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The New Zealand

BeeKeeper



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This month's cover photo is courtesy of Russell Berry. Russell commented that there were hundreds of waxeyes, all looking very full and healthy, and that he had never seen this before in 50 years of beekeeping.

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Deadline for articles and advertising

NB: No magazine in January

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March issue: 26 January 2009

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

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(See page 2 for full details)

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President's Report

Otago Branch Field Day

On 1 November I attended the Otago Branch Field Day held at Outram. The focus of the day was disease, mainly AFB and varroa.

The meeting was well attended with over 60 registrations. Many of those attending were hobby beekeepers who we rarely see at any event and some I had never met. They were gathering in a bit of last minute information on varroa before it finally makes its presence felt in the Otago and Southland regions.

Rex Baynes and Paul Bolger flew in from Wellington and Trevor Cullen also attended briefly. Paul updated the meeting on where the last of the money from the South Island Varroa fund was likely to end up; firstly to settle current compensation issues and the remainder to be allocated to research on varroa-related topics. He also updated the meeting on the status of the honey imports review process and indicated that there appeared to be no urgency to complete the process. With the recent change of Government it may take a bit longer.

The recurring theme for varroa management was that the use of varroacide chemicals should be as per manufacturers recommendation, especially with regards to strip removal. Leaving strips in for a year as has been reported is definitely a dumb idea. I also reiterated ERMA's clear warning to the industry that if they do not want to have to use coumaphos because of the failure of the current chemicals, then do things properly.

Review of Apiculture Unit Standards

On Friday, 7 November I visited Wellington as part of a group invited by Agriculture ITO to review the Unit Standards for Apiculture. David Woodward from Telford was also present as well as representatives of a private education provider, Agribusiness.

This was a productive day and the entire series of unit standards were reviewed. I learnt quite a bit from this exercise and can now see where some



of the perceptions regarding apicultural training have arisen. The expectation of a person qualified to a Level 2 or 3 is that no independent decision-making skills are required. This requires a Level 4 or higher qualification.

In the industry there appears to be a view in some quarters that trainees from the one-year Telford course have the requisite skills to be able to deal with management issues with some degree of independence. This is not so, and in general these people should still be accepted as only having a basic understanding of beekeeping skills. The rest comes from experience and a desire to improve oneself.

If there is a strong expectation from the industry that the Telford students need to have a higher level of competence and some minor decision-making ability, then the course needs to be modified to ensure that this happens. It has been suggested that a further year of training with suitable commercial beekeepers would address this issue. In other words, a cadetship-type course. I have discussed this with Telford and AgITO and there seems to be some acceptance of this idea. Now there needs to be some framework created to implement such a scheme: hopefully it can be a feasible approach to addressing the issue of the significant shortage of suitably trained young beekeepers, rather than having to employ too many low-skilled box movers.

New Government

With the recent change in Government it will be interesting to see if there is a significant change in attitude with regard to issues of concern to the beekeeping industry. David Carter is the new Minister for Agriculture as well as the Minister for Biosecurity. The Minister

for Food Safety is Kate Wilkinson. We are arranging to meet both to brief them about the beekeeping industry.

An Apiaries Act!

At the 2008 conference in Masterton a notice of motion was put forward to revisit the issue of an Apiaries Act. As chairman of the conference, my job is to run the meeting and avoid if possible entering into the debates at hand.

Although the notice of motion was lost I was surprised at the level of support for such an idea. The question is why? Do commercial beekeepers think that a new Apiaries Act will have any significant effect on how they conduct their operations? Do we want to go back to the old ways, and what advantages will that give the industry?

The comments from the proposer of the motion indicated he was disgruntled with the idea of all the paperwork and saw no value in harvest declarations, transfer documents, etc. He wanted to go back to a time when things were less complicated. Those times are now long gone and for a very good reason. Even if a new Apiaries Act is recreated, what would be dispensed with that is currently required by government authorities? I suggest absolutely nothing.

