NORTHLAND COMBINED FIELD DAY

4 March 2006
Honey Centre
Perry Road, Warkworth

Meet at 9 am for mix and mingle.
Speakers start 9.30 am

Excellent programme planned

Contact: R W Blair, field day organiser
Ph/fax 09 479 4354 for further information

Profile: Rex Baynes — Incoming Manager of the AFB NPMS

NBA President Jane Lorimer emailed me recently to suggest I provide a brief profile of myself as the newly appointed AFB NPMS Manager for inclusion in the next issue of *The New Zealand Beekeeper*. Journal editor Nancy Fithian suggested I tell readers a bit about myself.

My late mother used to take great delight in relating a story that occurred when I was a kid growing up in the small North Otago town of Oamaru in the 1950s and 1960s. One summer's evening after school my parents collected me, my younger sister and some friends to take us for an evening swim and picnic tea to a favourite swimming hole called Gemmels Crossing. It was an idyllic place in summertime where families would congregate under the willows, leaving the kids to swim in relative safety.

Anyway, the story goes that a certain amount of teasing took place with my younger sister taking the brunt of it, resulting in my father issuing the standard 'I will not tell you again' speech. Unbeknownst to me, a bee had witnessed the goings-on, taken pity on my sister and decided to take action by giving me a swift reprimand on the softest part of my backside. My reaction and subsequent behaviour was in my mother's words quite appalling, my sister's reaction highly predictable.

Little did I imagine that years later I would be managing a programme designed to protect the very same insect that had caused me such embarrassment and discomfort years earlier.

Since that summer's evening and before being appointed as AFB NPMS manager a lot has happened, not the least of which has been my marriage to Pam nearly 32 years ago. Our son Ryan (25) and daughter Emma (23) are both making their way in the world and experiencing the daily challenges life throws their way.

In terms of work history, I spent 19 years with the government, based in Wellington. I then served as the Executive Director with the New Zealand Manufacturers Federation from 1990 to 2001.

For nearly five years now I have operated my own company based in Lower Hutt, providing executive servicing to industry associations.

Concerning sports and pastimes, the first things that are packed when going on holiday are the golf clubs. Some years prior my passion was rugby, where I played in the local Wellington senior competition for a number of years.

By appointing me as manager of the AFB NPMS the NBA has placed total faith in my ability and I do not intend letting them down. As with any undertaking of this nature, the need for direct and open communication as well as a team approach will, I believe, assist in meeting the programme's objectives.

I look forward to working with you.

Finally, I suspect the old bee from Gemmels Crossing is looking down and taking some credit for all of this.

- Rex Baynes

AFB NPMS matters

Notification of Rates of Levy for the 2006–2007 Calendar Year

The Management Agency of the American Foulbrood National Pest Management Strategy (the National Beekeepers' Association (Inc)), hereby advises, as prescribed in the Biosecurity (American Foulbrood – Apiary and Beekeeper Levy) Order 2003, that the levy for the 2006–2007 year will remain the same as it has been for the 2003–2004, 2004–2005 and 2005–2006 years. This levy was fixed on 9 January 2006.

The levy rate will be (excluding G.S.T.):

(a) Base levy of $20.00; and

(b) apiary levy of $8.00 per apiary.

However, as stated in clause 7(4), if a beekeeper owns fewer than 11 beehives on fewer than four apiaries, the sum of the number of registered apiaries must be treated as one.

JANE LORIMER, President, National Beekeepers' Association (Inc).

ACCURACY OF APIARY REGISTER

In order that the Apiary Register represents accurate data beekeepers are urged to ensure that their information on Apiary sites is correct as at 31 March 2006.

Beekeepers can verify their Registered Apiary sites by contacting AgriQuality who will also arrange for new apiaries to be registered or disused sites to be deregistered. Forms are also available on the NBA website www. nba. org.nz (click on: deregister an apiary).

NBA Library Report

Life at the library continues much the same. A big thank you to all those who return magazine packs, and other library items, on time.

Unfortunately, there hasn't been much spare time to have a good look at the report facility of the new library software. However, it seems that reports in many forms can be produced and lists by subject can be collated and printed off. It might also be possible to email these reports — more on that at a later date.

If any member wants to have a complete listing of all the books and videos I can print one for you, but a short report format needs to be located, otherwise it will be quite a costly exercise. At present the listing is 56 pages long, so a more economical way is to pull up lists by subject; e.g., Bee diseases/Honey-recipes/Pest management, etc. Please get in touch if you want more details about this.

When the database is available through the website it will be possible to search by keyword, and subject headings have been extensively allocated for each title also.

I hope you are all having a good season. In North Canterbury even the hills are green — instead of the usual brown.

- Chris Taiaroa
Hon. Librarian

Do you want to be the Honorary Librarian?

The Executive Council have received notice from our current Librarian Chris Taiaroa that she wishes to relinquish that role in July. We record our sincere appreciation for Chris's hard work and dedication during her years as Honorary Librarian for the NBA.

The Executive Council is calling for expressions of interest. If you would like to become the Honorary Librarian please write and advise your interest to our Executive Secretary, Pam Edwards, by 28 February 2006 (see page 2 for address details).

[Editor's note: 2006 is the year in which both Southland and Waikato celebrate the 100th anniversary of their respective branches. During this year Publications Committee and Waikato Branch member Fiona O'Brien is hoping to co-opt some Waikato branch members to help interview and record some branch history. It is also an opportunity to go back over previous publications (journals and books) and reprint some of them. This month's article by W J (Wilfrid J) Lennon, previous editor of The New Zealand Beekeeper, *has been reprinted from a portion of his 1948 edition of the book* Bees in their Bonnets, *pages 13–16. Errors and omissions excepted. W J Lennon was from Omakau, Central Otago, and his book was written from a South Island point of view.]*

Bees in their bonnets

The National Beekeepers' Association

"For when was honey ever made with one bee in the hive."
– Thomas Hood

The growth of a National organisation can take several forms. Sometimes its beginning is a carefully organised affair into which much effort and planning have been put. More often, a few people begin in a simple way to hold meetings for the discussion of a subject in which they have a fervent interest. From small beginnings an organisation, like Topsy "just growed". The National Beekeepers' Association has been like Topsy. Like the growth of children, development at times was rapid alternating with periods where growth hardly seemed perceptible. There have even been periods when even life itself was despaired of and there seemed nothing to hope for. But enthusiasm and loyalty yoked to the long range view of one National Beekeepers' Association for the whole of NZ have encouraged unselfish individuals here and struggling branches there to maintain their interest and to encourage others to do the same. At other times the influx of new members and branches has given signs of growing pains that taxed the ability of the National organisation to cope with such vigorous growth. Again "alarums and excursions" arising from serious differing viewpoints have threatened to split the organisation from top to bottom or even across its middle. The strength — and indeed the weakness — of the National organisation has been the combined strengths or weaknesses, of the component Branches.

With branches placed from the North to the South, in conditions varying almost from the tropical to the polar; with members scattered over the whole country, especially as their work keeps each member somewhat isolated in his own community; and even with strong city groups of amateurs more closely habited, but whose main interest in beekeeping is as a hobby; there must be some strong bond to unite such diverse elements as well as a common aim that keeps the family united.

Now that this expanding family has reached some maturity in years, it is possible to appreciate more fully the valuable contribution made to the Beekeeping Industry by our pioneering Fathers. They may have had "bees in their bonnets" but they built better than they realised, without grudging the effort and without thought of personal advancement. Much knowledge and considerable experience have come to us in the intervening years that are valuable to our Craft. We honour the pioneers best by our continued support to the organisation that seeks not its own gain but service to beekeepers of the present generation and of those that will follow us.

