



The New Zealand Beekeeper



Beekeepers outside Civic Square.



Beekeepers march on Parliament.



Gisborne beekeepers at protest march.

New Zealand
Permit No. 154506



Annette Berry, with Russell Berry in background.



John Bassett and Mark Tweeddale at Parliament.



National Party MP Anne Tolley and colleagues.



One News reporter interviews Hawkes' Bay branch president John Berry.

Cover photos by Barry Foster, Julia Brooke-White, Frank Lindsay and Fiona O'Brien.

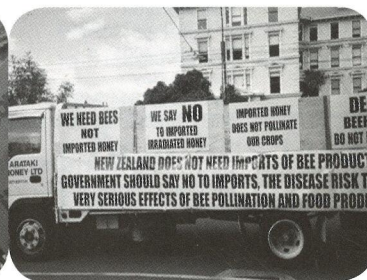
Creating history, and in 100 years what will they think?



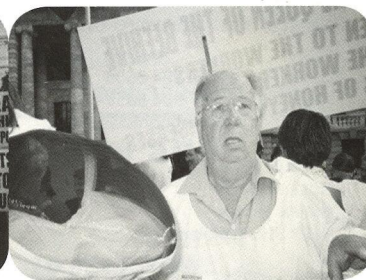
Beekeepers gathered at Civic Square.



Making a point at the Beehive.



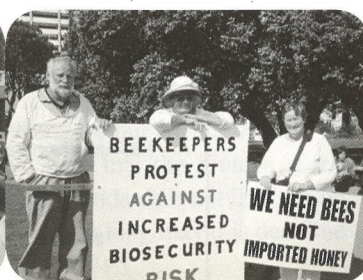
Arataki Honey sums up opposition to bee product imports.



Protest organiser and Waikato branch president Russell Berry.



Jim Anderton amidst a sea of politicians, reporters and beekeepers.



Stephen Batters with John and Pauline Bassett.



The Cable family, Hamilton.



Judy and John Dobson, Hawkes Bay.

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President's Report

The end of March and April have been an extremely busy time for me with numerous meetings to attend, as well as trying to get the last of the honey off our hives and varroa treatment in. I've had reports that a number of beekeepers are experiencing greater hive losses due to high mite levels and high wasp numbers in some areas.



So we need to be asking ourselves: is this the beginning of seeing varroa resistance to the common treatment materials? Or are we seeing a cyclical increase of mite numbers this year that will then drop again in the future, provided we are treating hives correctly and not getting a high level of resistance. I guess time will tell.

Protest march

The Waikato Branch organised a protest march on Parliament to show displeasure at the prospect of bee product imports due to the biosecurity risk of importing new bee diseases, and as a consequence, the potential downstream effects on the supply of hives for pollination.

The Executive decided to support this move by the branch as we had received no response from the office of the Minister of Agriculture to our concerns raised with the Minister, despite our continued correspondence with them.

The turnout to the protest from Civic Square to Parliament on 4 April was extremely pleasing. The feedback I have received from several people was that it was a well-organised and professional protest — our thanks to Russell Berry and the organising team for this effort.

One small thing, however, was noted on the march through the streets of Wellington: a child standing on the cab of a truck. This certainly captured the attention of those who were filming the protest. We must consider at all times the safety of people — if there had been an accident, I can see that OSH would have had a dim view of the people allowing the children to be put in danger.

The response from the Minister to our visit in his office after the protest was predictable, in that he repeated what had been said to Jim Edwards and me on our earlier visit. The only really good news was to hear that the review of the submissions on the Import Health Standards is not likely to be completed until the end of June — so long may this deadline be extended!!

[Editor's note: you can read additional coverage on page 4 and in the 'From the colonies' column, and more photos are on the back cover.]

Succession of the NBA

At a recent Management Committee meeting I raised the issue of the succession of people holding office for the NBA. A real need exists for those standing for ward representation as to how far their commitment can extend to assist in the successful running of the organisation. Whilst having both Jim and Pam Edwards on board (as our Executive Officer and Secretary, respectively) has assisted tremendously in reducing the workload of the President and Vice President in running the NBA, there is still a time commitment to administer the American Foulbrood National Pest Management Strategy. I believe that the time required to oversee the functioning of the strategy will reduce in future, as the Management Agency has now done some considerable work on the Operational Plan, procedures, and the policy document.

As new people come on to the Executive Council, we need to identify who has aspirations or potential to move into the Management Committee and the office bearers' roles. We also need to formulate a strategy that will assist people to develop the necessary skills to move into these roles. In the past, people who have either been office holders at branch level or who have chaired sub-committees have had their 'arms twisted' to step up to a national level of office.

The rewards are there for those who make the commitment — it may be in the form of a better understanding of how politics can affect the running of your business; how to influence the outcome of the bureaucratic nightmare of new legislation descending on beekeeping business; or taking the opportunity to meet with like-minded people from around the world. For me, the greatest reward has been meeting many people around New Zealand and overseas that has led to friendships that are likely to last a lifetime.

Continued on page 4

Deadline for articles and advertising

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

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Continued from page 3

During this discussion with the Management Committee, I outlined to them that I would be unlikely to stand again for Waikato Ward member when my term is completed in 2007. Until that time, I shall continue to work hard for the members of the NBA.

- Jane Lorimer

Executive Officer's report: managing the present and planning for the future

A lot of effort has been made by many members to protest the proposed importations of bee products. President Jane Lorimer and others in this issue have referred to the major protest led by Russell Berry and the Waikato Branch. You all created a great image and professionally expressed your concerns about the risk of diseases posed by these imports.



Our efforts have been one of support. Pam took some good photos which I used in the website report. We even had a call from Australia for permission to use one photo. I have also responded to a lot of requests from the media and spoken on live radio again this month.

The research work we are involved in continues to assume greater importance. Jane Lorimer and I held a meeting at Ruakura in late March to bring the project to look at new technologies to control varroa back up to speed. Mark Goodwin and Michelle Taylor continue to do excellent work. However, the massive government funding for this project has been held up because we needed to show that our industry is funding its agreed share. Last year, not all the promised funding came in. We have just sent out invoices to those who said they would support the project. We still need more, so please let me know if you would like to contribute.

To help us get better value from the Sustainable Farming Fund, I attended a workshop to learn how to make our applications more successful. In mid-May, we have a workshop for our pollination project.

All of this work is going to help set us up for the future. We want to enhance the future of beekeeping because of the difficulties impacting on the viability of beekeeping businesses. We are planning to address the future at our annual conference in Hamilton in July.

- Jim Edwards

Beekeepers protest imports at Parliament

One hundred beekeepers came from around the country to protest the proposal to import bee products into New Zealand. Their major concerns are the disease risks that they see will remain, even after the safeguards proposed by Biosecurity New Zealand.

The parade in fact started out in the districts with "beecoys" [Editor: *bee hiko*, or 'beekoi'] of trucks spreading their message and containers of New Zealand honey to bystanders as they passed through towns along the way.

The Wellington parade started in Civic Square and wound its way through the city, down Lambton Quay and into Parliament grounds. The procession was led by one truck festooned with placards and followed by a parade of more than 40 trucks carrying protest banners. The beekeepers in the procession were dressed in their beekeeping clothing and veils and a number operated their smokers to good effect. They received much encouragement from the public along the way.

The protesters were met at Parliament with good media coverage which included live coverage from National Radio Rural Reporter, Kevin Ikin. A number of parliamentarians, especially from the National Opposition, greeted the protesters and offered their support to the cause.

Waikato Branch President, Russell Berry then spoke to the assembled crowd and invited others to voice their concerns.

Minister for Biosecurity, the Hon Jim Anderton, spoke to the assembled protesting beekeepers and explained that the advice he had received was likely to conclude that imports would proceed once the import health standards were approved.

A small delegation including Mr Berry, NBA President Jane Lorimer and Bee Industry Group President Mr Lin Mackenzie and several others then accepted Mr Anderton's invitation to meet him and present their petition.

The protest was followed by a number of questions asked in the House.

- Jim Edwards
NBA Executive Officer

Reprinted from the National Beekeepers Association website <http://www.nba.org.nz>, 'Beekeepers Protest Imports at Parliament', posted by Jim Edwards, Tuesday, April 04, 2006 (includes photographs).

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Parliamentary debates (Hansard) transcript: Question 11—Honey and Bee Products—Biosecurity Risk

[Editor's note: The following question was raised in the New Zealand House of Representatives on 4 April 2006, the same day as beekeepers marched to Parliament in protest over the Government's proposal to import bee products into New Zealand. This is an uncorrected transcript which is subject to correction and further editing. For corrected transcripts, please visit: <http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz/hansard/>]

11. SHANE ARDERN (National—Taranaki-King Country) to the Minister for Biosecurity: Can he assure New Zealand there will be no biosecurity risk as a result of a Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry proposal to allow honey and bee products into New Zealand?

