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To whom did I sell my bees?

Photo: Frank Lindsay

...to the young one who doesn't look so young anymore!

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President's address to Conference

NBA members and invited guests,

This year I would like to begin by saying that I am humbled by the fact that some of our branches have been in existence for 100 years, and that the people of these times had the foresight to see that there was a need for a national body to look after industry affairs. There are not many associations that can say they have been in existence for this amount of time. I am proud of the fact that the Executive of the association saw fit to ensure the continuation of the association in 2002, and I believe that with the restructure that has taken place and the employment of an Executive Officer it will put us in good stead to continue for a number of years yet.

This year has been a bit like a roller coaster ride at the amusement park — there are many ups and downs and you never quite know when you will be turning the next corner and exactly where it is going to lead.

We have had a number of personnel changes — the most notable of which was the resignation of our National American Foulbrood Pest Management Strategy Manager James Driscoll — and our subsequent employment of Rex Baynes from Lower Hutt as his replacement.

The executive panel who interviewed Rex felt that he would bring a number of skills to the job that would enable him to fulfil the role with ease once he had a chance to familiarise himself with the legislation, the roles of our service providers and also the industry. The next month will be a busy one where we will continue our quest to get the Operational Plan in as complete a document as is possible so beekeepers, service providers, the Manager and the Management Agency will have clearly defined policies and procedures to implement the Strategy. Once completed the time that is spent on governance of the Strategy should diminish.

I would like to thank James for the work he had undertaken as our inaugural Manager — I know we asked more of him than was within the contract and he undertook that extra work to set us the platform for the future.

We have brought on board Jim and Pam Edwards to provide for our secretarial services with Pauline stepping down from that role. I cannot thank Pauline enough for the work she has put into the NBA; however, she still continues to be involved providing secretarial services for our Management Agency meetings.

The threat of bee product imports has loomed over us for much of the year and has dominated discussion at many an Executive meeting. We now know that bee product imports are proceeding unless we as an industry can find a legal means to stop imports in their tracks. We certainly feel that our concerns have not been heard and that there is still a real biosecurity threat when imports arrive. We shall of course hold the Government accountable for their actions should an incursion occur.

In our branches' 100th year, we have also completed a first for our industry — protest at the Beehive in Wellington. This saw the industry briefly united once more in the quest to show our dissatisfaction at the likelihood of bee product imports. I would like to thank all the beekeepers who saw a need for this action and took the time to come to Wellington to partake. Most of all however, I would like to thank Russell Berry and the Waikato members who did much of the organisation of this event. Sadly it did not have the desired outcome, but the one positive from this is that our industry has a heightened profile from its action.

With the ever-increasing threats that are impacting on us, it is time for our members to look to the future and put in place some strategies that will ensure our continuance in the industry as well as ensure the future of our next generation of beekeepers. You have heard once again the many opportunities that are out there with honey research — it is time for us to look seriously at whether we wish to progress these, as well as look seriously at branding New Zealand product. We need to be able to differentiate New Zealand-produced product and one from overseas — it is a duty that we have to our customers to allow them to be able to determine what is genuine and what has been blended.

We do have an extremely tough year(s) ahead of us — the more united we can become the better. It is up to each and every one of you to exert some peer pressure onto those who sit outside of this organisation to get them to come and join us on this journey into the future. Without secure funding, we cannot carry out many of the task required of our members. Please continue to support us so we can support you.

Deadline for articles and advertising

10th of each month

NB: No magazine in January

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

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I would like to thank the Executive members for their input over the year; in particular my right-hand man Neil Farrer. Without his sharing the workload, I may have been forced to resign from my position due to our lack of a full-time employee. I would also like to thank the publications team for their ongoing excellent work and the group that undertook the annual review of the American Foulbrood Pest Management Strategy.

Last but not least I would like to thank Tony for his ongoing support.

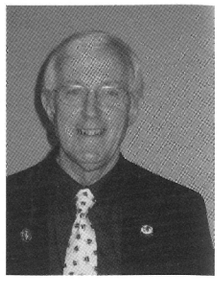
I look forward to the year ahead where we will move this organisation forward to face its many challenges.

Thank you.

- Jane Lorimer

Executive Officer's report

Management and planning for the future



The month since Conference has been busy. Not just with follow-up actions, but ongoing monitoring of the varroa situation in the South Island and planning how the NBA can help those beekeepers who will now be facing this mite for the first time.

While it would have been good to see the outbreak around Nelson eradicated, we can accept what is a reasonable decision to control varroa and delay its inevitable spread. At the time of writing, we have still to see the details of the Biosecurity New Zealand proposals. We plan to be able to tailor the NBA assistance to be complementary to the work proposed from Biosecurity New Zealand.

Another major issue is the detection of residues in our bee products. We share the concern for the impacts this issue is having on our exports and even the domestic market. We plan to bring you more information on what you can and cannot use to treat your bees, beehives and other equipment used with bees. Please remember that what is safe for bees may not be safe for humans and that we are working to provide products for human consumption.

The Executive Council is meeting in Wellington on Saturday 26 August. A significant part of the agenda will be the further development of the proposals that came from the floor during the seminar session when I presented the challenge to develop strategies for the future of our industry.

- Jim Edwards

Executive Council 2006

Members of the new NBA Executive Council. Back row: Jim Edwards (Chief Executive Officer), Frans Laas (Lower South Island Ward), Brian Alexander (Northern Ward), Neil Mossop (Bay of Plenty Ward), Arthur Day (Upper South Island Ward). Front row, left to right: Pam Edwards (Executive Secretary), Neil Farrer (Vice President and Southern North Island Ward), Jane Lorimer (President and Waikato Ward), Barry Foster (East Coast Ward).

Photo credit: Tony Lorimer

Do you believe that it is not worth alternating your treatment if your neighbours aren't as well?
Well it is actually very worthwhile to alternate because at least you will be killing any resistant mites in your own hives plus any invading resistant mites which come from your neighbours. While your neighbours treatments will be getting less effective, yours will still be highly effective and you won't run the risk of having to treat twice.

Preserve the luxury of choice while we still have it!

Alternate your Varroa treatment to…

Apivar®

The active ingredient in Apivar® is from a different chemical family to that used in the other two strip treatments. Apivar® has now been widely used by commercial beekeepers throughout the North Island for Autumn and Spring treatments and has proved to be highly effective in NZ conditions. Apivar® will not cause any residue problems, will not harm your queens or bees and is safe and easy to use.

10 – 90 strips	$3.75 each plus G.S.T.
100 – 990 strips	$3.40 each plus G.S.T.
1000 – 4990 strips	$3.10 each plus G.S.T.
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Dosage Rate: 2 Apivar strips per brood chamber.
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VARROA AGENCY INC

Varroa Agency Incorporated News

Update from Varroa Agency Chairman Duncan Butcher

Agency disappointed at government decision

The Varroa Agency is extremely disappointed at the Government's decision not to eradicate varroa in the Nelson area.

The decision, in the board's opinion, contravened the agreed position between the local government and the bee industry discussed when setting up the Varroa Agency. It was always understood that varroa eradication would be attempted if feasible. The Agency believes that the eradication programme was a feasible option in light of all the discussion and figures put forward in the board of enquiry, and with negotiations with Government in the setting up of the Agency.

Varroa Agency to continue

All members of the Varroa Agency (South Island regional councils and unitary authorities and the two New Zealand bee groups) agreed at a recent meeting in Christchurch that the Agency would continue its work, and that it supports the proposals for aggressive control of varroa in the Nelson area.

The Nelson Varroa Action Group's proposal, put to the Agency, is to negotiate with the Nelson beekeepers that have infected bees for voluntary depopulation of hives. Alongside that will be an aggressive search and destruction of feral hives.

The Action Group representative indicated they had a good response from beekeepers in the Nelson area for this. The Nelson beekeepers have also had tremendous support from the rest of the South Island beekeepers, who are prepared to replace bees in those depopulated hives in the Nelson incursion area.

The Varroa Agency has been working with the Nelson group over the last month, with Agency representative Steve Olds involved in helping work out exactly how the aggressive control programme could be successful in Nelson.

The Board also suggested the group could bring forward projects on how the Agency may help in some way towards financing the project.

Biosecurity New Zealand's control plan, explained to the Agency at its meeting, was also supported because it fitted in with what the Nelson beekeepers are wanting to do. Biosecurity New Zealand is planning to aggressively treat hives in and around the affected Nelson area, and is putting together a strong surveillance programme outside the treatment area.

Agency members felt the two plans would work together, not only to help the affected Nelson beekeepers, but also beekeepers in the rest of the South Island. It also felt its surveillance programme in the South Island could fit and support the two proposed programmes.

The Agency's Strategy Manager reports that the 2006 surveillance programme is almost complete, with only two beekeepers to return their boards for testing.

The Agency is grateful to all the beekeepers that put urgency on this year's testing, allowing Biosecurity New Zealand to be sure that varroa was confined to only a very small area. It will now be considering how to improve the surveillance programme in light of the varroa find in Nelson.

It's hoped any future surveillance programmes will restrict the testing period to two to three months. The Agency felt the responses from beekeepers in returning forms was too long, stretching out the programme to four to five months. A greater emphasis will be put on encouraging beekeepers to reply to letters and requests for information on the position of their hives, and to have the AP2 contractors complete surveillance work within a specified timeframe, so the programme is running earlier and completed quickly.

More stringent surveillance may be carried out at crucial entry points to the South Island.

Information on varroa control and other news from the Nelson area, along with reports on the surveillance programmes, will be posted regularly on the Varroa Agency's website www.varroa.org.nz.

It's been a difficult two months for everyone involved, but the Agency expresses its thanks to beekeepers in Nelson and around the South Island for their support, particularly for the delimiting survey of this incursion.

A look at biofuels

by Trevor Burling, Project Manager – Environment, Motor Trade Association

(Extract from a presentation given to the National Conference of the New Zealand Beekeepers' Association, 18 July 2006)

Why are we looking at biofuels?

The low price of crude oil during the twentieth century meant the development of non-fossil fuels was very limited. However, current energy economics has changed all that and we need to consider alternatives to mineral fuels.