Southland and Waikato seem to have been the first in the field of beekeepers' organisations. Both were formed in 1906 and have continued without intermission to the present. Southland can claim the honour of being first as its inaugural meeting was held on the 21st of February, 1906. Mr. James Allan of "Thistlebank", Wyndham, was in the chair and Mr I Hopkins, the newly-appointed Government Apiarist (1905) was in attendance. Two of the original members are alive today (1948). They are Messrs. W. Caldwell of Roslyn Bush and W. Hall of Edendale. Although farming is his vocation, Mr Caldwell has kept bees since he joined and he also has retained his membership of the branch continuously. He can therefore claim, if he desires, to be the member with the longest period of membership of a beekeepers' Association in NZ. Mr R Gibb was elected secretary. Hawkes Bay, Canterbury and Poverty Bay Associations were formed within a few years.

At the first annual meeting of the Southland Branch the following interesting minute appears: *"The secretary submitted a detailed list of the honey crops of each member which gave an aggregate value of £989/14/4."*

In 1909 another minute gives some indication of the prices being realised for honey. Honey pats sold through the Assn., by its Dunedin agent realised 6d per lb.

The Canterbury Assn. seems to have taken the initiative in attempts to form a National Association. The following minute appears under date of June 15th 1910: *"The Canterbury Beekeepers' Assn wrote asking the Southland Assn to join with them in trying to form a Federation of the various Beekeepers' Assn throughout the Dominion with a view to getting better inspection and of having Legislative measures submitted to the Federation before being enacted." "It was decided to support the Canterbury proposals and Mr Allan was asked to attend as delegate."*

On 22nd January, 1913, the following appears: "Mr. Brickell addressed the meeting at some length on Federation matters and it is generally understood that he will bring forward a working Constitution for the Federation of Beekeepers at the forthcoming conference in Wellington." "A resolution.... appreciating the good work done by Mr. Earp and suggesting that he be supplied with a motorbike to enable him to carry out his duties," was passed at the same meeting.

Messrs. Allan, Stewart, Gibb and Brickell attended the Federation Conference as delegates, and Mr. Allan, who was still President of the Southland Branch, was elected first President of the National Beekeepers' Association under the Constitution known to so many until 1945, when the Association became an incorporated Body. Mr R. W. Brickell

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was the first Secretary-Treasurer. In 1914, the Association comprised the Waikato, Taranaki, Canterbury, Pahiatua and Southland Branches. South Canterbury was added in 1915. In 1920 there were 11 Branches and four Sub-Branches.

A journal known as the N.Z. Beekeepers' Journal, was first published in July 1914 under the Editorship of Mr R. Bricknell. This was a monthly journal of 15 pages. By 1920, it had increased to 20 pages under the Editorship of Mr. F. C. Baines. No small credit is due to these two men who must have given an enormous amount of time and thought to Association affairs, for a very small monetary return. According to the balance sheet of 1915, the secretary received £12/10/- in 1914, £15 in 1915, and £24 for issuing twelve journals in the year as Editor. Members paid 3/6 p.a. above their membership subscription to secure the journal. £63/7/6 was received in journal subscriptions and "£20" as a Government grant. Advertisements brought in £21/1/-. The printing costs (twelve issued, 1915) were £83/9/3.

It was some years before other Branches were formed in Otago and Southland. Oamaru seems to have had a bee club. In 1915 the Beekeepers' Journal reported that only Oamaru, Marlborough and Poverty Bay were outside the National Association. The Taieri — later the Otago Branch — and Clutha Valley — later the Clutha — Branches joined the National in 1919; West Otago in 1924; Oamaru in 1928; Gore in 1935 and Central Otago in 1938.

The formation of a National Association had some interesting in the Southland Branch as the following resolutions demonstrate:

June 1913: "That the Federation executive be asked to fix their annual conference on some other date than Southland Winter Show week as that date clashes with our Annual meeting, and try to choose a date when there are Excursion fares."

June 1914: "The secretary reported that 'owing to the National receiving most of the fees, the year's balance was only 16/5'."

Endnote

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in." – Abraham Lincoln

Next month's instalment: National Bee-keepers Association of N.Z. – A selection of articles from* "The New Zealand Beekeepers' Journal, *July 1914"

[Editor's Note: if you have any further historical information you'd like to add, please write to Nancy Fithian: contact details on page 2]

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VARROA AGENCY INC

Varroa Agency Incorporated News

An update from chairman Duncan Butcher, February 2006

Consultation round a success

Keep up the good work — that's what we heard from many beekeepers during the Agency's consultation round late in 2005.

The good turnout of beekeepers at our consultation round late in 2005 was pleasing, as was the support and the constructive suggestions put forward.

I and the then Varroa Strategy Manager David McMillan met with beekeepers around the South Island in a series of meetings to report on our progress and get beekeeper feedback on the management and budget of our Varroa Pest Management Strategy. This will be an annual event.

We also put a levy date change to beekeepers.

Not only did I get to meet many of the beekeepers and bee industry people throughout the South Island, and put faces to the many names, but the Agency also received some positive suggestions for improving the education programme. We'll look at implementing some of those over the next year.

The beekeepers we met were pleased at the levy set at $1.38 plus GST per beehive charged to beekeepers for their contribution to the Varroa Pest Management Strategy, a drop from $2.00 charged the previous year. And we were able to assure them that we had set ourselves enough of a budget to achieve and build on the work done last year.

There was 100 percent agreement from beekeepers for the levy date change.

We require Biosecurity New Zealand to make the changes to the Order in Council for the date changes. We have requested to them to do this, and hope that they will have it completed in time for this year.

It is suggested that the date for beekeepers to pay their Varroa Pest Management Strategy levy be changed to September 1, with the levy being struck on June 30 each year. The Agency wants it brought forward three months, to put it into the financial year it applies to, and to bring it in line with the national apiary database Annual Disease Returns information. It also separates the levy collection cycle from the American Foulbrood Pest Management Strategy levy collection cycle. This will simplify the levy collection process, and reduce confusion and the time involved in levy collection.

Thanks to everyone who turned up to the meetings, and who took the time to put a submission to us.

Funding of future bee and bee product research

The Executive of the Association has been concerned for some time to ensure the funding of bee-related research. Jane Lorimer and Jim Edwards met in 2005 with many of the research organisations with the view of forming a consortium and setting priorities to work together in this area.

Industry prosperity will depend on innovation to keep the costs of bee management low and the development and marketing of niche products. You have an opportunity to become part of this by supporting the Research Consortium.

If you would like to give your financial support to research for our industry, please contact our Executive Officer, Jim Edwards (see page 2 for address details).

The virtues of varroa

Dr Barry J Donovan
Donovan Scientific Insect Research
Private Bag 4704
Christchurch

An ideal beekeeping scenario

In an ideal beekeeping world, what would beekeeping be like? One scenario might be that the only bee colonies existing would be those kept by 'real' beekeepers; or in other words, there would be no wild colonies, and no colonies not properly cared for. There would, therefore, be no other honey bees to compete with the managed honey bees for pollen and nectar, and so beekeepers' yields of hive products such as honey, pollen, royal jelly, wax and propolis would all be greater. Also, the absence of wild and poorly maintained colonies would mean that there would be almost no reservoir of diseases and enemies of bees that could spread to managed colonies. Further, there would be no bees to provide free pollination of crops, so beekeepers would be able to command higher prices for hives hired for pollination.

Varroa not universally condemned

The varroa mite, *Varroa destructor*, is almost universally condemned as perhaps the greatest disaster to befall beekeepers. But is this true? There are dissenters, as reported in the December 2003 issue of *New Zealand Geographic*. To his surprise, Adam Fricker found that the mood of beekeepers at a meeting he attended in the Bay of Plenty was quite upbeat because of a strong honey market and increased demand for pollination services. More recently, Frank Lindsay (*The New Zealand Beekeeper*, April 2005) reported that since the arrival of varroa just north of Wellington, honey production has increased from 30 kg a hive to 65 kg in some areas. Just after the mite was detected in a wild colony in a hollow log that had been transported from Northland to a timber mill near Frank's hives, Frank searched for and found far more feral colonies than there were managed hives. What he thought was a poor beekeeping area was poor because there were so many feral hives.