Hon JIM ANDERTON (Minister for Biosecurity): The proposal, as the member suggests, does not become a decision until around the middle of the year, after the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has considered the proposed import health standards for honey from Australia and the Pacific Islands. Those standards are based on sound science, in accordance with our domestic legislation and international obligations. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry expects to make final decisions in June, as I said, following analysis of the submissions.

Shane Ardern: If the Minister cannot assure New Zealand there will be no risk—and it appears he cannot—then will

Biosecurity New Zealand tell the honey producers, and also the rest of the farming and pastoral sector, why they should take that risk?

Hon JIM ANDERTON: Perhaps some of Mr Ardern's senior and more knowledgeable colleagues should advise him that the Act under which I am now acting and cannot intervene politically was passed in 1993 by the then National Government. If Mr Ardern is suggesting that National would politicise our biosecurity system and start to make decisions on biosecurity from a political standpoint, his knowledgeable colleagues will tell him that National, if it ever does get into Government, would be before the World Trade Organization faster than it ever imagined would be possible.

Hon Dr Michael Cullen: Has the Minister received any indications of support from the Opposition spokesperson on trade, Dr the Hon Lockwood Smith, for the use of sanitary or phytosanitary barriers as trade barriers; if so, how has that member squared that with his opposition to the Australian use of such barriers in the case of apples?

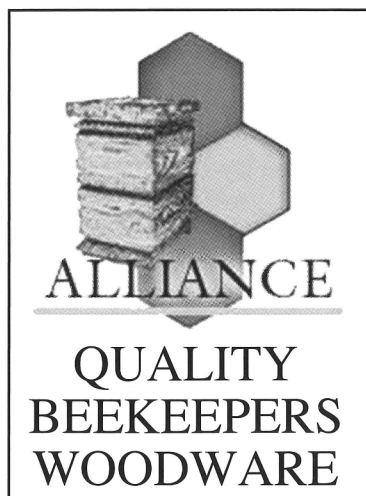
Hon JIM ANDERTON: It is very instructive for this House to consider the case of Australia versus New Zealand regarding the import of apples. We in New Zealand believe that for an overwhelming amount of time—close to 100 years, now—the Australians have not been taking notice of

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evidence-based information in terms of apple imports. If we now start to do exactly the same thing as that, we will be as bad as the Australians—and that is something I do not want to have any part in, as far as this Government is concerned.

R Doug Woolerton: What will the importation of honey and bee products do for New Zealand's balance of payments deficit?

Shane Ardern: Make it a lot sweeter.

Hon JIM ANDERTON: Ha, ha! At the present time, New Zealand exports about \$30 million worth of honey. If we were to take the actions that Mr Ardern is suggesting and intervene politically in these matters, it would not be very long before New Zealand, which is the most export-dependent developed country in the world, faced barriers all over the world—and we depend on 95 percent of our agricultural produce for 65 percent of our entire foreign exchange earnings. That is about the most self-defeating piece of advice I have ever heard from any member of any Opposition.

Sue Kedgley: Is there any essential agricultural industry in New Zealand that the Government is not prepared to put at risk from imported diseases, in its craven attempt to satisfy the free-market ideology of the World Trade Organization; if so, which ones are they?

Hon JIM ANDERTON: When I said that New Zealand has an evidence and science-based biosecurity system, that is exactly what I meant. If there was evidence of a risk put before the Director-General of Agriculture and Forestry, or before responsible Ministers, then of course New Zealand would stop any imports. But if the evidence suggests there is no feasible or viable risk whatever, then we would be acting against all of the international agreements we have as a trading nation in protecting ourselves from any such imports.

Shane Ardern: When the Minister met with the industry group and the pan-industry group concerned with all agricultural sector industries, including viticulture and horticulture as well as the bee industry, what basis or science did he use to allay their fears that by allowing the import of honey, we would not at the same time import European foul brood—on what science basis did he make that decision?

Hon JIM ANDERTON: Yes, on a scientist's basis. The independent group of scientists, from both New Zealand and overseas, who peer-reviewed this decision are all reputable scientists. They have all vouched for the fact that we have the most minimal amount of risk involved in it. And if Mr Ardern is suggesting, on behalf of National members, that National will change the Biosecurity Act of 1993 and make biosecurity decisions on a political basis, let him get up and say that now, and let the National Party acknowledge that. Then we will go into the next election with the agricultural community knowing full well what a danger to New Zealand's trade the National Party really is.

Shane Ardern: Has the Minister assessed the likely cost of the importation of European foul brood to our bee industry, our viticultural industry, our horticultural industry, and our agricultural industry, or is this just another one of those

examples of where, once it is in, Government members will say "That's too bad; treat it with antibiotics.", without worrying about the science that says it will come in?

Hon JIM ANDERTON: The scientific advice that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has in front of it, which I have seen as the responsible Minister, is that the heat-treating systems the honey is required to go through—that is, honey from Australia and the Pacific Islands only; those are the only sources being considered here, and not honey from elsewhere—reduces to millionths of a percentage point the chance of any kind of infestation of European foul brood. Let me remind the member for one second: the varroa bee mite did not come here by any decision of the Director-General of Agriculture and Forestry; it was brought in by somebody. We have an absolute prohibition on live bee imports, yet we ended up with the varroa bee mite. The member should contemplate that before he continues digging in the big hole he has now got himself into.

Question No. 11 to Minister

SHANE ARDERN (National—Taranaki-King Country): Madam Speaker, I am sorry I did not do this at the end of question No. 11; you moved to question No. 12 very quickly. I seek leave of the House to table a petition from the bee industry to Parliament expressing the concerns that I mentioned earlier.

Leave granted.

SHANE ARDERN (National—Taranaki-King Country): I seek leave of the House to table some documents from a pan-industry group, based on good science, showing why it would not be a good idea to allow honey imports into New Zealand.

Leave granted.

SHANE ARDERN (National—Taranaki-King Country): I seek leave of the House to table a media report by Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry officials stating that they are very concerned about the heat treatment process, and that they could not guarantee that it will have the success—

Madam SPEAKER: Leave is sought to table that document. Any objection? Yes, there is objection.



Shane Ardern MP speaks to beekeepers at the 4 April 2006 protest.



Varroa Agency Incorporated News

An update from Varroa Agency Incorporated Chairman Duncan Butcher, May 2006

Varroa Agency supports honey producers' opposition to honey import regulation changes

The Varroa Agency supports the honey industry's efforts to convince the Government not to allow the proposal to import bee products into New Zealand, and their concerns at the disease risks that they see will remain, even with proposed safeguards.

While the Agency isn't actively involved in opposition to the regulation changes, it does have concerns if the importations are allowed. Although varroa is not present in Australia, there is a possibility that as the imported goods arrive in the North Island and are then transported to the South Island, there is increased risk of spreading varroa as it is being moved from north to south. It is an issue we intend to monitor.

We need to make sure the risk of bringing varroa into the South Island is not increased in any way.

Levy dates

South Island beekeepers will be billed for their 2006-07 varroa levy shortly. The levy is set on the number of hives a beekeeper owns on March 31, 2006. The levy is due to be paid in full on July 1, 2006.

The Agency was extremely pleased at the response to levy payments last year — we appreciate the support that demonstrates, and are hoping for similar levels of support this financial year.

Only a very small number of beekeepers have not paid the levy, and that debt is now in the hands of debt-collectors.

Surveillance programme

This year's surveillance programme of South Island beehives is now underway. I'm particularly pleased with the number of AP2 people who have made themselves available to help with inspection this year.

We ran three training courses for the Authorised Person level two training, in conjunction with AgriQuality Limited, in

Gore, Nelson and Christchurch. Thanks to AgriQuality Ltd Apicultural Advisory Officer Tony Roper for his work with this training. Over 85 people attended these courses, which was really pleasing. Our thanks also go to the AFB Management Agency for its contribution of \$5,000 towards training.

I'm also pleased to say that we have successfully negotiated the same testing costs with Gribbles Veterinary Pathology Ltd laboratory services as last year.

Testing kits are being distributed, and we are urging beekeepers to complete and return them as soon as possible.

NIWA's climate outlook until June 2006

During the next three months atmospheric pressures are expected to be higher than normal to the east of the South Island, favouring a tendency for weaker than normal westerlies over New Zealand. Air temperatures are very likely to be above average in the North Island and are likely to be above average in most of the South Island.

Rainfall is likely to be normal or below normal in much of the South Island, and in the southwest North Island. Normal or above normal rainfall is likely for the northern North Island, with near normal falls likely in the east of the North Island.

Soil moisture levels and stream flows are likely to be normal or above normal in the northern North Island, normal in the southeast of the North Island, and below normal in the southwest.

In the South Island, normal or below normal soil moisture levels and stream flows are likely in the north, with drier than normal conditions elsewhere.

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Moves made to safeguard 'Manuka' name

An application has been made to secure the 'manuka' name after concerns were raised by manuka honey exporters that the word 'manuka' was legally unprotected in Europe and could fall into the wrong hands.