That's the main reason we are taking up biofuels in this country. This has also inspired the principles of sustainability and the search for renewable energy sources.

I can assure you biofuels have been tried and tested for many years, and the incentives for New Zealand to investigate them are driven by economical, environmental and sustainability issues.

How will this affect me?

No doubt you have questions: What are biofuels? How do you recognise them? What advantages do they have? When will they be available? Will my vehicle run on them?

Biofuels come in two distinct forms: bioethanol (commonly called ethanol) and biodiesel.

Bioethanol

Firstly, let's have a look at bioethanol for petrol engines. Ethyl alcohol (ethanol), which is the main product found in alcoholic drinks and methylated spirits, is different to "methanol" used in racing cars.

Ethanol is most commonly made from products containing sugars and starches through a process of fermentation and distillation, similar to making whisky.

Emerging technology allows bioethanol to be made from cellulose from crop residues such as:

- straw and corn stubble
- timber milling wastes (sawdust etc)
- municipal solid wastes and
- recycled paper.

In New Zealand, bioethanol is made as a by-product of the dairy industry by fermenting the lactose (milk sugar) in whey with special yeast that converts the sugar into alcohol.

Most ethanol made in New Zealand today is exported.

Is there any experience with these products?

Brazil stands out as a beacon to the world on alternative fuels innovation, beginning in the 1970s with the first oil shock, when a barrel of oil rose from $3 to $10.

Brazil turned to its main crop *sugar cane* and produced ethanol to supplement crude oil fuels.

Biodiesel

Now let's look at biodiesel, or fatty acid methyl ester (FAME). Biodiesel can be produced from vegetable oils or animal fats, and then used as a substitute for mineral diesel.

Our biodiesel will most likely be from the latter, given the large meat production industry in New Zealand.

Biodiesel is made by reacting vegetable oils or animal fats with alcohol. This reaction produces a mono-ester (biodiesel), and a by-product called glycerol. Glycerol is the thick sticky component of oils and fats and causes problems in engines, so has to be removed.

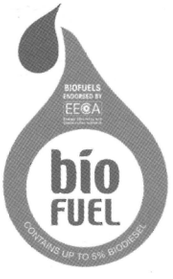
Biodiesel use in New Zealand

Biodiesel for public use in New Zealand would most likely be sold as a five percent maximum blend with mineral diesel.

At this level there are not expected to be any compatibility problems with existing diesel engines, and no vehicle modifications are needed before it is used.

How can we be sure of the quality?

Our law requires the products to be equal to or better than mineral fuels and for added assurance, all public fuel dispensers will have a "biofuels" logo on them (see illustration below) and be checked regularly.



For further information, please contact Trevor Burling at Motor Trade Association, telephone 04 385 8859.

Bee Products Standards Council calls for tight controls on chemicals

The Bee Products Standards Council (BPSC) met in Wellington on 16 August to review the use of chemicals in beekeeping. The BPSC reminds all beekeepers producing products for human consumption that they are part of the food industry and have direct responsibilities for food safety as a result.

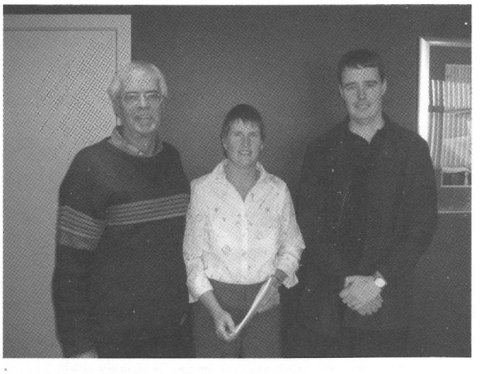
The detection of residues in New Zealand bee products will seriously affect the ability to sell honey, both on the international and domestic markets.

The BPSC and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority are reviewing the use of all chemicals used in beehives and bee equipment and will work to advise beekeepers of any changes and of alternative management techniques.

The BPSC recommends that exporters and packers should check with their product suppliers to confirm what chemicals have been used in beehives and bee equipment so that they can assess the risk that such use brings.

Dr Jim Edwards
Chairman
Bee Products Standards Council

NBA–AgriQuality contract



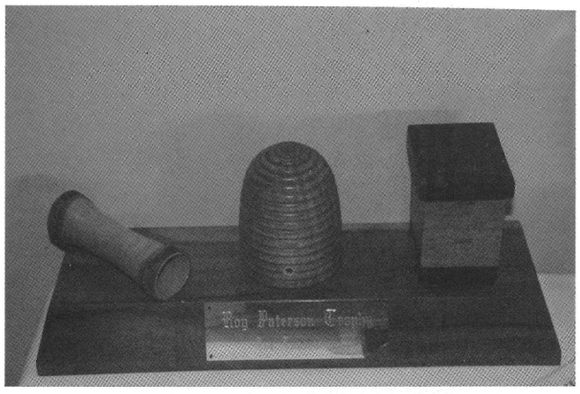
On 21 July 2006, the NBA Management Agency for the AFB NPMS and AgriQuality signed the contract for the year ending 31 May 2007. Left to right: Murray Reid (AgriQuality), NBA President Jane Lorimer and Byron Taylor (AgriQuality).

Photo: Neil Farrer

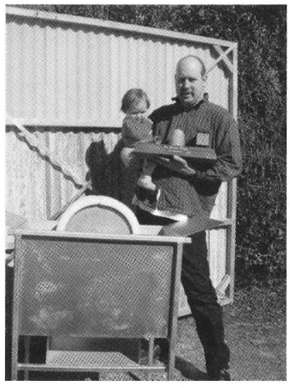
Roy Paterson Trophy for 2006

The winner of this year's Roy Paterson Trophy was Chris Valentine from Kai Iwi (just north of Wanganui), for his wax roller and trough for putting beeswax onto plastic frames. Chris started out in his own business a couple of years ago and has been building up hive numbers. Previously he worked for commercial beekeepers in Bay of Plenty and Wanganui.

- Neil Farrer



Roy Paterson Trophy. *Photo: Nicol Finnie*



Roy Paterson Trophy 2006 winner Chris Valentine with his daughter Nicole and his winning entry (wax roller). *Photo: Neil Farrer*

Roy Paterson Trophy Entries. *Photo: Frank Lindsay*

Manuka honey: variations in colour

"Why are you selling that honey as Manuka honey!" exclaimed a person at the Ohakune Carrot Carnival, held each year at the end of July. "I am a beekeeper," explained the questioner.

I must have been feeling a bit exasperated as I broke the cardinal rule of never arguing with a customer. "If you want Manuka honey which is not light in colour, go to another region to buy it," I replied.

Mostly people just pick up a pot of our Manuka honey and I can see the look of disapproval written all over their faces, or I overhear people explaining to others, "that is not manuka honey, it is far too light in colour". I then hear how that person is a beekeeper, so he knows what he is talking about. I find it hard not to butt into their conversation.

We do not need more customers, as the locals or those who have bought our honey before always come back for more, and often with praise for our product.

Since I cannot defend our Manuka honey when selling, I want to defend it through this article. The people who criticise us the most are other beekeepers or those who work for a beekeeper. When others hear a person whom they think knows what he or she is talking about say things like that, they will walk away.

Photo: Pauline Bassett

To help support our local communities, each year my husband and I run two stalls. The first is held in February at the Raetihi A&P Show, and the second is at the Ohakune Carrot Carnival. Ohakune is a small town situated at the base of Mt Ruapehu on the southern side. Each winter the town is flooded with skiers and snowboarders. These people come from areas where Manuka honey is dark in colour.

When we first sold Manuka honey to commercial buyers we had problems with their perceptions of the light colour, but for about the last 16 years we have not had a problem. In fact, big commercial packers have told us that our area produces a very high-quality Manuka honey. They told me that in some areas Rewarewa flowers at the same time as Manuka; and that is part of the reason their Manuka honey is dark in colour. A Taranaki beekeeper told me that the honey from around Mt Taranaki is light in colour.

We have our honey contract-extracted. Even though the honey is light in colour, the contractor has told us it is very sticky and hard to extract.

When our honey is first extracted it has a light amber colour. If we do not use too much heat, when the honey is bottled and left to granulate it lightens to the colour of Waikato clover honey; i.e, a cream colour. With age it gets lighter in colour. As not much Kanuka grows here we cannot blame that for the light colour of our Manuka honey.

I have heard that some larger commercial beekeepers blend Manuka honeys from different areas to give their Manuka a uniform colour.

I wish to collect 250-gram samples of Manuka honey from different areas and display them to help educate people. If anyone is willing to help me build up a collection of small jars of Manuka honey, please send them to our mailing address below. We live five kilometres down the Pipiriki road from Raetihi.

- Mary Allen
R.D. 4, Raetihi
Telephone 06 385 4138

Conference 2006 Memorabilia *Photo: Nicol Finnie*

From the colonies

Auckland Branch

We've just finished our first feeding round of around 1250 hives. Although we haven't looked in every hive at brood, we did have a nosy at one or two in a yard. Most sites have got brood, while others seem to be a bit slower.

When removing the tops to get to the parent hive below, the bees returning to their entrance at the back hang around in limbo. When the hive is put back together with the top back in position, the bees re-orientate themselves and beeline it for the small entrance that has now reappeared. You can really notice the different coloured pollens coming through en masse.

Making tops is our way of increasing hive numbers — they all seem to have come through the winter really well. We lost only a couple of colonies, mainly due to bad matings late in autumn (and one I forgot to re-feed, oops).

We are somewhat ahead of our schedule compared to last year due to my lovely wife joining the team. She's doing a great job scraping propolis, while I've just finished machining the last of the new boxes. Meanwhile the boss has been madly stapling about 5000 frames together.

We really enjoyed Conference in Hamilton; it was our first one. Although certain things were a bit depressing (need they be mentioned?), we did come away feeling positive about our future in the industry. Chin up, eh?

- James Harrison

Auckland Branch—winners of the 2006 NBA Branch Shield competition. *Photo: Nicol Finnie.*

Waikato Branch

What a party, what a celebration!