Removal of foraging competition from feral and unmanaged hives

The number of feral colonies in the North Island before varroa arrived is unknown, but if Frank's experience is at all typical they probably greatly outnumbered registered hives. Of course all managed colonies are supposed to be registered, but when varroa was first detected in New Zealand in South Auckland, a search for colonies to inspect discovered about half as many more colonies as were registered.

On the midday Rural Report on National Radio on 5 July 2004, Dr Mark Goodwin said that varroa had killed 22,000 hives in the North Island, or 16% of the total. Anecdotal reports suggest that virtually all feral colonies have died — and certainly two I knew of near Taumarunui, of which one in a cliff was at least 50 years old, were dead by May that year. So it may not be too far-fetched to suggest that the total number of dead feral colonies plus unregistered managed hives and registered managed hives, might be about double the number of surviving, managed hives. In other words, the competitive foraging pressure now faced by managed hives may be just a third of what it was before varroa arrived. If even partly true, managed hives should now be much better off because of the greater availability of pollen and nectar.

Disease reservoir reduction, and increased recognition of beekeeping

Also, the demise of feral colonies and poorly managed hives means that there are fewer reservoirs for diseases such as foulbrood and chalkbrood, and fewer breeding sites for wax moths. Another benefit is that the widespread and continuing publicity on radio, TV and the newspapers about the killing of beehives by varroa has enormously increased the public's awareness of the great value of honey bees to our economy through their pollination of numerous flowering plants such as kiwifruit, avocados, buttercup squash, and most importantly, white clover. Beekeeping has gone from being viewed as perhaps a slightly odd, but yes, reasonably important part of our agricultural economy, to a mainstay of vital importance, without which our wellbeing would be in real jeopardy. The public at large probably has the impression that honey bees will all soon be killed, so if they want honey they had better buy it now, even if the price is moving up. Of course, growers of crops that need pollination are very much aware of the need for hives and are paying more, and that is why shipping hives to the North Island from the South Island has been worthwhile for the last three years.

A near-ideal beekeeping scenario?

So, apart from the necessity to control varroa in managed beehives and the cost, the advent of varroa throughout the North Island could be seen to have brought about an almost-ideal beekeeping scenario for beekeepers who really manage their bees — except those who now cannot export bees and used hive parts to the South Island. Also, many benefits have even accrued to beekeepers in the as-yet varroa-free South Island.

Benefits for conservation

Another benefit from varroa is the killing of feral colonies in the conservation estate. Adam Fricker (2003) quotes Paul Craddock, a biosecurity officer of the Department of Conservation, calling feral honey bees the 'goats of the insect world', and saying that the reduction in honey bee numbers by varroa may prove highly beneficial to native organisms. However, another view is that feral honey bees in our native environment might be at least partially replacing the pollination services for native plants that were effected by many of the native pollinating birds that are now extinct or which are now present in only small numbers. On the other hand, fewer bees may have resulted in reduced pollination rates of many flowering weeds, and so the seed set and infestation rates.

Benefits for human health

From the human health point of view, the demise of numerous colonies will mean fewer people being stung, and so less suffering from pain and swelling. Less suffering from bee stings should find beekeeping looked upon with more favour by the general public.

Benefits from varroa may be short-term?

But for beekeepers, varroa is beneficial only for those who actually properly 'keep' their bees and who know how to use appropriate controls for varroa. For those who just 'have' bees (the 'bee-havers' as they are called in North America) and who didn't know how to control varroa, the advent of varroa has of course been disastrous, and they no longer 'have' bees. However even for good beekeepers, the presence of varroa has some beneficial aspects only as long as controls for varroa are effective. If resistance to existing controls develops at a similar rate to that experienced in North America, and new effective and economic controls do not eventuate, then in the foreseeable future there will be no benefits to any beekeepers, because keeping bees alive will be so difficult that population levels may become so low that the industry will fail. In the long term, only conservationists may remain happy with the presence of varroa.

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Fricker, A. 2003. The plight of the humble bee. *New Zealand Geographic* 66: 102–111.

Lindsay, F. 2005. Controlling varroa mites. *The New Zealand Beekeeper* 13(3): 21–22.

Quality standards of pollen

Stefan Bogdanov
Swiss Bee Research Centre, Liebefeld, Bern, Switzerland

This interesting article was also abstracted from Apiacta 2004.

Pollen

Bee-gathered pollen is regarded as valuable special food, having different health-enhancing effects and is also used in apitherapy.

According to the author of this paper there are no official international standards for pollen quality and because of this the Swiss Food Manual has proposed a standard for the quality of pollen with criteria set out for the content of protein, lipid, carbohydrates, crude fibres, minerals and vitamins.

Fresh bee-collected pollen contains about 20–30% water and with this high moisture content it is an ideal culture medium for micro-organisms such as yeasts and fungi. In order to prevent spoilage of the pollen it has to be harvested from the pollen traps daily and immediately placed in a freezer. After two days of storage in the freezer the spoilage organisms will be killed. After thawing, pollen should only be kept for a few hours and should be processed as soon as possible. The pollen is best dried in an electric oven (from where the moisture can escape) at a maximum temperature of 40°C for as short a time as possible until the moisture content of the pollen is 6% or lower. Such pollen will remain stable if kept in sealed containers for 15 months. A higher moisture content will mean the pollen will ferment during storage. Storage of dried pollen for one year or longer will reduce the free-radical scavenging capacity of pollen.

Bee bread is partly fermented pollen stored in the brood combs, mixed with bee secretions and honey. This should be harvested from brood-free combs for optimum quality.

Pollen is the bee product potentially least influenced by contaminants from beekeeping. However, it can be polluted by airborne contaminants, eg heavy metals and pesticides.

According to the author, for optimum quality the pollen should be collected in areas which are at least 3 km from contamination sources such as heavy traffic and pesticide-treated agricultural areas.

The paper then describes the pollen quality criteria taken from the Swiss Food Manual 2003.

Main Components	*g/100g*
Carbohydrates	**13-55**
Protein	10-40
Fat	1-10
Dietary fibre	0.3-20
Minor components	*mg/100g*
Minerals	**500-3000**
Vitamins	20-100
Flavonoid glycosides	40-3000

[Reprinted from The Beekeepers Quarterly, *Number 80, Spring 2005. Abstracted by David Aston NDB]*