Experience shows that New Zealand exporters need to be vigilant in the area of trademark protection — in a recent example a French wine maker has registered the name 'Kiwi' which means New Zealand wineries can not use the word in France without the threat of legal action.

According to Sue Irwin Ironside, partner at intellectual property lawyers Baldwins, while manuka as a word would be exceptionally difficult to protect in New Zealand as it is in general use, that is not the case in other countries.

"In Europe, for example, manuka would be an uncommon name and could be registered by a company that is unconnected to New Zealand — even though manuka is exclusive to New Zealand."

When the vulnerability of the name was noted by natural health products company Comvita, it immediately applied to register the name 'manuka' in the European Union as a precautionary move.

Comvita chief executive Brett Hewlett says after seeing that other interests have registered or tried to register 'manuka' elsewhere in the world we decided to move quickly.

"It's important to ensure that registrations for manuka don't fall into the wrong hands as that could result in legitimate exporters being sued for trademark infringement."

National Beekeepers Association executive officer Jim Edwards says he is pleased to see moves are being made to protect the name for manuka products on behalf of all New Zealand beekeepers.

"We must protect the reputation of New Zealand honey internationally and within our home market."

New Zealand Honey Packers and Exporters Association chairman Allen McCaw says it is a wise move to protect the brand or name overseas to ensure New Zealand doesn't lose out to offshore interests.

"As long as there are no restrictive practices that prevent any New Zealand honey company using the name 'manuka' then we are comfortable."

Hewlett is clear about the intention: "It is not, and never will be, Comvita's intention to obstruct any New Zealand-owned manuka product brands from selling in the EU. Healthy competition in such a vast market can only serve to continue to build credibility for the therapeutic properties of our unique and indigenous manuka honey."

But Hewlett says in essence the New Zealand honey industry needs to get moving on this one.

"We have a holding position in Europe but this is an industry problem that should be dealt with collectively."

For more information contact:

Jim Edwards
National Beekeepers Association
06 362 6301 or 021 631 447

Brett Hewlett
Comvita CEO Ltd
021 740 160

Allen McCaw
NZ Honey Packers and Exporters Association
03 417 7198

Pip Buckley – Marketing Communications Manager
Comvita Ltd
021 386 990

Source: joint press release issued 13 April 2006, reprinted from <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU0604/S00274.htm>

More sheep and less apples, statistics show

An increasing number of sheep in New Zealand is finally reversing a long decline, while land planted in pipfruit is diminishing.

Government statistics released today following the 2005 Agricultural Production Survey show sheep numbers got to 39.9 million last year — a 2 per cent increase from the year before.

It means there are now about 10 sheep for every person in the country.

Sheep numbers peaked in 1982, and dropped steadily until 2002 when they levelled off.

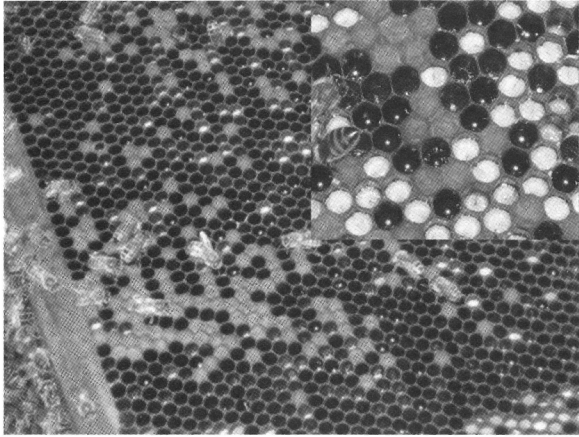
The increase was attributed to a significant increase in hogget (young sheep) numbers.

The survey included questions about horticulture production and showed there has been a general decline in the amount of land planted in pipfruit since 2002.

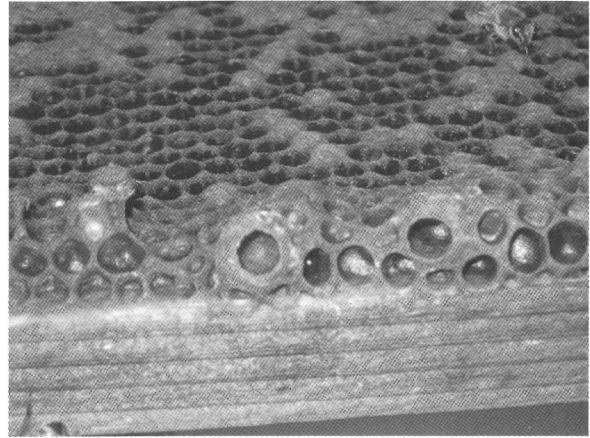
Apple orchards were down 6 per cent since 2002 to 10,980ha, pear orchards were down about 25 per cent (720ha), while avocado orchards increased 9 per cent (3400ha).

Reprinted from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3626107a3600,00.html>, Monday 3 April 2006.

Odd findings during surveillance



Although as the new brood looks to be the same age, this hive has been recently superseded.

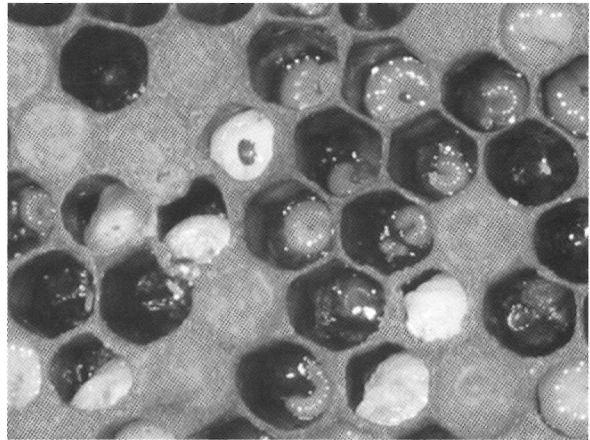


Queen cell buds in April. If this hive produces new queens at this time of the year, they won't get mated as the weather is too cold. The stimulation by this late flow has upset the rhythm of the hive — the bees think it's spring.

HELP WANTED

We are preparing the new website and would like to receive help with gathering information for the new pages.

Please contact Jim Edwards
(jimedwards@xtra.co.nz or 06 362 6301)
if you would like to help.



Some beekeepers were late in treating hives. There are varroa mites in a number of cells and dead PMS larvae (off white; curled in the cell).

Beekeeper

We are seeking to employ an Apiary manager for our Canterbury-based business.

Reporting to the owner, you will be responsible for the daily management of our 2000 hive operation.

You will be fully competent at Queen raising, making nucs, assessing hive condition, supering, extracting, wintering and have a current HT license. You will have a high degree of self-motivation, with a flexible approach towards work, a tidy disposition, with the ability to supervise, enthuse, and teach permanent and casual staff.

In return we can offer you a rewarding career path whilst living and working in one of New Zealand's most diverse and beautiful regions, with fishing, hunting, jet boating, tramping, skiing, horse riding on the door step and only one hour's drive from Christchurch.

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James Corson
Whitecliffs Road
RD Coalgate, Canterbury
gowanleagold@xtra.co.nz
www.gowanleagold.com
Tel: NZ 03 318 2960



The stunted bee at front is covered in mites. This hive might not recover even though given treatment.

Photos by Frank Lindsay.

From the colonies



Waikato Branch

The first week of April brought some welcome rain to freshen up the pastures, the bright yellow of the dandelions looking striking against the lush green of paddocks. Just a few weeks on and the pasture is now dotted with pollinated dandelions about to disperse their seeds in the next gust of wind. On farms, the maize harvest is past the halfway mark with truck and trailer loads on the move. Night-time driving becomes more of a challenge when following big harvesters and truck and trailer units. Most farmers are on once-a-day milking and by the time this article is read some farmers probably will have dried off their cows. The trees are beginning to show early signs of autumn colouring; yet the temperature both night and day are remaining warm for this time of the year.

Beekeepers are still busy with many chores — for some that is what the last of the honey extraction has become, as the 2005/2006 season seems to never want to end. Some Waikato beekeepers are supplying package bees to Canada, whilst other beekeepers' minds are occupied with varroa mites and the effects of treatments on hives. Some are trialling alternative treatments, with mixed results. There may be just enough time to slightly tweak the method of treatment to see a more positive result; again, only time will tell. And there's the completion of RMPs. Beekeepers are at various stages in this process: enough said.

Wasps are showing up in large numbers around apiaries and elsewhere. What's worse than having two bees in a closed-in truck? Having two wasps!