Conference 2006 opened on Sunday 16 July with a wonderful lunch and cruise aboard the Waipa Delta river boat on the mighty Waikato River. To get together with many distinguished beekeepers from around New Zealand, the older echelon of our industry, to celebrate 100 years of the Waikato Branch is an occasion that will never repeat itself.

The luncheon was followed by an afternoon tea, complete with a celebration cake, and then a chance to look at the memorabilia room. To many it would have been equipment that not so long ago was part of their everyday beekeeping business (and maybe still is, albeit some 20–30 years earlier). There were photos galore, comments about how one has aged and memories of people no longer with us.

Entering the memorabilia room to the inventions of Roy Paterson, and those of the beekeepers who had entered in this year's competition for the Roy Paterson Trophy, sparked many a comment. The old honey tins of yesteryear, the kerosene boxes complete with frames and the many personal collections of books, papers and photos. Thank you to all of you who made such an effort to respond to Pauline Bassett's request for memorabilia.

The sponsors' night was a huge success. The response from our sponsors was positive, especially in these changing times within our industry. We encourage you to support these businesses and if you know of any other businesses you can introduce to our industry, invite them along to Conference 2007 in Dunedin.

Thank you to all our guest speakers. It is a challenge for many a speaker to be confronted by a room full of passionate beekeepers. It all depends on how you come between them and their bees as to their response to you. Many asked what was in the gift bags given out. There was a range of bags, each a little different: a bottle of Waikato beer, limestone soaps (incorporating honey and wax), lavender hand and foot creme (with wax), pistachio nuts, bee and honey products — sourced from within the Waikato.

From the launch to the finish of Conference 2006 is a blur for many of the committee, and we have just one more committee meeting to wrap up the last of everything. Why so late? After conference it was home to do the GST, end-of-year books, have a holiday and if you are our new life member — Russell Berry — then there is always work to be done or more challenges up the road. It was a wonderful occasion at the AGM for Pauline Bassett and Lewis Olsen to nominate and have accepted by the Executive our branch request for

Life Membership to be awarded to Russell Berry, particularly in this our special year.

Out in the field

The beginning of July saw hard frosts and at the end, a window of opportunity of about a week to go around test weighing, feeding and straightening up a few hives that had been knocked over. Then the rain and the first two weeks of August has been enough to test the patience of many. The paddocks are waterlogged, and with intermittent showers many beekeepers are opting to stay home and finish the last of the shed work. For many it is an economic decision as to how many yards they will get through versus the cost of running the truck or ute, when you can only get half a day's work done.

- Fiona O'Brien

Hawkes Bay Branch

Like most of the country it is very wet and cold here with the bees only able to work occasionally; hopefully we will all get some better weather soon. Most hives have survived the winter reasonably well although there are high mite numbers in a few places, especially around built-up areas.

Our branch will be having a spring field day on Saturday, 7 October, 46 Arataki Rd. Havelock North, starting about 10 am. It will be a fairly low-key affair aimed mostly at hobbyists and semi-commercial beekeepers, with an emphasis on queen rearing and hive inspection (AFB, general hive health, strength, etc). Please bring some lunch and a veil. There will be no charge and everyone is welcome. Please note: 46 Arataki Rd is my address, just down the road from Arataki Honey.

- John Berry

Hawkes Bay Branch field day

Saturday, 7 October 2006, from 10 am.
Hosted by John Berry
46 Arataki Road,
Havelock North (just down from Arataki Honey)

Southern North Island Branch

Plans are well under way for our spring field day on 23 September 2006, hosted by Alan Simmonds, Pahautea Road, RD 1, Featherston. We start at 10 am with a welcome and cup of tea, followed by a full day of practical ideas to help hobby and commercial beekeepers. Want to know how to get there? Ask me (Neil Farrer) or Frank Lindsay. But it is simple: turn off the main road just north of Featherston (Tauherenikau) into Lake Ferry Road/No 1 Road, proceed approximately 12 km, take a left turn at the sign of the canoes into Pahautea Road, bear right at the next junction and aim for the first house on the left (with a concrete wall around the property). Parking on the roadside. Signs will be put up at the junctions.

At our August meeting we spent time on putting a full programme together for the field day and had an animated discussion on Conference. Those that attended enjoyed the Conference and wish to congratulate Waikato on a great event.

The meeting expressed concern over the apparent difficulty for beekeepers to sell drum lots of Clover/pasture honey. Many members still have last year's crop stored plus the season just finished. This problem makes it very difficult for new beekeepers to establish themselves and manage cash flow.

We have sympathy for Nelson beekeepers over the find of varroa. Our SNI members will offer support and welcome any from the South Island who would like to talk to either commercial or hobby beekeepers about how to cope with varroa and come out smiling at the other side.

AFB concerns also were discussed at our August meeting. The Management Agency is planning a spring inspection and our members will assist. There is a shortage of AP2s that we will address.

July and August have been very wet, but in the last couple of weeks we have had some sunshine. The queens are laying and spring is just around the corner for most of us. Members are pleased to find four to six frames of brood in hives, which means a lot of splits can be made up as replacements, and swarm control, in the near future. This subject will be covered at our field day.

- Neil Farrer

Southern North Island field day

on Saturday, 23 September 2006, starting at 10 am.
Venue: Alan Simmonds,
Pahautea Road, RD 1, Featherston.

Nelson Branch

As I write this, Nelson beekeepers are still coming to terms with the June varroa incursion. During the winter, there was lots of time for talking, planning and surveillance. It seems now that spring has sprung very quickly: beekeepers are feeling they are behind with winter work and are perhaps going into spring unprepared. We are moving into new territory without a map, as there is still not a clear plan of attack for how we will deal with the varroa incursion.

The Minister has declared that there will not be an eradication attempt in the Nelson area (especially now that an entire apiary has been infected in Pelorus Bridge, over the range from the original incursions). At a Biosecurity New Zealand meeting called for beekeepers following the decision, we were clearly told that there is no chance that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will reconsider or reverse this decision.

Probably the hardest issue at this time is not knowing what 'the plan' is going to be. At this stage, we are still having to apply for permits for any movement of hives within the control area, and already the early hives have been moved *into* the 10-kilometre incursion zone for stone fruit pollination without the pollinators knowing how they are to treat the hives. However, we *do* expect that Biosecurity New Zealand will require the hives to be treated for varroa for a period of weeks following the movement *from* the incursion zone.

Spring in the Nelson area has been very favourable with good trickles of early spring nectar (five finger started early August), and lots of heavy frosts but not too much rain. The hives are full of brood but our drones are not yet mature, so I guess those are the measures of where the season is at.

As we go into this new season, all beekeepers in the top of the South Island will be brushing up on their knowledge about varroa, how to diagnose when it has invaded their hives, and how best to deal with it when they get it. Once again, we appreciate all the support and advice that the North Island beekeepers have so willingly shared with us.

- Merle Moffitt

Canterbury Branch

As I write this the snow is falling once again; seems that winter hasn't finished with us yet. On the bright side, my diary shows that late snowfalls in August have resulted in above average crops in the past. Here's hoping anyway.

Here is one beekeeper amazed with Government's recent decision on varroa in Nelson. I can distinctly remember that one of the case scenarios for levy, surveillance and a view for eradication was very close to this real-life case. Where are these officials now who extolled the virtues of this levy? Government appears to be only good at monitoring; after all, how can you be wrong doing this? However, when the stakes are upped to a win/lose situation, everyone runs for cover and uses the same arguments that were used six years ago by those that were opposed to this scheme in the first place! We were against this asinine levy and scheme at the outset and are now ruing the money wasted on a pipe dream.

Finally, I would like to thank MAF/Biosecurity for finally settling my claim for the Oxford incursion. Food for thought.

- Brian Lancaster

Otago Branch

Well, with a few spring-like days in early August and bees flying about there were no excuses left. The scribe has had to come out of hibernation. (Do you think bees might do a bit of skiing in there too?)

The enthusiasm for a new season after a winter break has been somewhat dampened by the discovery of varroa in the South. It is an unpleasant wake-up call from any dreams that we might have had of working our careers without it. It was a nice thought while it lasted. Beekeepers down this way will obviously appreciate any efforts to slow its march south.

Despite the bad news there is a prevailing feeling of "just get on and do it" rather than despondency amongst beekeepers around here. This was apparent at an optimistic meeting of the Otago/Southland discussion group hosted at the Clissold's in Southland last week. Perhaps we have all taken heart in the fact that our North Island counterparts have, by and large, done just that. Not exactly business as usual, but where there is a will there is a way. We received some timely warnings regarding resistance and residues. Handy stuff to learn before the beasties sneak in.

A quick early look through some hives shows a few frames of brood on the way again. Our 'broodless' period seemed early this year, for most maybe six weeks sometime during March, April and May. June and early July were back to more normal winter weather this year; that is, damned cold! Otago thankfully missed the big snow dumps to low levels that hit Canterbury, but we have had some good winter rains. Good snow cover melting in the higher country will hopefully give us some drought proofing for the coming season too, and for the first time in a while there is a reasonable amount of water in the subsoil.

A mild spring is forecast so perhaps we will all be busy early.

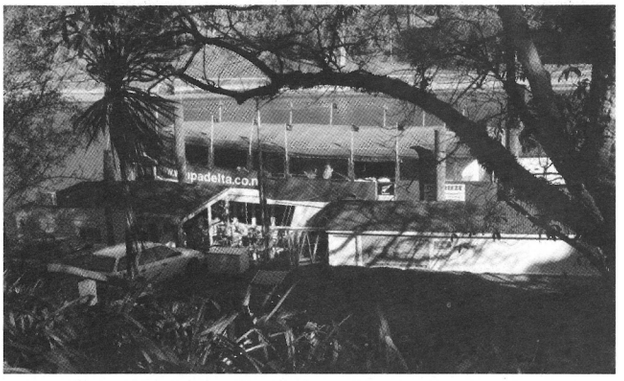
We are holding the Otago/Southland field day at Telford on Saturday, 7 October this year. A detailed programme will go out to local members soon but all are welcome to attend. Contact new Branch President Blair Dale (welcome back, Blair!), or any Branch member.