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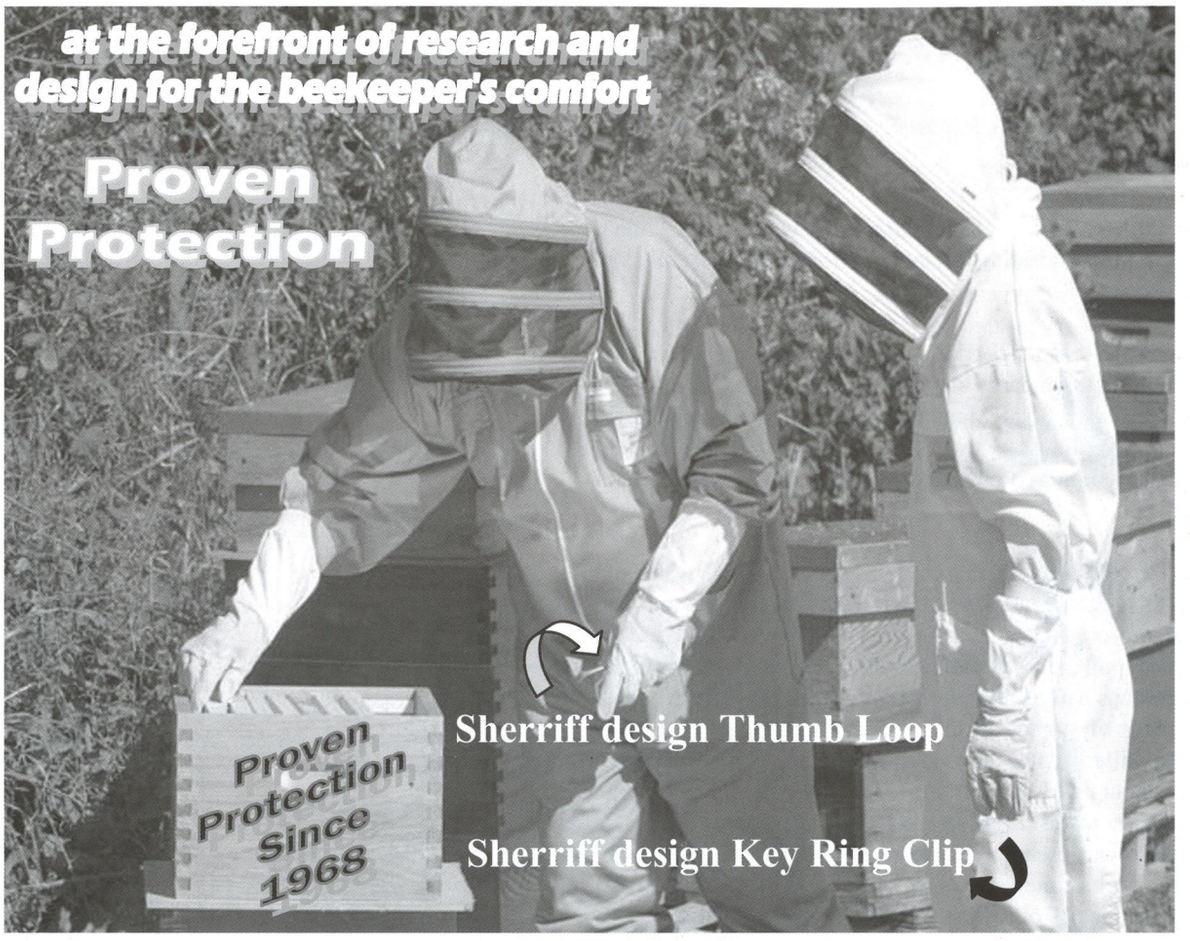

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From the colonies

Auckland Branch

I write this as the hustle and bustle of another year's end has come and gone, with it the dream of a decent Pohutukawa honey crop and money for a decent extractor this year. Manuka and Kanuka haven't fared too well either: a very poor flowering coupled with wind and squalls reduced the crop from the normal average of two to four supers per hive to half a super.

The hives came out of kiwifruit pollination with honey on this year also, which complicates harvesting somewhat, with the need also to get the small Pohutukawa crop off quickly before crystallising sets in on the Pohutukawa.

City beekeeping for Bee'z Thingz "Hive Hire and Service" company presents many unique microclimates which are largely unaffected by extremes in weather; these locations are saving the day this season.

I attended the Auckland Beekeepers Club event to hear Graham Law's presentation on observation hives on 17 January. I am now a convert; as Graham said, "you can observe at home what is happening in your colonies" and so interesting.

Highlights for me were queen killings by older bees, queen clamping to stop her opening other queen cells, recorded and visual queen piping inside and emerged from her cell and older bees shoving her out with a swarm. Other interesting observations were drone killing by lethal sting without death to the stinger bee, sound patterns, and the behaviour of colonies prior to and after swarming, and also at the onset of starvation.

Bees carrying varroa mites also display visible agitation, and Graham theorised that varroa clearly prefer the queen because she is better fed.

The powerful but totally random on-again/off-again attraction to light remains an unexplained mystery, as does the bees' seeming inability to see a wax moth but sense its presence at close range. Wax moths appear to know that distance and move about the hive with relative ease.

Graham showed a video of queen cells clamped closed by bees to 19 days old (we were assured 25 days is possible) and the queen being fed by nurse bees through a trap door opened in the queen cell wall. Wax production and cell construction in minute detail also was very interesting.

Along with all this were many laughs at Graham's failures, all well documented, he being a technical manager at the National Space Centre in Leicestershire for his day job, Glaswegian-born and very funny with it.

- Kerry F McCurdy

Waikato Branch

The last week or so has been hot and the bees are working hard drawing foundation, and turning nectar into beautiful honey. The weather has been changeable over the Christmas period with a fair amount of rain, 90mm being recorded on our farm in just five hours one afternoon between Christmas and New Year. Yet 20 kms away they missed the downpour.

While talking to another beekeeper this morning, I remarked on how much clover is around and how white the paddocks look, only for said paddock to be cut about 1 pm and bailed by 6 pm. It got me thinking that the yard of bees that would normally be across the road were lucky to have been moved away to the bush; otherwise it may have been a bailing of clover and bees!

Extraction sheds are on a roll. Only this year it's not just the machinery in the extraction room that can test your patience as it works its magic in removing the liquid stuff, but all the paperwork, sampling jars, rules and requirements that are unfolding as a result of the roadshows, courtesy of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority. I'm sure that every day will have a new twist and it's a matter of trying to be there when it happens. Although all existing bee product processors that require an RMP must operate under a registered programme from 1 July 2006, I wonder how many will make the application date of 1 April 2006 that we have been given to ensure registration is in place by 1 July 2006. Brrrugh, just another thing to do.

- Fiona O'Brien

Hawkes Bay Branch

Continual thunderstorms in the ranges have finally given way to screaming nor'westers and we have gone from far too wet to a bit dry. The manuka crop of Hawke's Bay has been a non-event except in the very late-flowering country. Clover is yielding well at the moment but not many hives are full. Some of the best crops reported have come from the coastal areas where it is normally too dry. Varroa is increasing rapidly in some areas despite the hives being treated well into November. At least one case of reported American foulbrood turned out on closer examination to be parasitic mite syndrome.

- John Berry

Southern North Island Branch

Overall the honey crop for the region is down by about a third but for different reasons in each area.

The Wairarapa and Wellington areas went into drought from early October after a good bush flow. Rains in December helped a little but Manuka has been patchy. Northern and inland areas were affected by wind and rain.

Possum control last year on Mt Taranaki and in parts of the inland high country have allowed the trees to flower, producing

Continued on page 18

Continued from page 17

a very good Kamahi and Rewarewa flow: perhaps the best for a number of years. Away from possum-controlled areas, the flowerings were patchy, which gives a very good indication of just how much damage this noxious pest does to our bush.

From December onwards the whole region has received numerous cold fronts about three days apart. The odd fine day between fronts has allowed the bees to work. A scale hive in Taranaki showed a gain of just under three kilograms of honey between cold fronts.

Many beekeepers have reported quite high swarming rates, some of which were very late into December and January.

Mites have had a devastating effect on hobbyist beekeeper numbers in the Taranaki region and some beekeepers are noticing higher than normal queen losses and spottier brood pattern since the mite's arrival.

There's still a lot of clover in pasture but the ground temperature remains low so it's not producing. Most beekeepers are hoping for a hot, fine February so that the bees can exploit this source.

- Frank Lindsay

Nelson Branch

I am writing this in the first part of January so it is really a bit early to tell how the honey flow will be this year. So far the extraction rooms have been sitting very quiet and most beekeepers are just waiting for either more honey to come in (do I need more supers?), or for the honey to be ripened (do I need to take off supers and let go some of the extracting staff?). Many of us have stopped peeking in the hives and have decided not to look again for a couple of weeks, when our income for the next year will be more apparent!

From Golden Bay to Murchison, most Nelson beekeepers are saying that the spring build up has been ideal, but of course just before Christmas, the unsettled weather started and then we had those strong winds in the New Year. The headlines in the *Nelson Mail* indicated that we have escaped the worst of the bad weather that has affected all of New Zealand, but it sure hasn't been great here, so goodness help the rest of you!! You might say that the honey flow is 'on hold'.

The bees still seem to be sitting and waiting for more honey to become available, and luckily, not packing the queens out despite a spate of very cold nights. Snow even fell quite low in the Nelson Lakes area over the New Year, chilling most of the top of the south. We woke one morning to a temperature of six degrees!

The high country borage and the clover have mostly burned off, but the Kanuka flowering has persisted even though it has been a patchy flowering for some.