We will still have beekeeper and apiary/hive registration and its attendant fees and enforcement requirements, whether or not the AFB NPMS continues in the future. There will be regulation of hive management practices and bee product processing and packaging, again with its paperwork, enforcement and fees. Traceability is a key component of the whole chain of production from floral source to the consumer. This message was brought home rather strongly by Keith Cooper of Silver Fern Farms, one of the major players in the meat industry, who intimated that traceability was essentially the cornerstone to the whole process of food production. This equally applies to the bee products industry. In short, we will change the name but not the result.

Tutin debate

The NZFSA recently put out their proposed regulations pertaining to the tutin issue. The NZFSA has planned to have these regulations in place by 1 January 2009, so the period of consultation has been limited. Although the government recognises the issue of beekeepers throughout the country being extremely busy in the November/December period, they also are not going to wait until January 2010 to implement the regulations.

Having read through the proposed regulations sends a bit of a chill down my spine, and I feel somewhat glad I live in a colder climate. The cost of testing seems to be a major issue from the perspective of many beekeepers, compared with the extra layer of sampling and paperwork. However, what are the alternatives?

1. Ban all honey production for human consumption in the affected regions: simple and effective; however, not a realistic option.

2. End point testing as currently proposed: effective but costly, removes high-risk product from the food chain. Business continues.
3. Declare tutu a noxious weed and have it eradicated: not an option.
4. Declare the passion vine hopper to be a pest of national importance and enable the provisions of the Biosecurity Act. This creates a National Pest Management Strategy: This option is feasible but guess who has to administer and pay for it?

Options 2 and 4 are realistically available to the industry, but at present only option 2 is immediately practicable, for better or worse. Option 4 is likely to be even more expensive than option 2 and both will need to run concurrently so even more cost and bureaucratic hassle. If the passion vine hopper is effectively eliminated, then option 2 is made redundant. The choice is yours.

I often hear comments about bureaucrats creating rules just because they can. This is probably stretching the truth a bit. While they get carried away at times and need to be pegged back a bit, they are only doing what needs to be done. With the tutin management the rules were very simple: it was the individual's responsibility to ensure that tutin contamination in honey was managed appropriately and to declare so on their harvest declarations. As a result of the catastrophic failure of one beekeeper, the NZFSA was obliged to act. They are tasked with the job of ensuring that food is safe to eat and they are obliged to take all practicable steps to do so. Subsequent surveys by NZFSA indicated that the problem is a bit more widespread than believed. Consequently they have promulgated an additional series of regulations to mitigate the problem.

Best wishes for the season

This being the last edition of the journal for the year, I would like to wish everyone an enjoyable festive season. I hope you will manage to get a few days off to recharge. I intend to spend a few days in the Richardson Mountains over the Christmas/New Year period, with the only reminder of civilisation being those pesky tourist planes disturbing the skies.

- Frans Laas



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A challenging year

The NBA has been through a challenging year and 2009 promises more. As the major organisation representing the industry, we have carried the cost of activities to protect and promote the whole industry.



At this year's AGM in Masterton, there was a very strong message from members that everybody needs to pay their fair share when it comes to subscriptions. To quote John Bassett: "membership is voluntary but subscriptions are according to the rules of the organisation". This means paying the specified amount for the category you belong in. Most notably, commercial membership requires the payment of more than the minimal hobbyist subscription. We want hobbyists to be involved because they have an important part in the industry. Seventy percent of registered beekeepers own less than 10 hives, while 11 percent own more than 250 hives. Since most industry income comes to 11 percent of registered beekeepers, it is critical that those larger operations contribute to the work that the NBA does on their behalf.

We have had a very difficult financial year after the Executive Council tried to make membership more affordable for 2008. That plan was not successful and our cash flow has restricted our activities. We were very fortunate that the Honey Industry Trust came to our rescue and paid for the expensive challenge to the importation of honey. Those efforts stalled imports when the Government passed legislation to require that the case be assessed by an independent review panel of experts.