- Peter Sales

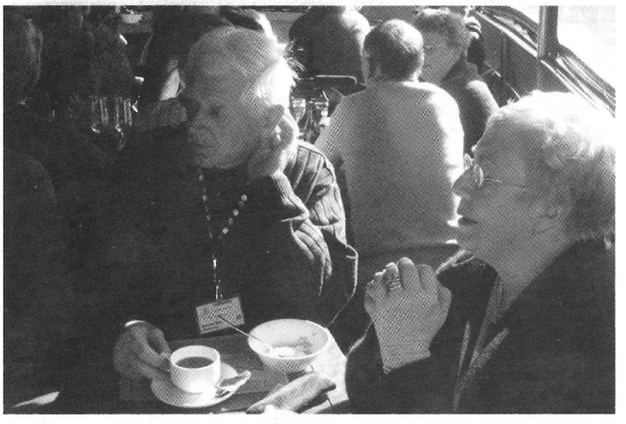
Otago/Southland field day

Saturday, 7 October, starting at 10 am,
at Telford Rural Polytechnic.

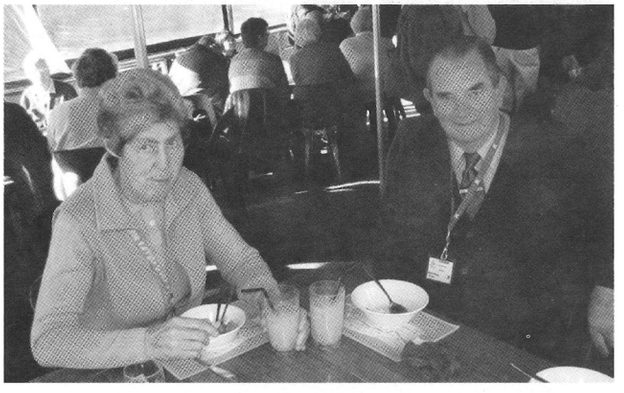
Waikato River cruise on the Waipa Delta, *Sunday 16 July 2006*



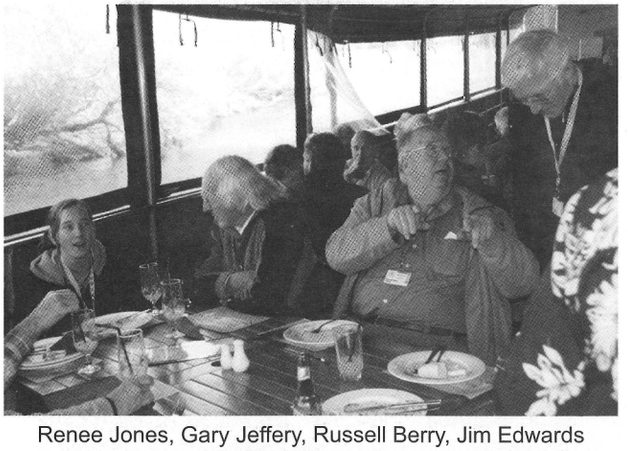
The *Waipa Delta*



Gerard and Patricia Martin



Ngaire and Norm Finlay



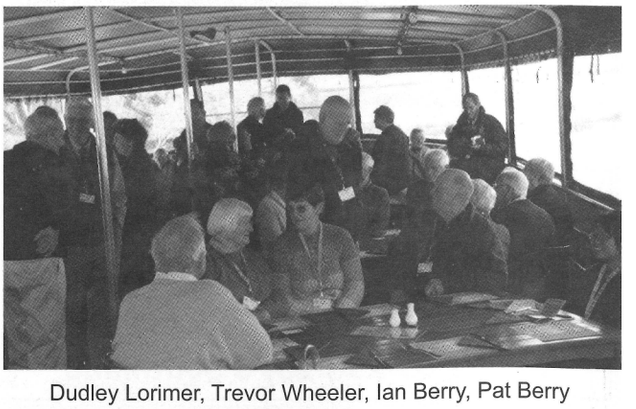
Renee Jones, Gary Jeffery, Russell Berry, Jim Edwards

Photos: Frank Lindsay and Nicol Finnie

Trevor Wheeler, Len and Edith Baker

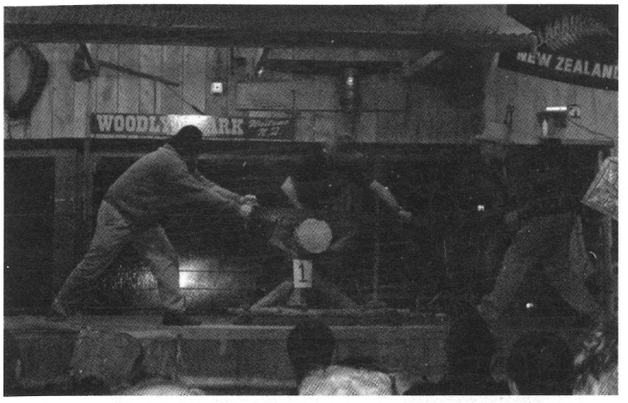
The younger guard: John Berry, Mark Gibson, Harold Jensen and Joe Pieters

Back Row: Stuart Tweeddale, Pam Edwards, Mary-Ann Lindsay, Frank Lindsay, Front row: Pat Gavin, Don Barrow, Gerard Martin, Terry Gavin, Bob Blair



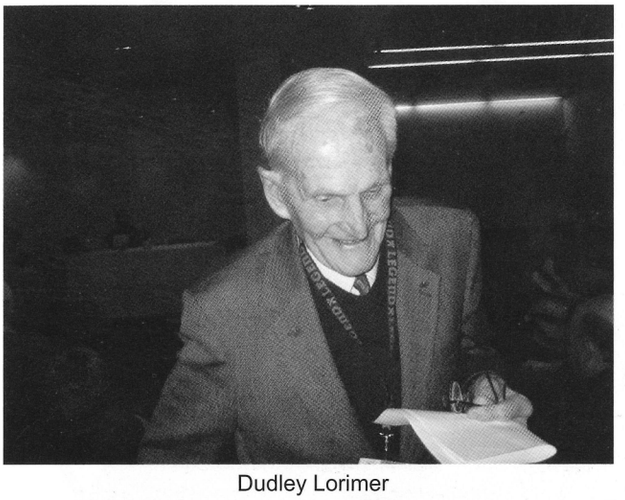
Dudley Lorimer, Trevor Wheeler, Ian Berry, Pat Berry

Memories of the NBA Conference, Hamilton, July 2006



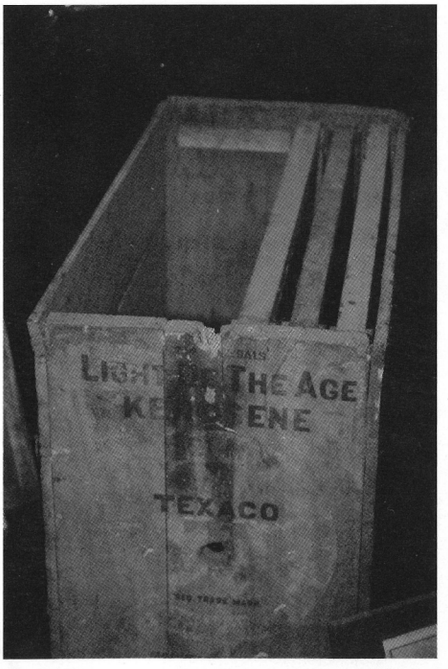
John and Peter Berry working the crosscut saw at Woodlyn Park, with Billy Black assisting

Waikato Branch 100th birthday cake



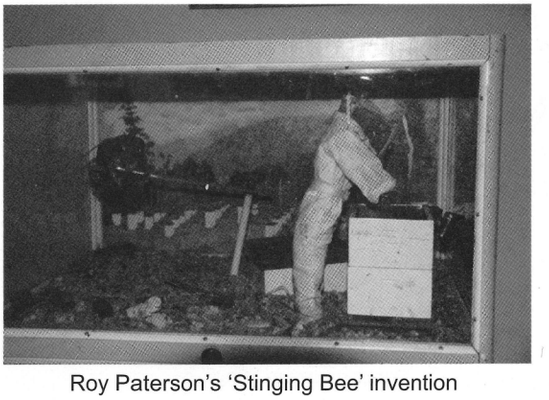
Dudley Lorimer

Bill Bennett, Mary-Anne Lindsay, Lewis Olsen celebrating their birthdays: they turned 60, 21 again, and 50, respectively



Inside a kerosene case

The registration desk



Roy Paterson's 'Stinging Bee' invention

Photos: Frank Lindsay, Nicol Finnie and Neisha Moffitt

2006

Prime Sponsors

Photo: Nicol Finnie.

Conference Sponsors 2006

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Comvita	Manuf. & Marketer of therapeutic apicultural products	07 533 1426	info@comvita.com
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Beetek Ltd	Plastic Hardware	021 739 760	rayd@interworld.co.nz
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Hometeam NZ Ltd - Bee Safe	Timber Preservative	021 399 365	info@hometeam.co.nz
NZ Beeswax Ltd	Beeswax & Beekeeping Supplies	03 693 9189	info@beeswax.co.nz
Traxion Distribution Ltd	Superwinch	07 846 4616	blair@traxion.co.nz

Supporting

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Kerry New Zealand Ltd	Simply - The choice in natural sweetner	0800 784 277	david.higgins@kerrynz.co.nz
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NZ Sugar Company Ltd	Chelsea - NZ's trusted taste since 1884	09 481 0746	kjacobs@nzsugar.co.nz
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VL Smith Ltd	Alliance - Quality beekeepers woodware	03 319 5447	danny@vlsmith.co.nz
Waitomo Honey Ltd	John and Pauline Bassett	07 878 7193	waihon@actrix.co.nz
Xenacom Ltd	Xen-Apiary - web based computer application	07 827 0890	fiona.kerry@xenacom.com

Associate

Active Manuka Honey Association	AMHA - Denise Tryer-Harding@Pipers	0800 747 377	www.umf.org.nz
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NZ Honey Producers Co-op	Honey Packers	03 684 8882	www.nzhoney.co.nz
Visy Industrial Packaging	PET blow moulded jars and closures	09 820 6620	patrick.mcmahon@visy.com.au

Photo: Nicol Finnie.