Golden Bay reports that the good spring weather helped to produce a Kamahi flow last year, but there is no significant flowering for the Northern Rata this season.

So the summary for Nelson: we are all sitting here with our fingers and toes crossed....

- Merle Moffitt

Manuka and Kanuka in flower in Nelson. ***Photo: John Moffitt***

West Coast

I hope the rest of the country is having a better season than we are. After a fantastic spring followed by one of the best Novembers for a long time, it all turned to custard. December brought warm, humid weather with frequent heavy rain and thunder, effectively ending the honey flow and giving the bees little chance to gather much. January hasn't been much better so far, with only one day without rain. As the season progresses it's looking as if it will be one of our leanest seasons for three or four years. As one of my beekeeping colleagues often reminds me, "an early season doesn't mean more, it just means it's early," and quite often this is the case.

With honey prices continuing to soften and production and compliance costs steadily increasing, we will have to tread carefully this coming year.

- Lindsay Feary

Canterbury Branch

The next meeting of the Canterbury Branch will be on Tuesday 14 March, 7.30pm at the Hornby Workingmen's Club. (Note no February meeting.) Tony Roper (AgriQuality) will be our guest speaker for the evening.

- Linda Bray

Otago Branch

In my note from the colonies last issue I was confident (ha) that we were in for a dry summer. Well actually I love the way the weather gods can make a fool of me. No sooner than to print and it became nearly as wet as the previous December, but this time thankfully a lot warmer. As a result most of Otago got

more rain in the month than in the previous six and the clover fields came alive for an early start to the season.

Things have been a bit erratic since with gales from every which direction, thunderstorms and lightning; even snow on the mountains a couple of times, followed by a few light frosts in places. Not what you need in mid-January! Despite all this unsettled 'high energy' weather we seem likely to get some good crops in most of the province. But then I should know better than to predict anything in this game, shouldn't I.

A good number of Otago and Southland beekeepers got together on 1 December for a meeting of the Southern Beekeepers Discussion group. Hosted by Peter Ward at Lake Hawea we had a great day, and got nice and warm for the time of year (29 degrees). Amongst other things we had a guided tour of his most effective queen-rearing set up, a reflective white plastic-covered tunnel house containing about 20 insulated hives. Pitch black inside, it is lit with red lights and enables beekeepers to manipulate the colonies without the bees taking flight from the hives inside the structure. The warm enclosed environment means they can begin early queen rearing any time of day in any weather: a very handy thing in the south.

Good luck out there with your harvest.

- Peter Sales

ADVERTORIAL

Don't put it off any longer

1 July 2006 will not take long to come around. The RMP template that is available on the NZFSA web site is a good place to start, and it's important to start now.

The 'living' part of your RMP is your records — this is the evidence that you are doing what you say you will do in your RMP. These records do not need to be elaborate: even recording the details in an exercise book is sufficient for a smaller operation.

I remember visiting a small honey extraction plant operator and beekeeper. While sitting in the sun on his doorstep, we talked about the pending RMP and what it would entail. He said he was already doing these procedures. I was impressed with his already established exercise book, detailing for the past few years or so where each drum of honey was obtained, when it was extracted and who the receiving retailer was.

In essence, this beekeeper and honey extractor was already running an RMP as good business practice. He only needed to document what it was he was already doing.

This will be in most instances what is required of all operations. The description does not need to be complicated and long. Simple bullet-point statements are sufficient.

Why do risk management anyway?

Well, how could you assure a customer that your honey is safe to purchase and eat?

Customers are asking for evidence that the food they eat is safe. No longer is this assurance based on trust as it was in the past. This assurance is generated in the management of a risk management programme and the records of your regular monitoring of the production process.

If you need assistance with any part of this process, even just someone you could talk with over the phone, there are people out there for you to contact. It will not necessarily cost you heaps; in fact, most advice will be free.

Each region has a Trade & Enterprise agent who will advise on who best to contact in your region: see their web site www.nzte.govt.nz and look for the list of Enterprise Training Providers.

Or phone your local NZFSA verifier as they also will assist in finding someone who could help you.

There are consultants who are experienced in RMP work. OR ring Robyn Stewart on (03) 216 3279 for information about contacts in your region.

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-1 to 9 boxes, 100 to 900 pces = 4.30 each +GST
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-51 to 99 boxes, 5100 to 9900 pces = 4.10 each + GST
-100 + boxes, 10000 + pces = 4.00 each + GST

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About the Apiary

It's been an unusual honey flow. The drought in October and November was broken by a fortnight's rain and windy weather but we have had little rain since, which has had an unsettling effect on the vegetation. Early sources such as Kamahi flowered well, but later sources didn't flower because of the drought. When the wet weather came, it stimulated plant growth again and all the early ground spring sources, especially Cat's ear, started flowering again.

Pohutukawa has had a dismal flowering but all the new growth looks good for next year and as of January, Whitewood is flowering when it normally flowers in November. Things are a little mixed up.

The Wellington area has had very little rain since November and there is a definite greening north of Otaki where rain has fallen. South of Otaki the coastal areas are dry, roadside drains are empty and there's only the odd green spot where clover is flowering in swampy areas. In the north where there's been rain, Pennyroyal is making an appearance. You can smell the peppermint when you drive over paddocks.

Manuka has been interesting. After last year's cold and wet, it looked very promising for this year as bushes were budding up well. Warm early areas flowered well and the bees have been busy but in the more exposed areas and some coastal areas, Manuka hasn't produced that well except for the period between Christmas and New Year, when we had beautiful weather. Kanuka, on the other hand, has had a massive flowering but unfortunately I've never see our bees work this source around Wellington (unlike other areas), and it's left to the native bees to pollinate it. Perhaps it's because the bees have other, better sources of nectar available to them.

Although the flow has been patchy, I should get a good average of two to four 3/4-depth supers of honey off each hive, despite the bees having to draw out one or two supers of new frames. It's just the Pohutukawa hives, the hives on stony soils and a few apiaries where the hives swarmed like mad that have only produced a super or two. This yield is well down from last year, when I extracted close to 55 kgs per hive from some areas.

While the flow persists it's just a matter of putting on more supers to hives that need them; i.e., if bees are hanging out the front or have capped right to the top super, and there are plenty of bees when the inner cover is removed. If you can, it's best to extract and put the supers back on. If you can't extract, put on another super close to the brood nest to stimulate the bees. A super added to the top of the hive may be ignored unless there is a heavy flow on.

Those hives that swarmed early packed out a super and the brood nest with early honey, then took off: a signal that I didn't have my honey supers on early enough. Others were split, grew and stored three supers of honey, then swarmed straight after the drought broke. A few of these hives are now queenless and some have spotty brood patterns. Normally I wouldn't worry about these hives as they'll get a queen cell in February and would come right again before winter, but since my AFB outbreak, I am now investigating any hive that isn't producing just in case it's diseased. Thankfully I haven't found any but I won't be totally sure until robbing season is finished. So in the meantime, any hive that did not go forward has had a nuc dumped on top. I've run out of these nucs and I'm now down to swapping queens from mini-mating nucs.

Varroa

Varroa is still out there but seems to be only affecting the odd hive in certain areas. I don't usually worry about varroa at this time of the year as it's been only a couple of months since I removed the strips. However, in going around my apiaries after the recent storms (a wind gust lifted a wooden pallet off a stack of drums), I saw two hives with the 'crawling death': drones and bees that are young looking but can't fly, and I've seen varroa in some of my nucs. Rather disconcerting, as you only see varroa when the hive is about to break down. Perhaps there are still a few feral or last year's swarms out there that are now breaking down. My solution was to insert Bayvarol® strips and hopefully the hives will pull through, but in the back of my mind is the thought that perhaps I'm seeing the start of resistant mites? Thankfully this doesn't appear to be the case (this was a couple of weeks ago and things look better now), but something we in the North Island must all be aware of as we go into the sixth year with mites.