This year we continued to support research at HortResearch to meet industry needs for varroa and tulin management and to refocus on the benefits of honey with a project at the University of Waikato. We could not have done this work without the commitment made by beekeepers with their direct contributions and the financial support from the Honey Industry Trust and the Sustainable Farming Fund. We are currently preparing research proposals to initiate during 2009. If we do not continue down this line, then the industry will not continue to develop, let alone survive some of the challenges thrown at us.

Please be assured that we are all working hard on behalf of our members and by default for our industry. We have to live with the fact that there will always be 'free riders' in an industry where voluntary membership support prevails.

The NBA needs your support.

- Jim Edwards
Chief Executive Officer



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From the Secretary's desk

It has been another busy year for the Secretariat.

Welcome to all the new members who have joined us during the year. A significant number have joined in the last few months. The more members we have, the more your Executive Council can do for the betterment of beekeeping for all New Zealand beekeepers.

The change we made during 2008 to run all NBA memberships on a calendar financial year (that is, 1 January to 31 December) has been very successful, so we plan to continue this through the 2009 year. *All 2009 subscriptions are due by 30 January 2009.*

You will shortly receive a letter requesting payment, along with a membership form and information regarding subscription rates. The new subscription rates can also be found on the NBA website. Please remember that you are able to pay your subscription in instalments if you are unable to pay it in one lump sum. Please contact me to make confidential arrangements.

Looking ahead to 2009, we are looking at the possibility of having a photo competition and also a honey tasting competition at the NBA Annual Conference, 7-11 June in Rotorua. More information will follow once the arrangements have been finalised.

The NBA has had some large expenses this year with the battle to oppose honey imports. Our finances were not helped with the unsuccessful trial of lower subscription rates for the 2008 year, which we had hoped would encourage more members. If you are not already a member of the NBA, or for some reason did not rejoin for this year, we encourage you to consider joining. The work and research the NBA is currently undertaking will benefit all beekeepers, not just members. So if you have beekeeper contacts who are not currently members, please encourage them to also become members.

Please do not hesitate to contact the NBA office for further information. While we are not always in the office (we only work part-time for the NBA), we will attend to your enquiry as soon as possible.

The Secretariat wishes you all a safe and happy Christmas, and may this season be the best ever.

- Pam Edwards
Executive Secretary



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Comment on proposed new tutin regulations

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) hopes to have regulations in place at the beginning of the new year following this period of consultation.

Not many commercial beekeepers attended the NZFSA tutin roadshow meeting we attended, as they are too busy working dawn to dusk (or if they are doing pollination, dusk till dawn) to take a day off. What transpired at the meeting is that NZFSA plans to have all beekeepers who sell direct to the public or packers (end product producers) test their honey for tutin, no matter when it was extracted. This way, they say, we will have proof that we are producing a safe product. Then again, some packers may insist that the beekeeper tests their honey before they purchase it.

One good thing to come out of the NZFSA research is that hyenanchin (most of the honeydew component from the passion vine hopper) is not poisonous.

These new regulations won't stop another new, unregistered beekeeper producing poisonous honey in a risk area, should there be another extended drought, but it will tell NZFSA (and us) where the risk areas are. If you have been monitoring tutu bushes in your area in accordance with your RMP, you will already know whether you are in a risk area. To my mind, the NZFSA is using beekeepers' money to do their research instead of going to the Government and using Government funds, as there is a common good component from the honey bees' "free" pollination, and 80 percent of honey produced in New Zealand is sold locally.

For any beekeeper selling, bartering, or giving away honey, NZFSA will require them to take samples from each batch they produce. But to get a good homogenised sample, the

honey will have to be stirred for a period (maybe up to 24 hours). This means that most commercial beekeepers will have to fit stirrers to the storage tanks or if they pack directly into drums, they will have to put a stirrer into each drum before taking a honey sample. An alternative will be to install in-line sampling systems as they fill drums.

Although packers only require one sample from each batch, it might be prudent for beekeepers to take samples from "each drum" just in case you need to do further testing at a later date.