Impressions from a Conference newbie

This was my first NBA Conference, and I was impressed with the quality and variety of the seminar programme and the smooth organisation throughout. Conference was a great opportunity to meet many people I've been corresponding with for the past two years. I wish I could have met everyone: the enduring mental image of morning and afternoon teas was of bees on the face of a comb — there one minute, gone the next.

Following is my summary of the seminar presentations I attended and some of my general impressions. I was sorry to miss the presentations on the history of beekeeping and bee research in the Waikato, but was en route at the time.

Tuesday seminar presentations

'Beekeeping in South Africa: more about the bees than the beekeepers'

Mike Allsopp of Stellenbosch, South Africa, gave a fascinating glimpse into an industry very different from New Zealand's: no inspection services, no disease control, no levies, no research support, no package or queen bee industry, and no artificial insemination. Increases are made by splits or trapping wild swarms. Beekeepers ignore legal registration requirements and don't reveal their sites. Theft and vandalism are their largest problems, so they hide their hives behind fences and are happy to have defensive bees to "welcome visitors".

Mike dislikes the term 'Africanised honey bee', as there are 11 races of bee in South Africa. He discussed the characteristics of the two main types of bee: *Apis mellifera scutellata* (usually referred to as the 'killer bee', but Mike prefers the term Savanna honey bee) and *A. m. capensis* (Cape honey bee). The Cape honey bee took about five years to adapt and live with varroa, which has now become an arbitrary pest in the western Cape. In the rest of South Africa. *A.m. scutellata* has taken longer to adapt, with losses of 60–70% of hives, before most bees became tolerant.

Mike emphasised that New Zealand should be concerned about Small Hive Beetle and should go the extra mile to keep SHB from reaching these shores. South Africa has no AFB, possibly because the bees are resistant; EFB is an occasional problem but is not treated; and chalkbrood is a minor problem since the arrival of varroa. Mike discussed the selective breeding and disease management approach taken in South Africa, in which bees are selected for their survival traits. This approach might not work in a honey-rich country, but their 'live and let die' approach is probably appropriate to their climatic and other conditions.

NZFSA presentations

Jim Sim updated work on Risk Management Programmes (RMPs) and the Code of Practice (COP). Jim also discussed tutin contamination and NZFSA's tutin audit as part of harvest declarations. He updated progress on pyrrolizidine

alkaloids (PAs), and said that NZFSA would be discussing the issue of residues with the BPSC, noting that this issue is becoming more prominent in the eyes of consumers and other governments. The issue is one of perception, not necessarily safety.

Greg Zemke-Smith's talk 'Exporting Bee Products (a pain in the RMP)', explained the rationale for the RMP system, which follows the same model as other animal products. He explained the differences between the RMP, Export Approved Premises, and Exporter ID designations, and also discussed the e-certification system.

European foulbrood in Australia

In keeping with the 'Tri-Nations' feel to the Conference, diminutive New South Wales commercial beekeeper Des Cannon began his presentation by appearing in a Brumbies cap, dubbing himself "a miniature version of Richie McCaw".

Des outlined the status of EFB in Australia, the signs and symptoms of a diseased hive, and differentiated EFB symptoms from AFB. Des cautioned that if EFB arrives in New Zealand, the main problems are that production would be reduced (the hive doesn't die out but becomes unproductive); beekeepers will confuse EFB for AFB and burn the hive; or will confuse AFB for EFB, treat it as EFB and possibly mask AFB, if New Zealand goes down the drug path of feeding using oxytetracycline (OTC). *Paenibacillus alvei* is a secondary infection of EFB and can also be confused with AFB. EFB is a seasonal and stress-related disease, and New Zealand hives are already under stress from varroa.

EFB is in 60% of honey produced in Eastern Australia. Des considers that it is unlikely that EFB will reach New Zealand from legally imported honey (under import protocol), because sensitivity of testing has increased using the HPCR test (heminested polymerase chain reaction), a much better test than the culture method used previously; and the heat treatment protocols of 60ºC for 8.0 hours have proven effective. *[Editor's note: honey coming into New Zealand will have to comply with Import Health Standards (IHS).]*

Remarking on the New Zealand Government decision to allow importation of Australian honey, Des wondered how marketable Australian honey would be in New Zealand, given that heat treatment changes both colour and taste. He quipped that Aussies and Kiwis tend not to like the taste of each other's honey anyway!

Des summarised that EFB is an early spring occurrence due to stress; Australian beekeepers now regard it as a minor manageable issue similar to control of chalkbrood; EFB is a larger problem in southern New South Wales and Victoria due to their cooler temperatures; good beekeeping husbandry (management of queens, brood comb, and nutrition) reduces the occurrence of EFB; and AFB and nosema are larger issues for the Australian beekeeping industry.

Developments in honey research

Dr Peter Molan (Honey Research Unit, University of Waikato) discussed the benefits of antioxidants in honey and described his current research into looking at which floral types are best. He outlined recent improvements in wound care products, noting that selected honey, held in place, "is achieving better results than modern pharmaceutical wound-care products can achieve".

Dr Molan mentioned other potential uses of honey that he and others are investigating to treat a wide range of conditions, including the anti-inflammatory reaction of honey to radiation burns to the head and neck from cancer radiology treatments. He is trying to get surgeons to use honey routinely to reduce the scarring caused by inflammation from radiation burns.

Other work is being done at the University of Otago in using Manuka honey to treat gingivitis and periodontal gum disease. Research also indicates the effectiveness of honey in treating diseases and conditions of the digestive, reproductive and immune systems.

One of Dr Molan's PhD students is researching why some Manuka honey is more active than others, and Dr Molan continues to search for the answer to the elusive question of the chemical composition of UMF® (Unique Manuka Factor). He commented that Australian Jarrah honey, being promoted for its high peroxide levels, actually has about the same peroxide value as Rewarewa and Honeydew, and is not better than Manuka honey. He urged beekeepers to promote the unique characteristics of high peroxide honeys before Australian Jarrah honey comes into New Zealand. He advised beekeepers many years ago to promote Manuka in this way and yet the Australians beat us to packaging antibacteral medihoney to the British Health Service years before New Zealand did. Most medihoneys in tubes sell for 200 times the price of honey in a jar.

AFB NPMS control programme and AFB NPMS panel

Byron Taylor of AgriQuality discussed compliance issues around the AFB NPMS. He suggested several factors that might account for why the AFB rate is not dropping, including unregistered beekeepers whose hives are not being inspected by Approved Persons; only 45% of beekeepers who hold DECAs have had their competence level tested by sitting and passing the competency exam. Although the AFB NPMS management agency can offer tools and advice, AFB control is an issue for beekeepers. One beekeeper suggested that the industry might have reached the point where it is dealing with a "hardcore" of non-compliant beekeepers.

Byron was then joined by a panel comprising Jane Lorimer, Mark Goodwin and Neil Farrer for questions and discussion from the floor.

Wednesday seminar presentations

The *capensis* problem — a New Zealand perspective

Mike Allsopp has been studying the Cape honey bee *(Apis mellifera capensis)* for about 15 years. This presentation focused on the problem characteristics of capensis and its spread within South Africa. Cape bees moved north beginning around 1989, when a beekeeper took them from Cape Town, and they bred with *Apis mellifera scutellata. Capensis* worker bees, when combined with worker bees of other races, will be treated as queens. In a normal colony the queen controls and the workers work. *Capensis* worker

bees are not controlled by queens of other races. When they combine with other worker bees in the hive, *capensis* will develop queen-like substance and will be treated as false queens (pseudo queens). *Capensis* workers will also only lay worker eggs (thelytoky) and no males, but can produce a queen "when they feel like it". *Capensis* larvae are fed nearly double the amount in 'foreign' colonies, resulting in enhanced development and a 'super *capensis*' bee.

When enough *capensis* workers are produced in a colony, the *Apis mellifera scutellata* bees eliminate their own queen, and *capensis* take over reproducing Cape workers. When only Cape bees are left in a colony, all *capensis* workers think of themselves as queens, no one works, they eat stored pollen and honey and lay a bit of drone brood. The colony dwindles or finds another *A. m. scutellata* colony, and the process begins again.

Beekeepers spread the problem around South Africa within a couple of months. Honey production and pollination in managed (commercial) colonies were severely affected, but the wild population remained unaffected. Mike discussed countermeasures taken to control *capensis*. Today, beekeepers are learning to manage the problem and it's hoped eradication will occur within 15 years.

Mike's messages for New Zealand: don't allow *Apis mellifera capensis* or any Cape bees into New Zealand; don't mix this bee with other types of bees; be super-vigilant with customs and biosecurity measures; don't get bright ideas about bringing in varroa-tolerant Cape bees to New Zealand because they would love it here; and think only in terms of prevention, not containment or eradication. If the Cape bee arrived here, the response would need to be a "scorched earth" policy. The biggest impact would be on pollination. Finally, Mike warned that not every bit of semen coming from Europe is secure!

Clover pollination

Dr Mark Goodwin (HortResearch Ruakura) summed up painstaking research done by him and his team (Harlan Cox, Michelle Taylor and Heather McBrydie) into the "sex life of white clover". The purpose of the research was to determine colony standards, stocking rates and pollination levels of clover. The team found that although some plants and flowers were fully pollinated, seed production was only half of what each plant could produce. Mark theorised that possible reasons why flowers were not fully pollinated were that there were not enough bees per hectare, that irrigation soaks bees and flattens the flowers, and (most likely) that the bees were unable to pollinate fully as the pollen between plants was incompatible, probably due to biological reasons not related to bees. The first visit was likely to be very efficient, whereas subsequent visits were not.

Among Mark's dazzling array of statistics was the calculation that bees have to fly the equivalent of six times around the world to collect one kilogram of surplus honey. Bees consume 25 g per orbit, which means they get three million kilometres to the litre!