Honey removal and extraction

Something we all look forward to? For some this is months of hard work. For hobbyists it's a few days of fun if you get together with other hobbyists and extract everybody's honey together. We must all agree that there's nothing nicer than seeing frames of white fully capped honey, the culmination of a year's work.

But before we can see what's in the frames, there's a lot of cleaning to do and then the supers have to be removed from the hives. Honey in frames is clean and free of foreign impurities but as soon as we break the cappings and spin out the honey, we introduce impurities. They are in the air — yeast and moulds etc, but we also have bacteria on our bodies that contaminate everything we touch. Therefore it's essential to have clean and sterilised equipment, clean overalls and hats, and clean hands. We all believe that honey kills bacteria so we end up with a clean product. This is far from the case. Many surveillance honey samples have to be plated a number of times because they are contaminated with bacteria. Dipping your finger in honey transmits bacteria. Squashed bees and extracting a frame containing brood also adds to the bacterial count.

Contamination starts when we remove the supers from the hives. Be gentle with the smoker so you don't introduce ash or taint the honey. Supers should initially be placed onto an upturned hive lid, then on to drip trays when cleared of

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bees and transported to your extraction plant, whether it be a hobbyist's kitchen or a fully certified plant if you are a commercial beekeeper. Don't let the supers touch the ground: cover to prevent dust going into them if they are being transported. These precautions are simply common sense.

So how do we clear the bees from the hives? There are several ways:

1 If there is a heavy flow on and the bees are working like mad, the majority of the bees in the supers will clear naturally in half an hour while you inspect the brood nest to verify the hive is free of AFB and tidy up. Brush out or blow out the few remaining bees.

2 You can use escape boards but this requires two visits. In the afternoon while the bees are still flying, inspect the hives, select the fully capped supers or those that are 90% capped and put them aside. Reassemble the hive, putting the honey supers that are not fully capped back on the hive. Add another super (with frames) if you have it to give the bees somewhere to cluster, because if the hive is packed with bees they won't leave the honey supers. Put on your bee escape board, followed by the honey supers, then the mat and roof. Check that the super/s above the escape board are completely sealed: any cracks or holes and the bees won't leave, or if they do the honey will be robbed. Fill the cracks with foam plastic or tape over.

Several things are important here: you must inspect the bee escapes beforehand to see that they have not been propolised, and check that the springs are set correctly. Plastic Porter bee escapes are easy to remove, but the older metal ones are a lot harder as they tend to rust in place. To remove the metal variety, take your hive tool and place the wide flat surface at 90 degrees to the end of the escape. Then, using a small hammer, gently strike the hive tool close to the escape and it should come apart. Inspect the springs and remove any built-up propolis with a small screwdriver so you don't alter the spring setting. The springs must have a light tension and there should be a gap between them of half the width of a bee. If the springs are bent they can be straightened with pliers or by stroking them. You do this by gently sandwiching the spring between your forefinger and the shaft of a small screwdriver and pulling out from the base. Set the tension by tweaking at the seat/base of the springs. Those that use bee escapes regularly should remove them after use and drop them in a jar of mentholated spirits for a week or so to clean them. Escape boards generally work better with two escape mechanisms.

There are other types of bee escape mechanisms. They all work but those without a trap mechanism will allow bees to re-enter the supers if they are not removed within a day. A little obvious tip: put the escape boards on with the entrance hole upward, otherwise they don't work (yes, this is easily overlooked).

Also, remember that bees will not leave brood. If you don't use excluders, you may have a few drone cells along the bottoms of some honey frames. Dig out the brood so that nothing remains or put these frames below the escape board.

Remove the honey supers in the early morning before the bees are flying. This poses less disturbance to your neighbourhood and it's much easier once the honey flow is finished and robbing starts. Brush out the few remaining bees (escape boards are not 100% effective).

3 You can brush out the bees. This approach is not recommended for urban areas as it tends to disturb the bees. The method is to remove the super from the hive and put it on an empty super placed on the upturned roof. Remove an outside frame and then use a brush to remove the bees. Move the next frame across and then brush again until the super is cleared of bees. Wash the brush every so often as it can get sticky with honey. Some UK beekeepers used a goose wing as a brush as it's gentler on the bees.

4 Chemical means: several chemicals on the market use fumes to drive the bees down out of the supers. The chemical is applied to a fume board so that the chemical does not come in contact with the honey frames. These boards are constructed of a frame using 25 mm timber (the same size as the super), so that it sits on top of the super, giving a good seal. The top edge of the frame is covered with a cloth and then a piece of tin is nailed over the top to the frame. The tin is painted black to radiate heat from the sun and assist in the vaporisation of the chemical.

It's a simple procedure. Larger beekeepers use three fume boards. Apply the chemical to the cloth so that it's evenly distributed across the cloth surface. Not too much, as you don't want any drips to contaminate your honeycombs. Mark the supers so you know which hives they come from, then remove the roof and hive mat of the first hive. Puff a little smoke over the top of the frames to move the bees down and then place the fume board on the hive. Repeat the process for the next two hives and then remove the top super from the first hive and replace the fume board. Then repeat for the next two hives and so on. On a hot day the bees will clear the next super before you can carry them to your vehicle.

The supers may need airing before extracting. Be aware that one of the chemicals, Benzaldehyde, becomes combustible after it dries on the fume board. The Australians switched to escape boards and bee blowers in the 1990's as fumigants can leave residues in the honey. In Australia, if a packer finds residues in your honey it's returned to you.

5 Mechanical means: larger-scale beekeepers use motor-driven or electric blowers. The honey supers are removed from the hives and the hive is inspected for disease. A super is then placed on a stand, which is positioned in front of the hive. The blower has a chute that delivers the bees back in front of the hive. The super is inverted on the stand, as it's easier to blow the bees out from the undersides of the frames. The blower is then moved quickly backwards and forwards along each frame. If done too slowly the bees can hang on and won't be removed. Any bees that are between the end bars and the supers are then removed, the super is righted and then moved to the vehicle. This procedure is

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simple and very quick, but wear ear protection as the motors can be noisy. A 230-volt inverter powers electrical blowers and requires an additional battery that can be isolated when in use so that it does not flatten the vehicle's main battery.

So depending upon size and location, choose your method of honey removal.

Extraction

Extraction is best done when the honey is still warm. Remove it from the hive in the morning and extract in the afternoon. Honey flows quicker and requires less effort when it's warm.

If you can't extract immediately you can keep the honey warm by placing a 60-watt incandescent light in an empty full-depth super. Place a queen excluder on top with oven foil over the queen excluder, then stack four supers on top and cover. The oven foil evenly distributes the heat coming from the light, stopping the frames immediately above the light from melting. It also prevents any honey that leaks from the frames from shorting out the wiring.

A method that is gaining popularity in the last few years with beekeepers who use plastic frames is to scrape the frames down to the midrib and deposit the honey and wax into a cappings spinner.

A small-scale beekeeper can do the same thing and leave the honey to separate from the wax overnight. Purchase two large plastic bins that fit into one another. Drill lots of 3 mm holes in the base of the upper bin. Remove the plastic burrs from around the holes and then it's ready for use. Place the honey and cappings in the top bin. The cappings should be fairly dry within 24 hours. Skim off the tiny flakes of wax in the lower bin and you have a very nice product. The cappings can be put back on the hive for the bees to clean out, or can be rinsed and used to make mead. Then melt the dry cappings in a stainless steel container half-filled with water and pour into a plastic container. Don't let the wax get too hot, as it will lose its characteristics and turn soapy, or could boil over. The only drawback with this method is that the bees have to draw out the frame again, meaning you get a little less honey than you do using fully drawn frames. On the positive side, you always have nice clean wax.