If you are fairly certain that you don't have passion vine hoppers in numbers sufficient to cause you problems, it's possible to have your honey tested in large batches. Laboratories can test up to 40 samples in a batch but if they find traces of tutin, it could cost more to have them identify which individual samples (drums—apiaries) are showing contamination. So put batches together that are unlikely to have any contamination, and make smaller batches for those from risk areas.

For hobbyists in most urban areas, I don't think you will have a contamination problem as there are lots of alternative floral sources flowering well into February, so get together as a club and submit batches of 40 samples at one time. This way the cost of having the test done is spread over 40 individuals, as it's financially impractical for an individual hobbyist to submit a single sample for testing.

In the meantime, continue to monitor tutu bushes in your area and document any sucking insects seen on them. Some are suggesting it might be another dry summer.

- Frank Lindsay



The November 2008 edition of *enrich*, the RD 1 magazine, led with a cover story about "Spray(ing) them away: Taking a closer look at summer weed control". However, unlike previous years, running alongside on page 5 is a column about Being Bee Friendly. Publications Committee member Fiona O'Brien says that this edition was a wonderful birthday present in the post—it's a start to the education of using pesticides and being bee friendly in their application. Good on you John Lea, CEO of RD1, for taking up the request to help educate about the importance of careful spraying.



This billboard, located on the main highway south of Katikati, Bay of Plenty, is another step forward in education about safe spraying of kiwifruit and the protection of bees. The billboard is sponsored by: Zespri, Fruitfed Supplies, NZ Avocado Industry Council, NZ Kiwifruit Growers, Beesafe Agrichemical Group, Syngenta and Bayer.

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Editorial: beekeeping ethics

In the October 2008 issue of the journal we published an article by John Berry entitled 'Beekeeping ethics'. The article referred to several incidents some years ago, before the AFB NPMS regime came into effect, which "led to either the deliberate destruction or the deliberate introduction of AFB (illegal, and except in extraordinary circumstances, unethical)."

It has come to our attention that this sentence could be taken to imply that the writer or the NBA might approve of or condone this sort of behaviour under "extraordinary circumstances". This was certainly not the intention of the author. The purpose of John Berry's article was and is to bring into the open, discussion on ethical beekeeping in its entirety, encouraging beekeepers to work together.

As the Management Agency (MA) for the AFB NPMS, the NBA and its officers emphatically *do not condone any form of wilfully destructive or illegal actions*. If the MA were to become aware of such behaviour, it would take appropriate and immediate action against the beekeeper(s) involved. It has done so in the past.

- Frans Laas, Chairman, AFB NPMS Management Agency

[Editor's note: all correspondence relating to these AFB NPMS matters is now closed. If you have any specific evidence or complaints, please refer them to the Management Agency.] 

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Honey does it again

The other day while weeding my garden I walked into a tiny branch, which scratched the corner of my eye.

The usual treatment is to head to the doctor and get some stuff to put in the eye, which I remember remained uncomfortable for about three days.

So this time, being of distant Scots decent (saving money ☺), I applied manuka honey to the eye every couple of hours. Others have told me that honey stings when put in the eye and it does, until tears wash it away, but that sandy feeling completely disappeared and I was able to carry on working as usual with a slightly closed, bloodshot eye.

- Frank Lindsay

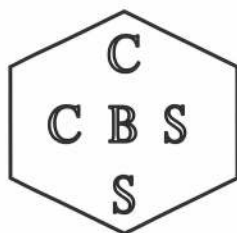


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To the Beekeeping Industry,

We will be closing down from mid-day on the 19th December and re-opening on the 12th January 2009.

The team at Ceracell thanks you for your support and wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

BK370

Donations acknowledged

The NBA gratefully acknowledges the donations, large and small, that have been received. These donations have enabled the NBA to commission research in such areas as varroa, honey and marketing and to fight the importation of honey. We also received very significant support from the Honey Industry Trust and from Zespri.