Biosecurity New Zealand: varroa update and bee products imports update

Douglas Birnie (Director, Policy and Biosecurity) presented a brief update on the organisation's response to the varroa incursion in the Nelson area, the options currently under consideration by Government, and their projected impacts.

He was then joined by his colleagues Howard Pharo, Clive Gower-Collins and Leone Basher to discuss the recent decision to allow bee product imports into New Zealand. The quartet explained the background to the decision in the areas of policy, risk assessment, the Import Health Standard (IHS), and the Western Australia freedom case. Not surprisingly, these presentations generated some considerable heat and scepticism from their audience, as evidenced by statements from the floor and questions to the presenters.

Survival strategies for the beekeeping industry

Jim Edwards outlined the impacts of various factors affecting the industry. After lunch, Jim facilitated a 'have your say' discussion from the floor. Beekeepers were asked to identify barriers to entering the industry, to think constructively about what beekeepers can do to make a living and operate businesses successfully, and how to work to develop an industry strategy. The audience participated in a lively, thoughtful and wide-ranging dialogue about issues including brand image and management; adding value to product; building constructive bridges within the industry and with Government and other stakeholders; working with health marketers to promote the many benefits of New Zealand's unique monofloral honeys, attracting young people into beekeeping; and developing a unified planning process for research, marketing, and communications.

DIY research

Michelle Taylor (HortResearch Ruakura) stated that "research, if good, is at the heart of all decision making. You can do research in your own beekeeping business, as it works best for your own conditions". When thinking about conducting your own research, Michelle explained the need to look at what, where, who, how and why. She discussed specific research techniques (e.g., setting up treatment and control groups, sample size, randomisation, and replication of results), and gave practical examples.

How to gain funding for your research ideas

Helen Percy (MAF Sustainable Farming Fund, Hamilton) described the purpose and criteria of the SFF, the bee-related projects SFF has funded since 2000, and how to apply for funding for public good research. SFF has four project advisors throughout New Zealand, and Helen gave some hints on how to write an effective application. SFF's present funding pool is $9.5 million per year and is oversubscribed three times over, so the SFF is hoping that its budget will be increased. Helen referred people to the SFF website www.maf.govt.nz/sff for more information about funding criteria, applications and other information.

EFB: implications for New Zealand beekeepers

Des Cannon focused on the use of OTC to treat EFB in eastern Australia. Western Australia is the only State that does not have EFB, and OTC feeding is not legal in WA. He theorised that EFB might have became established in Australia because it was particularly well suited to Australian conditions. Des detailed the OTC antibiotic treatment procedure, including the differences between blanket and spot feeding, and described some of the issues and impacts that OTC feeding has created in eastern Australia. Research is under way in Australia with the aim of reducing reliance on OTC; e.g., by developing or using alternative antibiotics, fatty acids or bacteriophages. *(NB: Using antibiotics is illegal in New Zealand.)* Des said that in hindsight he would not go down the antibiotic road to fix EFB but would use alternative methods. It is definitely possible to breed EFB-resistant bees. Antibiotics do help but cause other problems.

Adding value to your product

The multi-talented Maureen Maxwell (BeesOnline) emphasised that honey is more than a commodity, but a "triple bottom line product that is good for us, good for the environment, and it tastes good". Maureen focused on the challenge of "reinventing a product that's older than time … and telling the rest of the world about this awesome product. New Zealand is producing just a drop on the world honey market, so we must get the best out of that drop: ours is the best tasting, finest and purest in the world".

Maureen underscored the need to have a consistent goal and vision in business planning to achieve a point of difference in brand marketing. Given that global and domestic markets are merging, Maureen urged the industry to start working together to promote the 100% Pure New Zealand brand throughout the industry. Product must remain free of residues and antibiotics, and New Zealand producers must ensure that product packaged and sold overseas is not devalued by relabelling, dilution or blending.

In order for New Zealand to maintain credibility in the world marketplace, Maureen advocated the development of quality standards and ways of achieving them; for example, packers could set up a training module that would add value to the whole industry. Maureen presented a case study of BeesOnline to demonstrate how her company adds value and educates consumers about the unique properties of different New Zealand honeys and other bee products.

Final impressions (in no particular order)

- The generosity of the sponsors, who hosted a sumptuous dinner at the Glenview International Hotel on Tuesday night. Peter Bray of Airborne Honey spoke movingly about his late business partner Richard Bensemann, who died earlier this year. On Wednesday a silent auction was held for some lovely prizes contributed by sponsors and beekeepers. The proceeds, combined with all quiz-night bribes and charges for cellphones going off during seminars, amounted to a donation of $2009.50 to the New Zealand Kidney Foundation. Conference organisers express a huge 'thank you' to all the sponsors and conference attendees for donating to the auction.
- The quiz on the bus en route to the Conference dinner mystery destination kept us amused and served as this year's Branch Shield competition: Auckland Branch took out first-place honours, followed by the Nelson and Southern North Island branches.
- The Conference dinner and Billy Black's 'extra inch' Kiwi cultural history show at Woodlyn Park, Waitomo were loads of fun. Highlights were seeing twins John and Peter Berry give a very creditable demonstration of how to use a crosscut saw; and the double act of Fiona Kerry and Billy Black playing with explosives as part of a fence post 'splitting gun' demonstration. Billy Black is one versatile fellow! Little wonder, then, that Des Cannon told me it was the best conference dinner he'd ever been to.
- The general atmosphere of celebration: 100th anniversary of Waikato Branch, and birthday cakes to commemorate Bill Bennett's 60th birthday, Lewis Olsen's 50th and Mary-Ann Lindsay's 21st (a lady never gives away her age).
- The hardworking exhibitors who were a conference within a conference. Seeing the variety of exhibitors gave me a strong appreciation of and respect for the depth and breadth of knowledge required to work in this industry!
- The wide-ranging conversations within seminars, at tea breaks and during the dinners.
- The memorabilia display and the vintage Branch Voting Sticks at the AGM, linking NBA's past to its present.
- The friendliness, generosity of spirit and resilient nature of beekeepers.

Many thanks to the Executive Council for the opportunity to attend. I hope to see you in Dunedin next year!

- Nancy Fithian

HortResearch visit

A highlight for me during Conference was visiting the honey bee laboratory at HortResearch Ruakura on Thursday 20 July, along with Linda Bray, Trevor Corbett and Ernest Adamson. After hearing so much about the invaluable work of Dr Mark Goodwin, Michelle Taylor, Heather McBrydie and Harlan Cox, it was great to be invited to tour their facility.

Among other duties, Heather McBrydie (Research Associate) is responsible for testing honey and bee samples sent to HortResearch to test for AFB, as part of the AFB NPMS. Heather took us through the process of how she prepares these samples to test for Paenibacillus larvae. We also examined specimens of various species of varroa and other exotics pests through the microscope, such as Small Hive Beetle and Large Hive Beetle, preserved in ethanol in their sealed containers.

Heather stressed the need for beekeepers to use proper sampling techniques (e.g., ensuring that the sample is not contaminated with human bacteria from fingers, etc.). She also emphasised the importance of notifying HortResearch before sending suspect samples, having clear labelling and a submission form. (The October issue of *The New Zealand Beekeeper* will include an article to assist beekeepers to collect samples correctly for the AFB NPMS.)

Harlan Cox (Apiary manager), who works with Michelle Taylor in the Artificial Insemination (AI) pathology lab, showed us the equipment they use to inseminate queens.

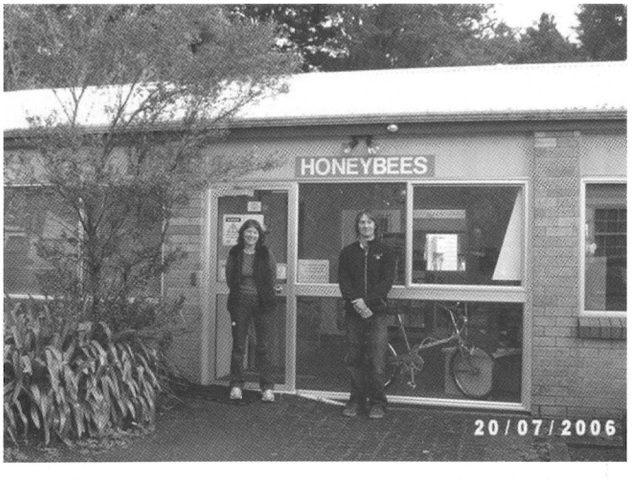
HortResearch is experimenting with breeding a varroa-resistant bee as part of the SFF project.

Heather and Harlan then showed us the wet lab in one of their out buildings, where the team does a small amount of extracting as part of their research work. HortResearch carries out residue trials of honey, propolis and wax and for these trials they use organic foundation. Among the equipment is a set of field scales, used to weigh boxes to determine the effect of varroa on honey production. The team uses a drying cabinet to dry anthers from flowers before putting them through a cyclone, which sucks up the pollen from the dried anthers. The pollen is frozen to -70ºC (to ensure good viability) in one of their two freezers, and other types of samples are kept frozen at -30ºC until no longer required. Other equipment includes a Potter Spray Tower to spray bees to simulate pesticides being sprayed onto bees in a laboratory situation. Those who heard Mark Goodwin's presentation on clover pollination would have seen a photo of bees with water droplets on them, courtesy of the spray tower.

Finally, we visited their bee yard nearby and this is one of several sites they have on campus. This yard comprises nucs that are placed on stands to alleviate back strain.

Thanks to Heather and Harlan for the invitation and for taking the time to demonstrate some of the team's work, to Linda Bray for taking the photos, and to Trevor Corbett for providing transportation to Ruakura.

- Nancy Fithian



Heather McBrydie and Harlan Cox in front of the HortResearch Ruakura honey bee laboratory. *Photo: Linda Bray.*

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About Uncle Russell

[Editor's note: Russell Berry was granted Life Membership of the National Beekeepers' Association in the centenary year of the Waikato Branch, 2006.]

I tried to get some dates about when Russell Berry started beekeeping but it was so long ago that no one could remember, so I'll just give you some personal reminiscences of my own.