For those with a manual extractor you have to first remove the cappings. Use a hot knife and cut upwards at an angle so that the cappings are separated and fall into the bin below. Put the uncapped frames in the extractor but don't turn it faster than 300 revolutions per minute, otherwise the wax in the frames will disintegrate. (Newly waxed frames lack structural strength: it's only after the bees have raised brood in the frame that they won't break up when rotated at high speed). Start slowly and turn for a minute (this removes half the honey from one side of the frame); turn the frame around and spin until the honey is removed, then repeat the first side at full speed.

For each batch you extract, save a 500 gm sample for surveillance. One thousand bee and honey sample kits are sent out in December each year by AgriQuality, so there is quite a likelihood that you will be chosen to supply samples. It is also in your best interests to return samples, as samples can tell you if you have possible disease problems or honey that is contaminated with bacterial spores. If you encounter these problems, you will have to look at your processing and work out how the contamination got into your honey.

In urban areas, return 'wet' (sticky) honey supers to the hives after the bees have ceased flying in the evening. If supers are put on during the day, the bees will get excited and fly around the neighbourhood looking for the nectar source. Needless to say, this can be disturbing to neighbours.

Things to do this month

Check brood nests for AFB before removing any honey supers. Extract honey, remove comb honey, rear autumn queens, introduce purchased queens, produce nuclei as spared for those that fail to requeen. (It's easier to replace queens when the flow is on.) Check for wasps, monitor varroa numbers and treat as soon as the honey supers are removed. Put out rodent baits in containers under a hive (so birds can't get at them) to reduce rodent numbers before they become a problem in the autumn.

- Frank Lindsay

Letters to the Editor

Action urged on Australian honey imports

Dear Editor,

I began my beekeeping career 55 years ago. During this time I spent many years in an active role in the industry, more recently in a more passive one. I have followed, with interest, the industry's efforts to eradicate AFB from our shores. The advent of varroa has probably helped to some extent, at least in the North Island, by depleting feral hive numbers. However, the beekeeper with poor housekeeping habits will always be a problem.

The push by the large supermarket chains such as Woolworths to import cheap Australian honey (quoting Jane Lorimer in the December 2005 issue that Tasmanian Leatherwood honey fetches only about $2.00 a kilogram) into New Zealand will make futile all the efforts of our industry to eradicate AFB from our shores. Because Australian beekeepers use a drug regime to control European Brood Disease in their hives the presence of AFB is undetectable by normal visual means. Because of this many of the larger beekeepers irradiate their brood nests on a regular basis in an endeavour to control the spread of AFB. The honey produced from non-irradiated hives can easily carry AFB spores, which can be transported to New Zealand in neatly packaged 500-gram containers. Once this honey is here it becomes a constant threat to the beekeeping industry. AFB spores can be spread by way of people feeding birds and by discarded packaging.

I bring into New Zealand uncapping knives for reblading. To get an import permit I must have documentation to show that the knives have undergone radiation treatment to the level of 15 rads so any disease is destroyed. This condition was imposed by MAF. This is not a problem to my larger-scale clients who regularly have brood combs irradiated to that level to control AFB. They just include the package of knives in the wrapped stack of combs and then they get a certificate as required in New Zealand.

I pose the question: do you, as an industry, want to see honey entering New Zealand (obviously without an irradiation certificate) that may contain spores of AFB? Honey will always be a potential threat of random infection of hives all over New Zealand.

The Risk Management Analysis on importing honey from Australia has been done and apparently found to be acceptable — an analysis which found uncapping knives presented a risk and must undergo irradiation. I personally find this inconsistency alarming!

Import legislation documents have probably already been drafted, ready to be put before Parliament when it reconvenes in the New Year. Is the beekeeping industry once again going to become a sacrificial lamb so that the pipfruit industry can export their apples to Australia? Or are you going to use every weapon you have, including the goodwill of the agricultural and horticultural industries gained following the outbreak of varroa, to fight to keep the status quo?

David Penrose
Christchurch

Response from Biosecurity New Zealand

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter from David Penrose, which raises two issues regarding how the December 2004 MAF import risk analysis on honey bee products deals with American foulbrood (AFB).

With regard to imported honey, the risk analysis recognises that AFB spores may be present in bee products. International agreements supported by successive New Zealand governments prevent the imposition of sanitary measures on imports that are greater than the measures applied to domestic products for the same organism.

Therefore, for a disease like AFB which is present in New Zealand, our international obligations mean no measures at all could be imposed if it were not for the fact that AFB is under an official control program in the form of a National Pest Management Strategy (NPMS) under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

As is explained in the risk analysis, New Zealand can impose through official certification requirements, a level of protection that is equivalent to that achieved under the NPMS (i.e. an assurance that the bee products were not derived from hives with clinical AFB). However, the risk analysis recognises that few countries have inspection programs equivalent to the New Zealand NPMS for AFB, and for those countries there are three alternative treatments:

- spore counting (we require spore levels to be 2 orders of magnitude lower than the known minimum infectious dose for AFB); or
- irradiation; or
- heating for 24 hours at 120 deg Celsius.

The letter also raises issues about the risk of AFB on uncapping knives. Used beekeeping equipment was not considered in the 2004 MAF risk analysis. Since there is no completed risk analysis for used honeybee equipment, the measures that are required for the importation of uncapping knives for re-blading (the only type of used beekeeping equipment that can be imported) are based on a worst-case scenario for a number of diseases and are deliberately highly precautionary — hence the need for irradiation.

Yours sincerely

Howard Pharo
Team Manager Risk Analysis (Animal Kingdom)
Biosecurity New Zealand
Wellington

Submissions due: consultation on Draft Import Health Standards for Bee Products

Please note that the consultation on the import health standards for bee products closes on **20 February.**

You will find these draft standards on the Biosecurity New Zealand website at: http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/strategy-and-consultation/consultation/ihs

If you want to make any comment, it is important that you take the opportunity to make your submission before the deadline.

The consultation process is explained at: http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/strategy-and-consultation/consultation

- Jim Edwards, Executive Officer, NBA

Opinion: importation of honey into New Zealand gets a step closer

With the release by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's review of submissions to the Import Risk Analysis: Honey Bee Products, we are now one step further down the road to seeing honey imported into New Zealand.

As mentioned in the President's report in the December 2005 issue, some feel that the Ministry has sidestepped some important issues by saying that it is not a scientific problem but rather an issue for ERMA (Environmental Risk Management Agency) or the NZFSA (New Zealand Food Safety Authority).

Like the response to Brian Lancaster's submission, which expressed concern that OTC feed to bees to control European foulbrood (EFB) may result in difficulties in recognising AFB. The review stated: *"The number of spores in honey and other products is primarily a result of spore growth in infected larvae. In a hive with no clinical signs there will be few infected (dead) larvae and therefore low spore numbers. If there are no clinical signs of infection, regardless of OTC usage, the risk is considered acceptable."* This to me appears to be quite a step forward from previous statements indicating that the honey would need to be heat treated before it would be allowed in.

The problem would be if we got EFB beekeepers would call for drugs to be used to treat this disease and that this would then make AFB harder to detect, which could then compromise our National Pest Management Strategy which aims to eliminate AFB from New Zealand.

EFB is not a major problem overseas. It's considered a treatable minor disease, or in bad cases the hive is burnt. It only appears in the spring and soon disappears with treatment but it still persists in bees, otherwise why does it keep reappearing? The NBA commissioned a search of the International Bee Research Association's (IBRA) library a few years back to find out more about EFB, as we thought that this would be the next thing to hit New Zealand (unfortunately we got varroa). The results weren't very conclusive, as very little research has been conducted in this area since the 1970s when Canada had a seminar on EFB research. The latest research is from UK on controlling EFB without the use of drugs by using the 'shook swarm method' to all the hives in an apiary. How would this go down in New Zealand, where some beekeepers pool large numbers of hives (up to 200 in some cases) into a few apiaries for ease of spring management?

In Australia a number of beekeepers replace one third of their brood nest frames every year and add nucs or frames of brood to weaken hives, which controls EFB. Many New Zealand beekeepers have adopted this practice since varroa arrived in an endeavour to keep disease and residue levels low.