Thank you to those members below who have supported the NBA.

Wellington Beekeepers' Association
Dudley Lorimer
Mark Horsnell
F C Wilson & K Gentleman
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Watson and Son wins prestigious award

Congratulations to Watson and Son Limited, which scooped the top award in Deloitte/Unlimited's Fast 50 in late October. Deloitte/Unlimited calls for entries during July through to August each year and ranks entries according to their revenue growth. The first 50 companies with the fastest revenue growth are announced as the Deloitte/Unlimited Fast 50.

Watson and Son wrote the article that follows.

A major active manuka honey exporter with operations in the far north, Southland, and Masterton took the top award for Deloitte-Unlimited's Fast 50 last week. Watson and Son Limited (www.watsonandson.co.nz), established in 2003 by beekeeper and scientist Denis Watson, grew by 784 per cent between 2006 and 2008. It is now counted amongst the top exporters of active manuka honey from New Zealand to the world, with customers that include Tesco's.

The company employs 60 staff, operates 20,000 hives, which it either owns or which are under its direct control, and harvests from over 17,000 hectares of manuka forest.

"We are literally blessed with active manuka honey in this country," says business development manager Jono Scarlet. "There is no other plant like manuka in the world, and no other honey which has strong anti-bacterial qualities like active manuka honey. This makes New Zealand active manuka honey sought after, with a high price paid for it here and overseas. While this demand drives our company, it is also benefiting new beekeepers in the north of New Zealand and iwi who have hectares of previously poorly regarded manuka scrub. Active manuka honey is literally creating a new industry for iwi in the far north. We are delighted that this has happened."

In the same week as the prestigious Deloitte's New Zealand award was announced, Watson and Son also announced a new initiative between itself, iwi authority Te Runanga o Te Rarawa and regional development agency Enterprise



Northland. The three organisations have agreed to work together to help increase production of manuka honey in the far north. They will set up a beekeeping college to train young Maori, and will build processing and storage facilities in the next five years.

"This means that manuka covered hills in the far north, long regarded as poor scrubland, will start producing a significant income," says Mr Scarlet. "We already offer the opportunity for land owners, including Maori land owners, to contract with us for placement of hives on their land — or for helping



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manage hives on their land. It's hugely beneficial, and given the returns from manuka honey overseas, should only improve in the future."

Founder Denis Watson has Maori heritage and strong tribal links to the far north.

"Ethical production using a sustainable natural resource, and with the active support of Maori is very important to Watson and Son Limited," says Mr Scarlet. "We are honoured by the iwi's support."

Mr Scarlet says the future for this unique honey lies in medicine, not as a food. Its qualities are so powerful and unique that it will be used in future for all manner of remedies.

"Honey based wound dressings are already being used in hospitals around the world," says Mr Scarlet. "The Honey Research Unit of the University of Waikato is researching its capability in a number of projects, and we believe new products will be developed as a result."

Meantime, the demand for the honey just grows.

"We're in the thick of the season right now," says Mr Scarlet. "The manuka is in flower, and the real employees — the bees — are doing the hard work."

[Source: Watson and Son Limited (2008, 3 November). Honey, You're Great! Top Award to Manuka Honey Company. Retrieved November 14, 2008, from <http://www.infonews.co.nz/news.cfm?l=1&t=0&id=30164>. Background information from Deloitte/Unlimited. Retrieved November 16, 2008 from <http://unlimited.co.nz/unlimited.nsf/fast50/7088b23acb381ecbcc25702000761e38#knowledge>]



Denis Watson with another pallet of packed manuka.

Photos: OBee Photography.



Radio New Zealand weekly series on beekeeping

Simon Morton has started a "backyard bee team" on his programme "This Way Up" with a weekly series to introduce beekeeping to the public.

The NBA has been working very closely with Simon to provide information and other resources. We are pleased to see that local beekeeper Dave Carleton has become Simon's mentor in this feature programme, which will run each Saturday on Radio New Zealand National.