One of my earliest memories of Russell is of him at my grandparents' place wearing a back brace. This should have been an indication to him that beekeeping was not a good career, but all these years later he is still actively participating.

His initial beekeeping experience was as part of Arataki in Hawke's Bay, where I believe he looked after the Puketitiri area. He then moved to Waiotapu near Rotorua and has run that side of the business ever since.

I spent a lot of time there as a kid, as dad's idea of a holiday was to go up to Rotorua and work with Russell while Mum took us kids to see the sights: from memory this was in May and it was always freezing. As I got older I would often stay with Russell and Annette in the school holidays and help with extracting, as well as working many nights shifting hives. One night I remember started about 5 pm with a trip to Kawerau to pick up some hives, then down to the Rangaitiki Plains where we unloaded. Just before getting back to Waiotapu, we met Russell coming the other way with his car and my gear. We then drove back to the Rangaitiki Plains, where we met a truck from Hawke's Bay and proceeded to super hives until well after dark. I then went back to Hawke's Bay with a truck. I think I did 23 and a half hours that day.

It wasn't all work. I still remember catching my first trout with Russell and we spent many, many hours fishing the lakes and rivers in the area. Over the years the sheds at Waiotapu have grown and multiplied: what is now the mechanics' workshop was the whole factory when I first went there. Russell will tell you that he built these new sheds because he had increased his hive numbers, but probably just as important was that he needed the extra room to hold the machines he had built.

The earliest one I can remember was the comb section cleaning machine: it was huge and it worked, sometimes! It could also paint honey over a wall 30 feet away and may have been the reason we changed to cut comb honey. The next one I recall was a machine for melting out and pressing wax out of old frames. This machine was actually quite fun and I spent many happy hours working on it. It had its idiosyncrasies but I would rate it an eight out of 10. His extractor is, of course, legendary and anyone who has spent time at Waiotapu will have seen many of his creations (most of which worked).

Russell has always been passionate about his vehicles. If a truck was too old (ancient) to use on bees you could always turn it into a forklift. He did, at one stage, attempt to sell the Thames Trader truck that had been in the back paddock for about 20 years, but unfortunately the deal fell through when the truck wouldn't start (I hope he didn't remove the battery leads). As far as I know he still has it. Every car he has ever owned is stuck in sheds somewhere on the property; I guess they are a retirement project if he ever retires.

Russell and Annette Berry. *Photo: Nicol Finnie*

The other side of Russell is of course his family: wife Annette, son Mark and daughter Tracy. There are also now grandchildren. Annette seems to work as many hours as Russell, and they are more likely to be awake and working at two in the morning than to be up with the sun. (It doesn't always pay to get up early at Waiotapu: I remember vividly as a young lad picking up frozen sparrows from the driveway and placing them on the heat exchange to warm up enough to fly away.)

Not everyone always agrees with Russell's politics, including myself, but he is always been a tireless worker, both for his own business and for the industry as a whole. If we all put as much effort into projects as he does the country would certainly be a much livelier place.

I have never been more proud of him and Annette as when I stood beside them and all the other beekeepers from all over the country as he politely tried to tell Jim Anderton and the rest of Government that they were ignorant on this matter. Only time will tell if the message got through but at least he tried.

- John Berry

Jane Lorimer presents Waikato Branch President Russell Berry with Life Membership of the NBA. *Photo: Neisha Moffitt.*

Reducing the impact of Kashmir bee virus on New Zealand honey bees

Jacqui Todd (HortResearch, Ruakura, New Zealand)
Joachim de Miranda (Queens University Belfast, School of Biological Sciences, Northern Ireland)
Brenda Ball (Rothamsted Research, Plant and Invertebrate Ecology Division, Herts, United Kingdom)

Kashmir bee virus (KBV) was originally discovered in *Apis cerana* bees collected from Kashmir, India (Bailey and Woods, 1977). It has since been detected in samples of *Apis mellifera* from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and several European countries (Ellis and Munn, 2005). It is the most virulent of the known honey bee viruses, multiplying quickly and killing bees within three days of the virus entering the haemolymph (Bailey and Ball, 1991). This virus has become an extremely damaging infection following the arrival of *Varroa destructor* in most of these countries. Studies have shown that varroa mites are able to acquire the virus from infected bees and pass the KBV particles on to other bees and pupae on which they subsequently feed (Chen et al, 2004; Shen et al, 2005). This results in epidemic KBV infections within the bee population, and eventual death of the bee colony.

Our studies with KBV in New Zealand, funded by The C. Alma Baker Trust, have shown that bee colonies with KBV infections and large *V. destructor* populations will soon die (Todd and de Miranda, 2005; Todd et al, 2004). Figure 1 shows the results of a study conducted in 2002–03 where 13 colonies were monitored for the survival of the bee population, changes in the varroa population, and the development of KBV infections.

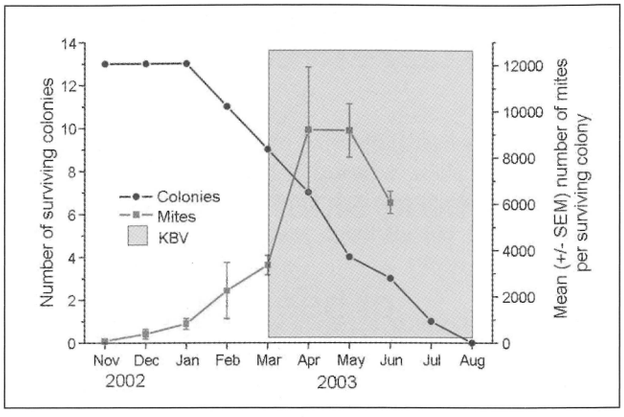

Figure 1: KBV infections appear in the bee population in late summer when the mite populations are high. Honey bee colony survival is unlikely once the KBV infection becomes epidemic in the bee population. Reducing the mite population in the late summer may prevent the onset of epidemic KBV infections and prevent colony death.

These colonies were not treated with acaricide, and the mite populations reached high levels in the late summer. Five of the colonies died early in the summer following the loss of their queen. These deaths were not related to KBV infection

and are, as yet, unexplained. All colonies that were still alive in the late summer developed KBV infections. Symptoms included dead brood, dead adult bees, and a dwindling bee population leading to colony death (Figure 2).

The presence of KBV in colonies with a large mite population, and its presence in bees at the time of colony death, suggests this virus is at least partially responsible for the colony losses beekeepers have suffered since the arrival of *V. destructor* in New Zealand. It would, therefore, be advantageous for beekeepers to be able to prevent the development of epidemic KBV infections in their bee colonies. Overt KBV infections appear to develop in bee populations in the late summer and autumn, which is also when the mite populations are at their peak. It is possible that timing the application of mite control treatments to coincide with increasing virus prevalence would effectively remove the mite virus vectors and prevent the onset of epidemic KBV infections in the bees.

To investigate this hypothesis, a small pilot study was conducted involving eight colonies at the Mt Albert Research Centre, Auckland, in 2005–06. Monthly samples of live bees were collected from each colony and tested for the presence of KBV using a sensitive Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) technique. This technique detects the genetic sequence of the virus in the bee samples. Once KBV was detected in half the colonies, we applied a 6–8 week acaricide treatment (Apistan®) to half the colonies that were infected with KBV and to half the colonies in which KBV had not been detected. Thus, there were four colony groups: (1) KBV absent and mites treated; (2) KBV absent and mites untreated; (3) KBV present and mites untreated; (4) KBV present and mites treated. The colonies were then monitored monthly for the development of KBV infections, mite population growth and colony survival (Table 1).

Group	Mites	KBV	Mites treated	Result	Colony survives
1	Yes	No	Yes	Mites controlled no KBV	Yes
2	Yes	No	No	KBV infection develops	No
3	Yes	Yes	No	KBV becomes epidemic	No
4*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Mites and KBV controlled?	Yes?

Table 1: Four treatment groups were included in the small pilot study conducted in summer 2005–06. The results for groups 1–3 are consistent with our previous studies. *One of the colonies in Group 4 died when the bees failed to raise a new queen in mid-summer, so these results are for only one colony and therefore inconclusive.

We would predict from our earlier studies that the colonies treated for mites and with no KBV in the bee population (Group 1) would live through the winter, and the colonies with mites and KBV (Group 3) would soon die. The results of this small study followed these predictions. In Group 2 (KBV absent but mites not controlled), KBV infections soon developed and the colonies died, which is also consistent with our previous studies. The colonies of real interest were those that had the mite population controlled following the development of a KBV infection in the bees (Group 4), since this would indicate whether or not such a treatment could save these colonies. Unfortunately, one of the colonies in this group lost its queen and then died because the bees did not raise a new queen. The other colony in this group survived, however, suggesting this theory is worth further assessment. A study involving more colonies would determine whether KBV infections can be eliminated from a bee population through the application of mite control treatments in the summer months.

In addition to these studies, we have conducted an investigation into the stability of KBV in honey and the ability of the virus to infect bees that feed on KBV-contaminated honey. In 2004, 22 colonies were established at five apiary sites in Auckland and the Waikato. Half the colonies had their mite population controlled using Apistan® or Bayvarol®, and the other half were untreated. We took samples of live bees and honey from each of the colonies and tested for the presence of KBV using RT-PCR. Although KBV was detected in the bee population of several of the untreated colonies, no KBV was detected in any of the honey samples. KBV was also not detected in any of the treated colonies. This suggests that KBV is not present in honey produced by KBV-infected bees, but it would still be of value to determine whether bees feeding on KBV-contaminated honey can become infected with the virus.

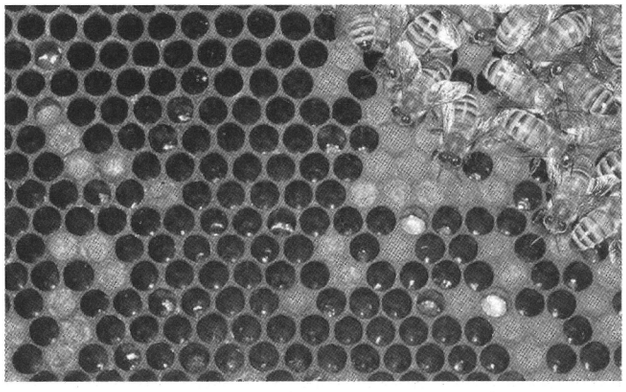

Figure 2: Photo of a brood frame from a colony with a large population of *V. destructor* and an epidemic KBV infection in the bee population. Colonies with dead larvae should be checked for AFB and, if found to be negative, have an acaricide treatment applied to prevent the mites spreading KBV through the bee population.