The dates of 3-4 April 2006 are firmly fixed in history. On these dates Waikato beekeepers, along with beekeepers from all over New Zealand, united to voice strongly their concerns about the pending decision on whether or not to allow imported honey and other bee products into New Zealand. It was an immensely proud occasion to be involved in the many separate convoys of trucks and utes, converging in Wellington with many other beekeepers who had arrived from the South Island and flown from various other destinations in the North Island. We then moved in unison from Civic Square to Parliament, whilst handing out pots of New Zealand honey printed with a simple message of why we were protesting. (Honey was also distributed at the various towns travelled through by the convoys.) There were also buckets of apples from Hawkes Bay: apples for honey, or is it honey for apples? Newspapers both local and national ran the stories, with many local beekeepers raising their profiles. Many letters to newspaper editors have also been generated. Whatever the decision, our action ensured that New Zealand politicians, the horticultural, agricultural and arable industries, and New Zealand consumers have been put on notice of the possibility of another biosecurity breach (maybe not tomorrow but some time in the future), if the decision to import is made.

I took the liberty of telling a reporter the other day that beekeepers are an individualist lot and that after the protest we would go back to obscurity. Well, some will anyway! Hopefully back to working on their projects for the Roy Patterson Trophy.

Remember, it's never too early to start thinking about conference, especially looking at your accommodation needs. Most of you will be flying in. If you think you may extend your trip to take in the sights and sounds of the greater Waikato, here are some possibilities, all within an hour or two of Hamilton:

- a day trip to Waitomo: see the kiwis at the Otorohanga Kiwi House, go black water rafting at Waitomo or visit the newly opened Ruakuri Cave
- Thames on the Coromandel Peninsula, visiting antiques at Paeroa along the way (a source for many props for 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' film in the *Narnia* series)
- Tauranga: shopping, surfing or stunning real estate prices
- Rotorua: thermal wonderland
- Taupo: for fly fishing, hot pools, and not far from the ski fields on Mt Ruapehu.

Talk to Zoltan at Low Cost Car Rentals (phone 0800 569 267). Tell him you're going to the Bee Conference and ask him for the deals on offer. Hamilton has plenty of shopping and the cafés down the main street have excellent choices. When making bookings for flights, a wise choice is to come into Hamilton in the afternoon (if you can get a flight). If you leave it to the day of the seminar, the airport could be closed due to fog.

- Fiona O'Brien

Hawkes Bay Branch

Hawkes Bay had two trucks and a motorbike in Wellington for the protest, where we joined up with all the other trucks from all over the North Island. It was just amazing — a great effort from everybody. A lot of effort went into dressing up the trucks, and I especially liked the cow. The mannequin in the bee suit hanging from a rope around its neck (from the back of the boom on Jonathan Wroe's truck) was quite a sight as it swung in the breeze as we drove along the motorway. However, I think it might have been a bit subtle for Mr Anderton.

The Hawkes Bay contingent contributed buckets of apples for distribution with the message: NO BEES NO TREES, to demonstrate the importance of bees to horticulture.

It was good to catch up with old friends and to make new ones; it is just a pity we had to be there in the first place. I have not stood on the steps of Parliament since I was 12 years old: the politicians have got smaller but at least the building is still impressive.

A long dry spell has been followed by 10 days of solid rain, which has not helped queen mating at all. But the farmers are happy and the weather has settled, so hopefully there will not be too many mismated queens. During testing for exotic diseases large numbers of varroa have been detected in almost all hives inspected. If you have not treated your hives, do so now.

Continued on page 13

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Free Fax: 0800 233 929 or email: Bayvarol@beehealthy.co.nz

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Hawkes Bay Branch AGM

The Hawkes Bay Branch held its AGM on 10 April 2006 at Arataki Honey. John Berry, James Ward and Ron Morison were re-elected as President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer, respectively.

- John Berry

Southern North Island Branch

Most commercial members have taken off their honey; some reporting a less than usual crop, but the majority report an average season. Those that produce Manuka honey are looking forward to the seemingly increased demand, but others with bush blend or pasture honey are not nearly as optimistic.

The protest event in Wellington has dominated our thinking and activities — with excellent representation from Wanganui, Rangitikei, Wairarapa, Manawatu and Wellington beekeepers. Many were there whom I did not know, but thanks to Russell Berry and the team for the organisation. I and others got geographically misplaced in Wellington traffic, resulting in our going around several extra blocks before we were able to link in again with the rest. Generally we were well received. Most Members of Parliament did not know anything about honey and bee product imports, so we have made the general public and MPs aware; but at the end of the day I feel that MAF and the Minister of Agriculture have made up their collective minds and that imports from Western Australia are all set to be announced. This is the thin edge and a start to a lot of problems for NZ beekeepers, both financially and through increased disease risk. We need to keep the publicity campaign going.

We are enjoying a warm fine spell as I write this, so no trouble getting into paddocks for the last of the crop, or varroa treatment. Good to see the report from George Jonson and Ken Finer in the April issue on their experience with FGMO. Others have had similar results, but not written about it: it is a constant battle to stay on top of varroa.

SNI Branch has their AGM on 1 May so by the time this issue is out, we will be planning for Conference in Hamilton in July.

- Neil Farrer

Nelson Branch

I am writing this in the first week of April, and we have just had our first NBA meeting this year. We had a good discussion on how we might interest more members to join the NBA, and how to get more members attending meetings. We definitely want to try to have a field day of some sort in early spring before we all get too busy, so stay tuned...

We have had a great deal of rain in the past two weeks, which has created a lot of pasture growth for the farmers so we can't

wish it otherwise. As it is, most beekeepers have their honey off and are nearing the end of extraction. Was it a good year? As Rickki Leahy says, "It is always easy to have an average to good year when it follows a 'shocker' of a year!"

Most beekeepers are disappointed that they still haven't received the materials to start the varroa checks for the PMS. It seems to me that I said this exact thing a year ago. Beekeepers want to have materials to start the checks in March. Anyone who has opened strong hives at the end of April or early May in the cold to put in and take out sticky boards will know why this is not a happy or easy task!

There was appreciation expressed to those beekeepers who were able to join the march on the Beehive last week. We urge all branches to keep the pressure on to try to stop imports of honey into New Zealand. It was felt that more emphasis needs to be placed on the biosecurity issue rather than the trade issue. Write letters to the editors of your local papers. Write letters to your MPs: if all of us did something, it would definitely make a stronger impact.

- Merle Moffitt

Canterbury Branch

Autumn is drawing out with plenty of pollen still coming into the hives. I hope most of you are well underway with your wintering and that it has been a successful season.

This month the Canterbury branch was fortunate enough to have Tony Roper from AgriQuality give a presentation on the new RMPs that need to be registered by the end of March. Tony gave a great talk that cut to the chase and enabled the beekeepers present to exercise their frustrations and question how these RMPs will work in practice.

I for one really appreciated Tony taking the time to do this presentation, considering that he seems to have a double workload at present. The beekeeping industry is lucky to still have the involvement of a guy like Tony who has beekeepers' best interests at heart. Most other officials I have come across lately are only interested in completing the documents in the correct order and taking the money.

On the subject of RMPs, New Zealand beekeepers need to look at introducing these across the whole of the industry and not just exporters. It's a farce when NZFSA has the desire to introduce RMPs on the grounds that we need traceability for foreign buyers, yet they couldn't care less about New Zealand consumers. It is my humble opinion this anomaly has been deliberately left open by the 'powers that be' to make it easier to import honey into this country. After all, remember the catch cry: "we cannot apply protocols any different than the domestic market". If all New Zealand honey was produced to current export standards, few countries around the world would be interested in exporting to New Zealand. We need one rule for all and this anomaly must be rectified!

- Brian Lancaster

About the apiary

Wintering down

The weather has remained settled although the days are getting cooler and shorter as we approach winter. Bee work outdoors is tapering down. It's just a matter now of wintering hives down and seeing that they have enough food to carry them through to spring.

Well, that's what I thought was happening but recent surveillance work has altered that. I'd noticed the bees from the nuc in my garden were flying well for most of the day and wondered what they had found; but it wasn't until I got out into the city that I found out what's been going on. The spell of warm mild weather through March and April with daily highs over 20° C has done something to the shrubs and trees in the city. There's a honey flow on and the bees are working like mad. Apart from the regular trees that flower at this time and into the winter like Pink Eucalyptus, many other shrubs that normally flower in summer have burst into flower; i.e., Australian Bottle Brush and Pohutukawa.

What has this done to the bees? They have been stimulated into producing brood — just like spring. Several hives I inspected have produced supersedure queens, which are laying well in five to six frames. It was very good to see but there is a downside to this brood rearing for beekeepers that had removed the strips from their hives: varroa have been breeding. Feral hives and those hives that belong to some older beekeepers who failed to treat are now collapsing, and varroa are being brought back into treated hives by robbing bees. It's a little surprising to see half a dozen or more varroa on sticky boards following a 24-hour surveillance with Apistan®, and this was in hives where the strips were about to be removed. In a few of my hives it was possible to see a few mites on bees. These hives were given another treatment with strips.

Still, winter preparations continue, with particular attention now being paid to just how much honey is in the hives following this unusual period of brood rearing.