So EFB is not considered a major problem mostly because overseas countries bees are used to this disease. If we get EFB, it will be a bit like when chalkbrood got here. Dark bees were very susceptible with up to 50 per cent of the brood affected. EFB may have a similar effect, but then again we have better pollen sources here, so perhaps it won't be as dire. However, one thing that can be counted upon is that it will interfere with the identification of AFB and Parasitic Mite Syndrome.

There are problems ahead for all beekeepers when the Government finally allows honey to be imported into New Zealand. Here's hoping they will minimise the risk by having the honey treated so that the potential for bring in another disease is eliminated. Keep an eye out for the next instalment, when the Government releases the protocols for importing honey, and make a submission.

- Frank Lindsay

[Editor's note: see the notice on page 27 for details on making a submission to Biosecurity New Zealand.]

Sugar prices may rise to 24-year high

By Claudia Carpenter, in New York

Sugar prices may rise to a 24-year high this year as Brazil, the world's biggest producer, uses more of its crop to make automotive fuels and demand for sweeteners rebounds in the US.

Raw sugar will average 14.74US¢ (21.09¢) a pound on the New York Board of Trade this year, up from 10.03 US¢ last year, based on the median estimate of 17 traders, analysts and buyers surveyed by Bloomberg.

Prices probably will touch 18US¢ or more, the highest since 1981, a majority of respondents said.

Brazil is converting more sugar into ethanol fuel after gasoline prices jumped to a record. A drought in Thailand, once the world's second-biggest exporter, and the prospect of reduced European Union exports are adding to the supply squeeze, raising costs for companies including cereal maker Kellogg and Coca-Cola, the world's largest producer of soft drinks.

"The market's got legs, no question about it," said Edward Makin, chief executive officer of the Rogers Sugar Income Trust, a Montreal-based company that controls Canada's biggest sugar-refining group. "I don't know if we'll see 25 cents, but I'm hearing lots of people talk 20 cents."

White, or refined, sugar prices, which averaged US$279.09 a tonne in London last year, will trade between US$300.50 and US$532.80 this year and average US$407.50, the Bloomberg survey shows. Prices jumped 37 per cent last year.

While crude oil prices made headlines last year, New York sugar futures jumped 62 per cent, second only to a 94 per cent surge in natural gas. Sugar's gain accelerated late last year after the US increased imports because of damage to domestic crops and refineries from hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

"The US is importing more because of the hurricanes, and that clearly is new-found consumption that hadn't been expected," said Mark Flegenheimer, president and chief executive officer of Michigan Sugar Co, which sells about 400,000 tonnes of refined sugar a year to foodmakers.

US sugar consumption in the season that started in October will probably rise to 9.1 million tonnes, the highest in five years, the US Department of Agriculture said.

Demand has rebounded 5.7 per cent from an eight-year low three years ago. "The supply and demand numbers are very, very tight," said Anthony Compagnino, a partner at East Coast Options Inc in New York, who predicted prices would rise to 18.5US¢.

Raw sugar reached a 10-year high of 15.17US¢ a pound on January 5 in New York.

The biggest shift has occurred in Brazil, where the world's largest ethanol industry forecasts record production of 16.6 billion litres in the 12 months ending this September. About 80 per cent of output, or 13.4 billion litres, will be used in Brazilian cars. Global demand for ethanol may quadruple by 2010, according to Roland Jansen, founder of the US$1.9 billion fund-management arm at Liechtensteinische Landesbank in Vaduz, Liechtenstein. "Two or three years from now, there will be giant ethanol carriers roaming the high seas, just as oil tankers do now," he said last month.

Rising oil prices are driving the ethanol surge. Crude oil has gained in six of the past seven years, reaching a record of US$70.85 a barrel in August [2005].

The decline in sugar supply is being deepened by falling production in other regions. The shortage is so great in Thailand, where first drought and then flooding decimated the harvest, the Government has capped prices and is threatening to jail hoarders. In China, production has dropped to a three-year low because of poor weather, prompting the nation to sell sugar from its stockpiles.

Europe cannot make up the shortfall. The 25-nation EU, the second-biggest sugar producer, must start limiting exports to 1.27 million tonnes a year by May 22 to comply with a World Trade Organisation ruling. The total is 17 per cent of the supplies the bloc has to sell, based on estimates from British brokerage Sucden.

"There's no one waiting in the wings immediately to be able to make up the shortfall," said Judy Ganes-Chase, president of J Ganes Consulting in Katonah, New York. Sugar may rise as high as 16US¢ this year, Ganes-Chase said.

M. Somasekhar, a sugar-price analyst at TransGraph Consulting in Hyderabad, India, said prices could reach 16.26US¢ a pound in the next two months. "The market is on a bullish wave because of a tight supply situation," Somasekhar said.

The shortage has pushed wholesale prices in the US to the highest in at least 75 years, adding to costs at companies such as Hershey, the largest US chocolate maker, and Michigan-based Kellogg, the biggest cereal maker. Makers of sweets are the second-biggest sugar users, behind cereal makers.

Reprinted from the New Zealand Herald, *'No sweetener to world sugar shortage", 17 January 2006, page C5, taken from the Bloomberg financial site.*

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.

Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand

Astelia solandri
Astelia banksii

Maori name: Kowharawhara

The Kowharawhara is an epiphytic Lily, although some species, *A. nervosa* and *A. trinevia*, are also found growing terrestrially. The former often is found on rocks by the seashore; the latter is known as Kauri grass in Northland.

The ground-growing species flower in November while the epiphytic species flower in January and February.

The male and female flowers appear on different plants with the nectar being very attractive to bees, but the white-coloured honey produced is objectionable in flavour.

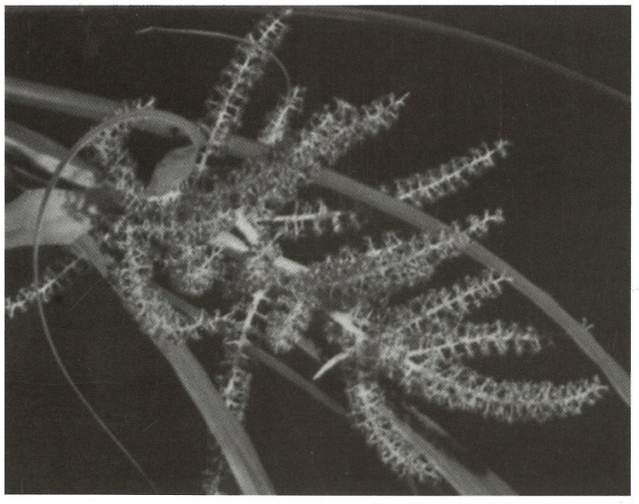
The epiphytes are found in the forked branches of our forest trees. The clumps can be dislodged during high winds and fall to the ground, hence the bushman's name of widow maker. It is when these clumps have fallen that one can observe the creamy to purplish blossoms or see or taste the transparent wine-coloured berries.

The *Astelia* are able to store water against a drought and water — although brackish — can be obtained if one was thirsty in the bush. (It would be easier to ensure that you carry a bottle of water!)

One tribe of Maori in the early days placed the bones of their dead in the Kowharawhara up in the trees — never in the ground. This could be likened with the patupaiarehe or fairies of Maori folk legends living in the trees.

The Astelias were used by the Maori for spiritual and physical healing, as well as being used in ceremonies and as cosmetics by the women.

- Tony Lorimer



Astelia solandri

Astelia banksii

Photos: J T Salmon, New Zealand Flowers and Plants *(Reed, 1963; revised and enlarged 1967).*

NIWA's Climate Outlook: January to March 2006

Circulation patterns for late summer, January to March, favour slightly lower than normal pressures to the northeast. Air temperatures are expected to be above average in most regions of New Zealand.

Rainfalls are likely to be normal or above normal in the north and east of the North Island, normal or below normal in the east of the South Island, and near normal elsewhere. Soil moisture levels and river flows are expected to be normal for the North Island, and normal or below normal in the South Island.