To obtain KBV-contaminated honey, we extracted the virus from bees from a colony with an overt KBV infection. This virus extract was then added to honey, which we had previously determined to be free of KBV using RT-PCR analysis, at a concentration of one part virus extract to nine parts honey. KBV was detected in the honey both immediately following the addition of the virus extract and after 10 days of storage on the laboratory bench.

We then collected 330 newly emerged bees from a colony in which no KBV could be detected by RT-PCR, and divided them randomly among ten test cages. The bees in five of the cages were fed uncontaminated honey, and the bees in the other five cages were fed with honey to which fresh KBV extract had been added. The bees were fed in this way for

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five days, after which all cages received uncontaminated honey until the end of the study. We took bee samples from the cages at days 0, 5 and 10 and analysed them for the presence of KBV infection, and monitored the survival of the remaining 20 bees in each cage.

Although we did not detect KBV in the bees collected on days 0, 5 or 10, there was a lower survival rate of the bees remaining in the cages that had initially been fed with KBV-contaminated honey. It is possible that the KBV infections took more than 10 days to develop, even though the bees were only fed with the KBV extract for the first five days. We hope to test these remaining bees for the presence of KBV infections in the near future to determine whether this is true.

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[Editor's note: Jacqui Todd presented this research at the NBA Conference, Hamilton, July 2006.]

Letters to the editor

Thanks from Des Cannon

I would like to thank Jane Lorimer and the members of the NBA for an extremely enjoyable visit during the Conference at Hamilton. I would particularly like to thank Trevor Cullen and Dave West for help with transport between Auckland and Hamilton. I gained a number of valuable insights into beekeeping in New Zealand, and hope I was able to provide similar value for your members. I look forward to meeting a number of you next March when I come over for our Varroa study tour.

Thanks once again,

Des Cannon
New South Wales, Australia

Serbian beekeeper seeks work

Hello!

I am beekeeper from Serbia and I keep up to 50 hives. I wish to move to New Zealand, with my family, and find job as beekeeper. I am experienced in work with bees but I would like to prove my knowledge working for someone and at the same time attending one of the courses at Telford Rural Polytechnic.

Are there commercial beekeepers that need and want to employ young people, ambitious and willing to work and learn?

If you know for some farm and company please write to me. My e-mail: danijelbee@ptt.yu and radulebee@yahoo.com.

Thank you.

Daniel Radulovic

About the Apiary: guest column from Auckland

Frank Lindsay is hopefully enjoying the Canadian summer, so this month's 'About the Apiary' comes from Auckland.

Byron Taylor of AgriQuality had a 'back to basics' experience when he spoke on Exotic Bee Diseases to the Auckland Beekeepers Club (ABC) meeting in early August. It was cold, wet and windy for his outdoor presentation with no 'Powerpoint' available, so he was using his fingers to count the five topics as he covered them. The conditions seemed to concentrate the mind and all 35 present were attentive. We saw sample bottles with hive beetles and other 'unwanteds' floating about. And if we are concerned about our carnica/Italian crosses, a new bee suit will be required if some of these African bees find their way here. It is unusual for the club not to open at least one hive for a quick look.

The 24-hour natural varroa mite fall counts onto sticky (vaseline/cooking oil) coated coreflute boards ranged from one to 120 over the club's six hives. The treatment strips should be in on 19 August and will come out six to eight weeks later, just before the bee population starts 'boiling out' of the single full-depth (fd) brood box hives. The club has some single fd, some double fd and some double 3/4 brood box hives.

We work on the principle of treating as late as possible at our ABC apiary in the Horticultural Area at Unitec. Hopefully this treatment will take us through to March 2007, when a 'different' chemical will be used after the main honey crop has been removed. A honey flow can occur late in the urban area so the late summer varroa treatment has to be slotted in as best it can, while the honey boxes are off and before one or two boxes go back on.

The ABC coreflute nuc box

A nuc box is a very handy piece of beekeeping equipment. It can be used to introduce a caged queen to a new small queenless colony, to run a small colony in conjunction with a 'production' hive on a city property, or to collect a small swarm and get them established.

The ABC encourages members to 'wrap' carefully cut coreflute (old real estate signage) around three sides of two wooden 190 x 270 mm, 20 mm thick ends. The ends have a 20 x 10 mm rebate and one has a 10 x 70 mm entrance slot. The coreflute is 270 + 190 + 270 x 505 + (20) mm for a little 20 mm landing on the front of the 190 mm floor. A 100 x 250 mm hole is cut in the centre of the floor and a piece of gauze fitted and glued in to provide bottom ventilation. The coreflute can be wrapped/folded, glued and stapled to the two wooden ends to form a light insulated nuc box. The top can also be fashioned out of more coreflute, say three layers thick. The top is (20 + 200 + 20) x (20 + 510 + 20), folded and taped to run off the water, and two more layers of 505 x 200 mm 'inner cover/s'. Perfectionists use a water cleanup adhesive as well as a staple gun to fit the ends, and the finishing touch is to run tape over all edges. Two 50 x 20 mm tanalised 200-mm long wood blocks screwed on to the bottom keep the box clear of the ground. Maybe a carrying handle would improve it?

Continued on page 31

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A foam fish box winter nuc box

Fish, crayfish and other seafood are delivered to hotels and restaurants in polystyrene foam boxes. These can be glued using 'water cleanup' adhesive. The lid is glued, left 24 hours to set, then the foam box can be cut to the desired height for a four- or five-frame nuc. A 100 x 250 mm gauze covered ventilation opening is needed in the floor and at least two full coats of water-based paint is needed to stop bored winter bees chewing great caves into the foam.

They are excellent winter nuc boxes. No feeding is needed in the city and they will build up from very few bees, but washing and repairing with a filler and repainting is common.

Things to do this month

Make or clean and paint your nuc box(es). Assemble or obtain plenty of spare frames. Try the different frames now available: wax-coated plastic, wood with a waxed plastic foundation or the traditional wax foundation.

As the colony starts to build and provided it has plenty of stores or a honey flow has started, remove one old frame and put in a reconditioned/new frame at the edge of the brood area. Don't overdo the workload of your early building colony. The idea is to have maximum field bees when your honey flow kicks in. Be canny when feeding. Feed strong syrup to draw out new frames or to encourage the queen to lay and build up the bee population. Pollen is seldom a problem in the city gardens but in the paddock it must be considered. Feed a little dry sugar and wet it with syrup if you think your bees are short of food, but you don't wish to encourage too much brood raising. The sugar will set like concrete but will slowly be fed to the bees. Frames of honey are probably better food, but don't feed anything that could spread AFB into a weakened colony.

Check your city bees at two-week intervals and keep a 'hive record sheet' noting the following: queen age and pedigree; last mite treatment date; last full AFB check and date; population; eggs/brood; queen sighted; 'hot'/calm; number of queen cells removed/left; space; stores; frames added; disease/mites/action; number of honey boxes; +/- honey frames; needing attention. Having to write down a 'measure' will pressurise you into better observing how your bees are doing, and educate you about your apiary site for future years.

- Paul Brown
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Heavy vehicle driver fatigue

Don't die for a deadline! Fatigue is one of the biggest causes of accidents for heavy vehicle drivers.

A study in 2000 found that 45 per cent of long distance heavy vehicle drivers in Australia had experienced fatigue during their last trip. If you drive a truck or bus, it's crucial that you know how to identify and handle the effects of fatigue.

Why is fatigue dangerous?

Fatigue doesn't just make you feel tired. It affects your body and driving in a range of ways. This includes a slowing of your reactions, loss in concentration, and fatal 'microsleeps'.

It also makes it harder for you to recognise how tired you actually are, and therefore difficult to recognise when fatigue is setting in.

As a professional driver, you need to understand what causes fatigue and how to pick up on the early warning signs so you can do something before it affects your driving.

Warning signs

Know the signs of fatigue. These include:

- feeling tired or drowsy — yawning — sore or tired eyes
- feeling bored — getting restless and uncomfortable
- not remembering the past few minutes or forgetting where you are going
- getting angry or annoyed on the road
- missing road signs or taking the wrong turns
- reacting slower — under- or over-correcting
- problems with your steering — straying out of your lane
- experiencing microsleeps, where you 'nod off" for a short time.

- Submitted by Frank Lindsay

Late night

Chris Valentine was moving his hives one night and got stuck in a paddock — I pulled him out with a tractor. Any beekeepers' nightmare, and it does happen!

- Neil Farrer

Photo: Chris Valentine

Conference 2006 AGM, Hamilton

Photo: © Snapshot

And the winner is ...

In Australia the New South Wales Branch gives an award to recognise research contributions to the industry. We should have a similar award here for ingenuity and inventiveness.

Dr Mark Goodwin's presentation at the Waikato conference on HortResearch's recent clover research, in which the research team found that only an average of 1.2 seeds were produced per floret (where it can produce up to six seeds), was extremely interesting and enlightening. Especially interesting was learning about the damage the large irrigators do to flower heads.

However, I felt that the New Zealand version of the 'research contributions' award should go to Harlan Cox, their trusty research assistant. It seems he got the ute stuck in soft ground with no chains to put on. Instead of calling for help and risking a ribbing from the rest of the crew, he used his head and put a couple of plastic frames under each wheel. Now I'm not sure whether he used full-depth frames or three-quarter ones or which brand was involved (perhaps here's another line of research), but they did the trick and they got him out with only one frame being slightly cracked. A good clean up and a quick hose down and the frames were ready to be reused again in a hive.

So if you beekeepers get stuck this pollination season, there's now a ready aid at your fingertips you can use — a plastic frame.

- Frank Lindsay