I like to leave my hives with at least one full-depth super of honey. Many beekeepers don't leave this much as they feed sugar in the spring as supplementary food and to stimulate the queen to produce brood.

Feeding additional sugar to bees has advantages and disadvantages. Honey is worth more than sugar but sugar feeding is extra work. Honey left on the hives is a natural product and requires no additional work by the bees to use. Bees fed sugar syrup use their body fats to invert it into honey, which can affect the longevity of the winter bees and their ability to produce royal jelly in the spring to feed developing larvae. Generally I recommend that hobby beekeepers store a few extra frames of honey for that odd hive whose queen continues to lay well into winter, thus leading to a food shortage early in the spring. Wrap three frames in plastic bags and seal them to prevent water vapour entering and causing them to ferment. Each hive should have a minimum of three frames of honey, which represents a week's food supply in the late spring when hives are developing and to hold them over during inclement weather.

Another important thing is pollen. Hobby beekeepers' hives generally don't suffer pollen shortages in suburban areas, but commercial beekeepers with more than a dozen hives in an apiary and those hobbyists whose hives are away from home can suffer pollen shortages in the spring, especially in extensively farmed areas. A shortage of pollen can arrest the development of the hive during the critical build-up stage from September to December. Most commercial beekeepers now feed a pollen substitute to get over these shortages.

To avoid pollen shortages I never remove frames with pollen in them from the hives even if the pollen has been stored in the honey super. I put these frames down into the body of the hive, and usually place them slightly to the side (about three frames in) so the bees have ready access to the pollen in the spring.

Apart from adequate supplies of feed honey and pollen, the hives should also have a young laying queen and plenty of bees. Actually you can winter over quite small (three to five frame) nucleus hives, provided you look after them. Put them in a warm spot so they get sun most of the day during the winter and check their weight every couple of weeks. Replace the outside frames with more honey as they use them. Overwintered five-frame nucs can be added to any hive in the spring that has gone queenless or isn't up to standard. This means that you have a young queen and plenty of bees available when you want them, and aren't reliant on trying to get a new queen from a breeder when they are under pressure to supply their contracted orders.

Now back to this month's activities. The robbing season is just about over, so those beekeepers whose hives are close to known AFB areas or have found AFB in their hives this year should now re-inspect their hives to see that they are still clean. AFB shows up pretty quickly at this time of the year if bees have robbed out a diseased hive. AFB will be in its early stages so you won't see perforated cappings. You are looking for a single cell that has a darker colouring or is slightly sunken. Flick off the cappings with the tip of the hive tool and look at the larvae. A larva should be pearly white and glistening if it's healthy or going through metamorphosis. If not, pick up a dry twig and try and get the larva out of the cell. If it falls to bits and ropes out slightly more than once, suspect AFB. See if there are other cells in the same condition and if there are, dig out a minimum of three larvae and put them into a film container or new sample bottle and contact AgriQuality, which will then arrange for your sample to be tested. The chances of your hive having AFB are very small but it pays not to take the risk, so get suspected cells checked by another beekeeper or AgriQuality.

Also keep an eye out for the exotic pests. Small Hive Beetle is across the Tasman Sea and is spreading fast. It will only take one female to get here on imported tomatoes or bananas and we will have another problem on our hands. Look for bees with 'K' wings — a sign of tracheal mites. Always be aware that we are the first to see anything wrong in our hives, so keep an eye out for the unusual.

For those in the North Island, this task can be included in the

visit to remove the varroa strips. Don't accept that the strips have done their job. Look at the bees and brood frames and dig out some drone brood with a cappings fork if you have drone brood.

I have come across a few hives that had mites still running around on the face of the comb, a sign that the hive could be about to collapse. I had to put in another lot of strips into these hives and their partners. Why were these mites still in the hives? It could have been reinvasion, as the hives in that apiary had a lot of wet honey in them — perhaps they were robbing this year's swarms that are now collapsing. The bees in one hive had moved away from the strips, as I hadn't put them against brood frames. Without this additional inspection these hives could have been lost.

I've also been looking closely at the bees on the brood frames. Some of my hives got their strips rather late and were showing possible signs of mite predation as the bees were small. A few hives had lots of small bees, so I've marked them for an extra inspection in a month's time.

Checking the condition of the queen

While inspecting the hives I check the condition of the queen. The brood should be of the same age and not scattered with lots of missed cells. This indicates an old queen and now is an ideal time to change her. I use a technique developed by Brother Adam (from Buckfast Abbey) and Steve Taber (an American queen breeding expert and author of *Breeding Super Bees*) to directly introduce queens. Brother Adam held new queens in a nuc for a season to evaluate them and then directly swapped the nuc queen into a main hive without the need to cage them.

If I find a failing queen, or one that has failed to be superseded when I added queen cells a few months earlier, I replace her. At this time of the year it's easy to find the queen as she's generally on one of the frames of brood. When I find the queen I remove the frame she is on, along with the adhering bees from the hive, and place it on a split board. I then open up a nuc and find the queen in it, pick her up and place her on the frame from the hive. If you don't want to pick her up, use your finger or a queen clip to herd the queen down to the bottom of the nuc frame, and then onto the frame from the hive. Treat her gently, as young queens are flighty and will take off if disturbed too much. I have also found it pays not to try and mark her as I lose a few when they take off and don't return.

Then pick up the old queen and place her on to the nuc frame and close up the nuc hive. Observe the new queen for a minute: you will see that she will carry on moving through the bees as before. Usually they will not take any notice of her, as both queens at this time of the year have the same amount of pheromone output so the bees can't tell the difference. Sometimes the bees immediately start to sting or ball the new queen. If this happens, pick her up and put her in a queen cage to allow a slow introduction; however, you should only have this sort of trouble in the spring when the queens are laying at different rates. Generally the queen is accepted without any fuss at all. After you've replaced the queen, place the frame back in the hive and squeeze the frames gently together.

If you want to unite the bees from the nuc to the hive, spray them with a little sugar syrup or Glade® air freshener and dump them in the top of the hive if it's cool, or on the landing board if it's a warm day and the bees are flying. They will be accepted by the hive bees and move in.

So now the hive is set up (if you followed the instructions in last month's article), it's disease free, has a young queen and is set up to winter well. Living in a windy part of the country, I also tie a nylon rope around my hives so if they are blown over or knocked over by cattle, the hive boxes stay together and the hive is not lost. Finally, just before you leave, check the weight of the hive by 'hefting' it. Stand beside the hive, put your fingers in the top handhold at the back of the hive and try lifting it. It shouldn't move if it has enough stores. Make a mental (or written) note of its weight and check it again in a month or so. The bees only use a small amount of stores when wintering in a broodless condition but chew through the stores once they start producing brood. A quick check allows you to judge what's going on in the hive. Happy wintering.

Poisoning wasps with toffee jams

I was reminded of the presence of wasps by a beekeeper who reported that quite a few beehives have been killed this year. He suspects that grape growers have been using poison jam to protect their ripening fruit.

About every second year we seem to be inundated with wasps around our house. Bringing home honey supers sends a plume of scents into the air, attracting both bees and wasps to investigate. While bees are discouraged by moving them away, wasps are a little harder to deal with, especially if you can't find the nest.

From March onwards wasps require carbohydrates to produce queens, so ripe fruit, honey in beehives and jams are very attractive. I've been doing some experimenting. Runny jams are attractive to both wasps and bees because bees can suck them up. But toffee jams are not: only the jaws of a wasp can bite in to it.

So how do you get toffee jams? I collect fruit in my travels and recently brought home a few kilograms of quinces (actually three shopping bags of windfalls), as I'm rather partial to this jam on meats and toast. Mary-Ann spent a week cutting them up, boiling the pulp and draining it, before making it into jelly and jam. The residue around the inside of the pot was rather thick (just about a toffee consistency), so she put it into a saucer for immediate use. But as wasps were everywhere, we used it to attract them and it worked very well. The bees weren't interested in it.

So if you are considering using jam as a bait and don't have any to hand, buy the cheapest from the supermarket. Put it into a saucepan and reheat on a low setting on the stove to reduce the water content further so that it becomes thick and unattractive to bees.

Note: The use of jam as a bait for wasps is generally frowned upon by beekeepers as there is a chance you can still poison bees. If you are not sure and can't hang around to monitor what's going on, try using an apple-based bait. Apple is

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said to be not as attractive to bees, yet I have produced some lovely apple honey in an abandoned orchard. The bees were collecting the juice of windfall apples after the birds and wasps had opened up the apples. As to what insecticide to use: a range of different insecticides is available in garden stores. Before you commit to one, ask other beekeepers what they are using and what they are having success with.

Things to do this month

Winter down hives. Sell the honey crop (if the price is right). Grade and sort combs into:

- brood: this year's drawn combs
- extracting: lightly coloured frames
- damaged and dark frames.

All beekeepers should now be replacing a third of their brood nest frames each year. This method helps reduce pathogens in the combs (such as nosema and AFB spores), and reduces residues in the hive. For North Island beekeepers, this method also helps to confine drone brood to only one or two frames.

Fumigate for wax moth if you still use this method of protecting frames. Storing frames off the ground in a cold, airy situation is an alternative. Check for wasps and clear grass growth around the hives. If you spray the grass, try using a weed wand — it reduces the amount of spray required and is safe for the bees.

- Frank Lindsay

Letters to the editor

South African beekeeper seeking work

Good day,

I am a full-time beekeeper in South Africa. I was hoping you might be able to steer me in the right direction as to acquiring a full-time bee farming position in your country.

Regards,
Brett

Email: "ray" <rjsol@telkomsa.net>
Telephone: (0027) 082 802 0827

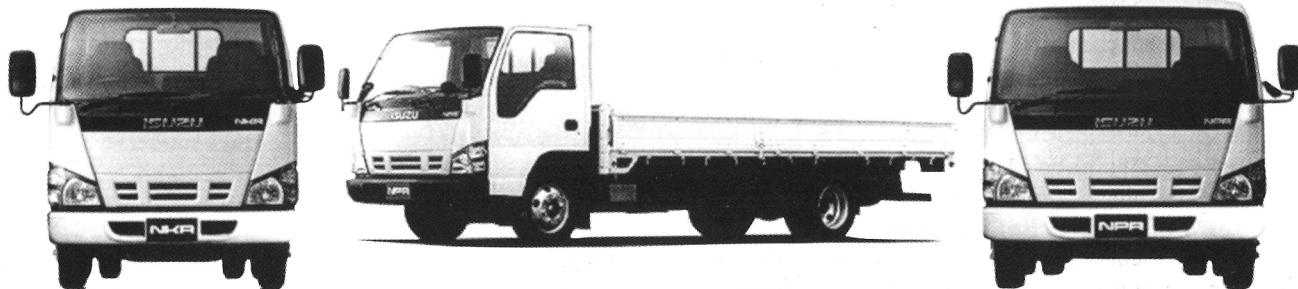
French beekeeper also seeking work

Hello, I am a French beekeeper, my name is Damien. I am 20 years old and have five years' experience in apiaries, honey production, queen rearing, etc.

I like work in New Zealand for six months, during 2006/2007 season. I have international truck drive licence. I speak English. Can you give information and contact with beekeepers who need people to work on their hives?

Thank you for information.
Damien

Email: Damien74alpes@aol.com



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Post-pyrethroid varroa control, using a combination of Apiguard® and oxalic acid

Wally Shaw, Wales

[Editor's note: this article originally appeared in The Welsh Beekeeper in 2005. Although the author has modified it slightly for New Zealand conditions, the article was written for conditions in the United Kingdom. We are expecting to find mites resistant to strips within two to five years in New Zealand. NB: all dates pertain to the Northern Hemisphere.]

Introduction

Pyrethroid-resistant mites are spreading rapidly in the United Kingdom and have caught some beekeepers by surprise and completely unprepared. It is important to have effective and well-rehearsed alternative methods of control in place to avoid serious colony losses. The methods described here are two of many that have been used to control varroa. For us they have proved effective over the last four years, amounting to about 100 hive-years. With reasonable precautions, the methods (and the substances involved) are safe for both the beekeeper and the bees. The combined cost is approximately the same as for pyrethroid strips (Apiguard® costs about the same as strips and oxalic acid syrup costs about 5p/hive). The level of skill required is no greater than for pyrethroid strips but the hives do have to be opened a total of four times instead of two (three times for Apiguard® and once for oxalic acid). The greatest hurdle may be persuading beekeepers that it is safe to open hives and trickle liquid over the bees in the middle of winter. It is a widely held dogma of British beekeeping that this will do irreparable harm to the colony (hence the saying, "Don't open a hive unless you are comfortable in your shirt sleeves"), but believe me, it does not cause harm. Oxalic acid has been widely used in Europe in much colder climates than ours. There are reasons to suppose that varroa is unlikely to become resistant to thymol (the active ingredient of Apiguard®) or to oxalic acid. The double treatment at different times of the year with different substances also makes the development of resistance less likely. The staggered treatment also protects against the most likely period for a colony recruiting mites from external sources (autumn), when untreated hives and feral colonies are most likely to collapse.

Safety

Oxalic acid is a poison but not an acute one — it can be obtained without signing the Poison Register. In the standard rat test it is slightly less than three times more toxic than thymol. To put this in perspective, two trays of Apiguard® contain 25g of thymol but the average treatment with oxalic acid is less than 1g. A healthy diet, including a daily intake of vegetables and fruit, gives humans regular exposure to oxalic acid and our metabolism handles this with no adverse consequences. Spinach contains up to 1% oxalic acid (dry weight). However, there is evidence that inhalation of oxalic acid is more dangerous than ingestion, causing inflammation of the lining of the lung. Spraying

oxalic (an alternative method of application) needs protective equipment and care during the process (i.e., avoiding windy conditions). Application as a vapour (e.g., the Isenring oxalic acid vaporiser) is potentially very dangerous and not to be recommended as a full face gas mask is required. The trickle method described here only requires the use of rubber gloves when handling or applying the material.

Equipment required

- a) *Although not absolutely essential, it is recommended that the hive to be treated is fitted with an open-mesh/varroa floor with a catch tray for estimating mite numbers. A mesh floor probably enhances the efficacy of Apiguard®.*
- b) *A hive with an open-mesh floor MUST also have some sort of top insulation and the means of closing-off all top ventilation. An insulated cover board using 25mm polystyrene insulation is the best solution, rather than an insulated roof. **Note** — polystyrene insulation must always be protected from the bees, which will quickly chew holes in it. [Editor's note: top insulation generally is not used in New Zealand.]*
- c) *You MUST also have some sort of spacer to provide clearance under the cover board (or between the two boxes) so that the bees have unimpaired access to the trays of Apiguard®. The use of 1"/25mm deep mini-eke is recommended.*
- d) *A 50ml graduated plastic syringe with a wide-bore needle is required to deliver the oxalic acid solution.*

Treatment with Apiguard®

Apiguard® (a polymer gel containing 25% thymol) can, in an emergency, be used at more or less any time of year except mid-winter. A daytime temperature of about 10°C (or better 15°C) is necessary for the treatment to be fully effective. Treatment while honey supers are in place is to be avoided to prevent the risk of tainting the honey.

Autumn treatment with Apiguard®

The normal time for treating with Apiguard® is in the autumn (August and/or September, the same as with pyrethroid strips). Correct timing of the treatment is vital:

- i) *If there is a high population of mites in the hive (1500–2000) then treatment MUST commence as early as possible in August. It may even be necessary to take a premature honey harvest.*
- ii) *If the number of mites in the hive is reasonably well under control (500–1000), then treatment can be delayed to the end of August or the beginning of September.*

Continued on page 18

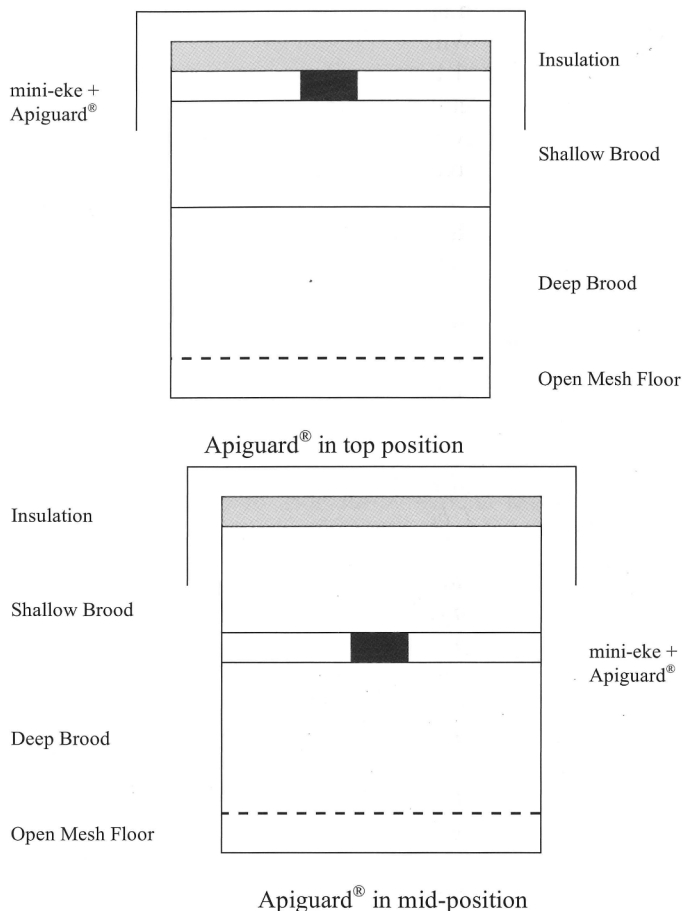
Continued from page 17

iii) If the hives are going to the heather then, unless there is a very low number of mites (less than 500), you have got a problem: when to treat? In this situation, it may be safest to give the hives a half treatment (1 x 50gm tray of Apiguard®) in late July (removing the lowland honey crop first). A second treatment should then be given after the return from the heather (mid-September). Two staggered Apiguard® treatments will be less efficient than two consecutive ones, but winter treatment with oxalic acid will deal with any mites that have escaped this treatment regime by being in the brood. The first tray of Apiguard® normally kills 70–80% of the total after two consecutive trays.

But how do you know how many mites are in the hives in order to make these (informed) decisions? Uncapping of drone brood during the season will have given you some idea of how many mites are present. A more accurate method of estimating the number of mites present in a colony is through count of natural mortality. The catch tray should be fitted to the mesh floor for five to seven days in early to mid-July. The number of fallen mites is counted and divided by the number a days to give a daily average. This figure, multiplied by a conversion factor of 30 (i.e., daily fall x 30), gives a good estimate of the total number of mites in the hive.

Instructions for the use of Apiguard® are given on the packaging. There are, however, a number of additional details relating to the use of Apiguard® that need to be observed to ensure maximum efficacy. The 50gm foil tray is opened and placed on the top bars of the upper box on the hive (i.e., on top of frames if single box, or the upper box of

brood and a half or double brood) **in the space provided by the mini-eke.** If the colony is not very strong and the upper box is not well populated with bees, it is better to position the tray of Apiguard® between the two boxes using the mini-eke again (see diagrams).



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The aim is to get the bees to completely clear the thymol gel from the tray in the two-week treatment period (thought to be a form of hygienic behaviour). After two weeks, a second tray of Apiguard® should be placed in the hive. If the first tray is substantially cleared, all is well. If it is not, you should consider repositioning the trays for the second part of the treatment period. With the type of bees we have on Anglesey (predominantly dark bees) the colony often gets smaller quite quickly in late August–September (as the worn-out summer bees start to die and are not immediately replaced). This is another reason to reconsider the positioning of the second tray of Apiguard® and it may be better to put it between the two boxes. The first tray can be left in place or any remaining contents emptied into the second tray. There is no great imperative to remove trays of Apiguard® at the end of the four-week treatment period (as there is with pyrethroid strips), but it is good practice to remove empty trays and the mini-eke (to restore correct bee-space) as soon as possible: do not leave it like that all winter, please!

The catch tray and an insulated cover board with no top ventilation should be in place throughout the treatment period to keep the hive warm and encourage bee activity. It will also help maintain a high concentration of thymol vapour. It is recommended to fit an entrance block to the hive to discourage robbing that can be exacerbated by thymol masking the hive scent.

Note that the presence of Apiguard® in a hive seems to inhibit the taking of sugar syrup from feeders at the top of the hive. The best strategy is to treat first and feed second, as two separate operations.

When the treatment is carried out correctly, Apiguard® should kill a minimum of 90–95% of the mites in the colony. Those I checked in 2004 (using a subsequent six-week treatment with Apistan) showed a 98% or better kill with Apiguard® alone. This is significantly less than the 99%+ usually achieved with pyrethroid strips (providing you have not got resistant mites, of course) because it is the number of mites left that really matters; hence the necessity to carry out a follow-up treatment with oxalic acid.

Spring treatment with Apiguard® (if required)

It is a wise precaution to check the number of mites present in a hive in spring. The number should be low enough to permit the colony to get through the honey season (until August) without building up a critical number of mites. Provided the treatments during last autumn (Apiguard®) and winter (oxalic acid) were correctly done, the only reason for there being too many mites is spring recruitment (reinvansion) from external sources. I have not yet had to spring treat any hive, although there was one case where I probably should have done.

Checking the early drone brood (late March or early April) is one way of assessing the situation. If more than 10% of drone cells contain mites then this should make you suspicious. The interpretation of 10% infestation depends how much drone brood is present; if it is just a few cells and you have opened most, then 10% does not necessarily mean a problem. However, if there is a lot of drone brood and 10% are infested, then this probably requires some attention.

If there is any cause for concern, a further five- to seven-day check on natural mortality with a catch tray (as described above) is indicated. The only problem is what conversion factor to use to multiply the average daily fall by (the summer factor is 30 and the winter 400). I suggest you use 100 in March and 50 in April, but that is just a guess.

Spring treatment with Apiguard® should be completed before the supers go on the hive. If you decide treatment is necessary, then one tray over a fortnight should be sufficient, unless you get a large fall of mites, when it would be advisable to use a second tray, to kill further mites as they emerge from the brood.

Treatment with oxalic acid

Oxalic acid is a short-lived treatment that only kills mites that are living on the bees (i.e., those in a phoretic state). It does not kill mites that are in the brood. When there is brood present in a hive, only about 15% of the mite population are normally on the bees (i.e., the other 85% are in the brood). It follows, therefore, that oxalic acid works best on colonies that are broodless at the time of treatment. This is the ONLY CONDITION (broodless) in which oxalic acid should be used. It can of course be used on swarms (both natural or artificial) if they are suspected of carrying a heavy load of mites (normally they carry very few mites).

Treatment should be delayed until colonies are in a broodless state. In our area, this does not usually occur until mid-December or even January. After the Apiguard® treatment (in August–September), it is recommended that the catch tray should be removed. Previously I also removed the insulation from the cover board and reinstated top ventilation during the autumn. Recently I have not done this, preferring to give a slightly warmer hive for the bees to raise brood (winter bees). Surprisingly, this seems to have very little effect on the timing of the brood-free period.

*The treatment material is 3.2% oxalic acid in a 1:1 sugar solution. The recipe for making this is as follows: make up a sugar syrup consisting of 1kg sugar in 1L of water. To this should be added 75g of oxalic acid dihydrate and well mixed. This will make 1.67L of treatment material. Accurate weighing of the oxalic acid is essential because under-strength will give a poor mite kill and over-strength may kill bees! **This sweet solution is poisonous and should be stored securely out of the reach of children.***

Procedure for treatment with oxalic acid by the trickle method

- 1) Fill the 50ml syringe with treatment solution (oxalic acid).
- 2) Remove the roof.
- 3) Remove the top box (shallow or deep) with cover board in place and rest it on the upturned roof.
- 4) Treat the lower box with about 5ml solution/occupied seam of bees.
- 5) Replace upper box.
- 6) Remove cover board and treat any seams of bees as for the lower box (the upper box will often have no bees, especially if the weather is cold).

Continued on page 21



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Continued from page 19

7) Replace the cover board and roof.

This process usually takes less than a minute per hive. It is safe to carry out the treatment in cold conditions with the temperature down to 0°C. If the weather is cold and the bees are well clustered, they will usually not even have got moving until the deed is accomplished. However, it definitely does pay to ensure you have the correct bee space between boxes so that they come apart readily without disturbing the bees — it is surprising how many hives do not meet this very basic specification!

Mites may continue to fall for about a fortnight (especially if the weather is cold), after which the catch tray can be removed. With a kill efficiency of about 90%, the oxalic acid treatment will not only mop up mites that escaped the Apiguard® treatment three to four months previously, but it will also kill any mites have been bred from the survivors in that time or have been recruited from external sources.

Further reading

Control of Varroa: A Guide for New Zealand Beekeepers, by Mark Goodwin and Cliff Van Eaton. The book is currently out of print but can be downloaded from the MAF website: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests-diseases/animals/varroa/guidelines/control.htm>

Endnote

Recent experience has shown than estimating mite populations by natural mortality is not quite as straightforward as it is supposed to be. Mite fall varies widely over time and a single sample does not seem to be a reliable guide. This is a case where theory does not accurately match practice. Mite activity is driven by the supply of brood and variations in this supply are probably the cause of the problem. At the present time it is the best (easy) method available, but it clearly needs to be better understood.

[Editor's note: Wally Shaw gave a demonstration at Honikiwi, west of Otorohanga. Beekeepers put Apiguard® treatments into a number of hives set up in different configurations. Some of the lids were sprung-loaded migratory that allowed top ventilation, some were telescopic lids, some floors were standard and some had mesh. Hives were set up as they are normally in the field. Results were mixed. A report on this trial will be in the June issue of The New Zealand Beekeeper.]

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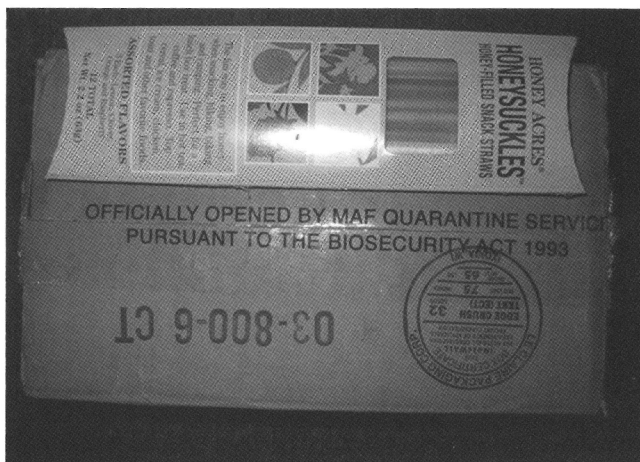
Imported honey passes through New Zealand security checks

[Editor's note: this item appeared in a recent issue of Hawke's Bay Today. Thanks to Ron Morison and John Berry for bringing it to our attention.]

This honey was sent from the United States to New Zealand via post. It was opened at the border, inspected and then passed on to its NZ recipient, despite the fact that it clearly contains pure honey. Fortunately the recipient realised the dangers involved to NZ's biosecurity and the product will be safely destroyed, but it is unbelievable that this kind of product can come through our borders.

- John Berry

[Editor's note: we are seeking a response from MAF/Biosecurity NZ for the June issue.]



Hawkes Bay field day

On 18 March more than 20 beekeepers gathered at John Berry's for a field day. Barry Foster, our ward representative, made the trip down to Havelock North to give members an update of NBA Executive Council considerations and plans. Barry also replied to our questions.

We discussed requeening, including a practical demonstration of finding the old queen and inserting queen cells to create splits. The easiest queen to find was a marked lady that had escaped from an Arataki Honey observation hive.

Of course there was vigorous talk about various methods of checking for varroa, and all the treatment alternatives. The warning was loud and clear: *treat now or lose your hives*.

It was a good day so something similar will be held in the future.

- Ron Morison

History revisited

Origins of the Waikato Branch, first annual report of the New Zealand Bee-keepers' Association, and introduction of honey bees in New Zealand

[This is the fourth of a series of articles occasioned by the centenary of the Waikato and Southland branches, as well as reprinting other items of general interest. The articles below are reprinted from The New Zealand and Australian Bee Journal, termed the "Official Organ of the New Zealand Bee Keepers' Association and its Affiliated Associations". The first item is from the February 1885 issue, page 93; and the 'Report of the New Zealand Bee-Keepers Association' and the letter to the Editor are from the May 1885 issue, page 136. Thanks to Roger and Linda Bray for sending these items.]

PROPOSED BEE KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION.

We understand that it is the intention of the bee keepers in the Hamilton (Waikato) and surrounding districts to form themselves into an Association. There are a number of bee-keepers in this part of Waikato, some of whom are making apiculture their sole business, while there are very few farms or gardens in which several Langstroth hives cannot be seen. Bee-keeping has become a well-established industry in these districts, and some of the largest crops of honey yet taken in New Zealand have been secured here. Knowing personally most of the bee-keepers in this part of Waikato, who were the first in New Zealand to adopt the improved system of apiculture, we feel assured that a local Bee-Keepers' Association will be well supported by them.

REPORT OF THE NEW ZEALAND BEE-KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION.

No doubt the first annual report of the above Association—published in our last—will have been read with a considerable amount of interest by all our subscribers. It cannot have failed to have impressed upon the minds of all—whether members or not—the important bearing that the work of such an institution must have upon the future of our industry. The report shows clearly and concisely the position and aims of the Association, and points out how each individual bee-keeper in the colony can best aid the Association in the work it has laid out for itself.

There are a number of points well taken in the report, one of which showing how necessary it is to their success that every bee-keeper should keep himself "posted up" in everything pertaining to his business, and to consider the small annual expense that he would incur in doing so as a part of his regular business expenditure, should commend itself to all. Although the list of members of the Association is by no means a large one, still, looking at the fact that it contains the names of the most prominent bee-keepers in all parts of the colony, the Association may be said to be in a very healthy condition. The institution is young yet, but steadily gaining in strength, and now that its first report has been published, clearly showing the necessity for such an institution, no doubt during the second year of its existence the list of its members will be considerably augmented.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONEY BEE INTO NEW ZEALAND.

[Editor's note: *Phormium tenax* is *flax* — see the article by Tony Lorimer on page 23.]

Sir,—In Dieffenbach's Travels in New Zealand, published in London 1843, I find the following passage (Vol. I., p. 143) :

"Sometimes we came to an open spot, several square miles in extent, probably cleared by Natives, but now grown over by the highest *phormium tenax* I ever saw. The leaves in many instances were twelve, and the flower stalks twenty, feet long; their flowers contain a kind of sweet liquid in considerable quantities, the extraction of which forms a favourite occupation among the New Zealand children. The cryptogamous plants, ferns, jangermanmas, and mosses, bear in New Zealand rather an undue proportion to the phanerogamous—a circumstance which is unfavourable to the rearing of bees. I am not aware that there is any native bee in New Zealand, but in certain seasons the European bee would find a great quantity of honey and wax in the *phormium tenax*. Bees have been introduced into New Zealand from New South Wales: my excellent friend, the Rev. Richard Taylor, at Waimate, had a hive, and they were thriving remarkably well; but in that neighbourhood many European plants had been introduced."

The Doctor was not fortunate in hazarding an opinion as to the flora of New Zealand being unfavourable to bees—he seems not to have known or not to have taken account of the honey-bearing qualities of the rewarewa, rata, pohutakawa, &c., &c., and the expression he makes use of about "honey and wax", being *found* in the *Phormium tenax* shows that apiculture was a matter to which he had not given much attention. My reason for quoting the passage is the fact of his stating that bees were introduced here from New South Wales, and it would be desirable if any relative or acquaintance of the Rev. R. Taylor could be found who might still be able, and would have the goodness, to inform us whether or not that statement is quite correct. Dr. Dieffenbach visited Waimate in December, 1840. It is known that bees were introduced from Europe by Lady Hobson in the early part of 1840, and that they were landed at the Bay of Islands. It is quite possible that the hive which the Doctor saw at Waimate may

Continued on page 23

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Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand

Phormium tenax

Maori name: Harakeke

Common name: Flax



The dull red flowers are borne on two- to three-metre long stems (Korari) that flower from October to January. The flowers secrete a large quantity of pale nectar that is sought after by the tui, bellbirds and bees. As the structure of the flower prevents the bee from entering the narrow corolla, the birds overcome this difficulty by inserting their tongues where the petals overlap.

Flax honey is medium to dark amber in colour, of poor flavour and coarse in grain. The flower also produces a source of deep salmon-coloured pollen.

The Flax plant is probably one of the most valuable and versatile of New Zealand native plant species. The Maori sold Flax to the early traders for export to England for rope manufacture, wool bales and sacks.

Maori used it as a source of shelter, clothing, baskets (to carry or cook food, or trap fish and birds), floor mats and food mats.

Although Flax grows everywhere, the best flax comes from swampy or damp ground.

The leaves were used for binding and holding fractures, as the base made a good splint. The inner part of the leaf, when the outer leaf had been scraped off, produced a mass of silky floss, which was useful in mopping up blood and stemming its flow. The base of the leaf, when beaten to a pulp, was heated and applied to an unbroken abscess, boil, or tumour to bring it to a head.

The gum at the base of the leaves was softened in water and used on burns, scalds and old sores. The gum was also rolled onto the limbs of people suffering rheumatic and sciatic pains and early settlers relieved arthritic pains by this method.

The roots (actually rhizomes) were boiled and used in a remedy for gunshot and bayonet wounds during the land wars between settlers and Maori. This same liquid was strained and bottled by the early settlers and used as a substitute for castor oil.

- Tony Lorimer

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Continued from page 22

have been stocked from Lady Hobson's bees—but it is also quite possible that the bees may really have been brought at an earlier date from New South Wales, where they had been introduced in 1822. The question is, of course, not a very important one; but still it would be desirable to clear up the point if possible before the true state of the case is quite forgotten.

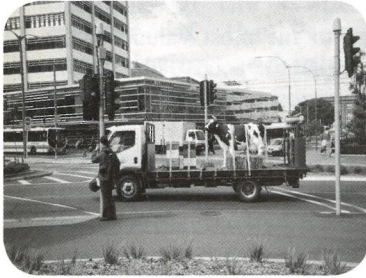
T.J.M.

Bay View Apiary, Katikati—April, 1885.

[We recollect having seen somewhere before mention made of bees being brought here in the early days of the colony from New South Wales. It would be interesting to know upon good authority further particulars of the matter. Perhaps some of our readers may be able to enlighten us a little, or may know whether any of the Rev. Mr Taylor's relatives are in New Zealand—if so we shall be glad to have the information.—Ed.]

Comment from Roger Bray: the extract from Dieffenbach's Travels raises questions on the introduction of bees into NZ. It has generally been accepted that bees were introduced into NZ on 13 March 1839 by Miss Bumby at Hokianga and the first bees to the South Island arrived in Nelson in 1842. The article has reference to bees in Waimate coming from New South Wales — could this predate the existing 'evidence'?

'Beekoi': a honey of a hikoi!



Mabel, her friends and her clover.



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