The backyard bee team is following a previous programme where they set up the "Funky Chicken Farm" in Simon's backyard as part of the Suburban Home Initiative for Food Production (SHIFP for short). The plan is to set up a bee hive next to the chicken coop and start producing honey and get a bit of pollination happening in the area.

The NBA, along with Simon and his producer Richard, are hoping to attract more interest in hobbyist beekeeping and a better understanding of beekeeping by the public, especially urban dwellers.

Listen on Radio New Zealand National and visit: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/thiswayup>

We are also providing links from the NBA website.

- Jim Edwards
Chief Executive Officer



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From the colonies



Bay of Plenty Branch

As I sit at the computer on a drizzily early November evening, what is there to say about the weather? Cool, especially at night, a bit of wind and some lovely sunny days but not hot. The honey flow has reflected this with a poor showing to date. It could change of course in the next few days but time is running out for the rewarewa, although there's plenty of time for the manuka. I even noticed a few pohutukawa flowers on the sunny side of the trees yesterday. So other than a lack of nectar, which has meant many beekeepers both in the western and eastern bays have had to check feed levels a little more than normal, what else?

Swarms. Yes, there have been a few! All sizes and shapes, mostly small, and all seem to have been picking posts and tree trucks to cling to, so it's not just a matter of shake and go: there's a little more finesse required to capture them than in some years.

We have now completed gold kiwifruit pollination, which went really well weather-wise: just enough moisture to help the bees collect the pollen but not enough to create problems for the trucks in orchards. Now we await the green kiwifruit. As always, we look at the buds, already more than twice the size of gold and think, uh-oh, are we organised? Of course we are; nothing happens for another week or two yet. Every year we seem to get excited by the size of the green buds but at the end of the day Nature has a great levelling factor. It will happen when the weather dictates with a limited influence from mankind.

Another surveillance round has just been completed and it is pleasing to see the hot spots showing less AFB than last year. Well done, everyone. What is concerning, though, is the continuous lack of regard beekeepers seem to have for sensible varroa control. During surveillance activities you cannot help but notice how people manage varroa. Too many beekeepers have a total disregard for promoting resistance and encourage absconding hives through poor practice of chemical use. Unfortunately our neighbouring beekeepers affect us all when it comes to problems like varroa. Be you commercial or hobbyist or somewhere in between, you should show some responsibility and follow label recommendations. They are set for a reason and in this case it is to help delay the onset of resistance to chemicals and reduce re-infestation of other beekeepers' hives by absconding hives. I urge you all to not scrimp on spending money on varroa control: it will bite you in the bum if you do things by half-measure—guaranteed.

We seem to have spent much of this year writing submissions. It continues with the AFB National Pest Management Strategy and the tutin in honey standards. The timing of this is as bad as it gets for Bay of Plenty beekeepers as we are all busy with kiwifruit pollination. No time is good, and it seems to be a sign of the times that you just have to find that 25th hour in the day to make a submission; otherwise you get what you

are given without the pleasure of at least having a go. Hope you have all taken the opportunities on offer to have your say and keep yourselves informed.

Conference update

Conference planning is at a slower rate at the moment because we all have too much else to do. That is not to say things are not ticking along nicely. We have had a number of sponsors confirm; Ecroyd Beekeeping Supplies Ltd, Comvita, Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies Ltd, Tunnicliffe's Ltd, Beetek Ltd, NZ Honey Producers Cooperative, HP Industries NZ Ltd, NZ Sugar Co Ltd, Seeka and LeafScreen. Please support these sponsors in your everyday beekeeping activities.

A number of other sponsors will be at conference and we expect to have a good range of products on offer in all areas of beekeeping. The outside forum is attracting extensive interest from the 'big boys toys' type firms, and although Rotorua is cold in June we expect to have a really interesting forum that will make you want to brave the weather. Some speakers have yet to be confirmed so you will have to wait until the new year to see the programme; meanwhile pencil in 7–11 June 2009, Rotorua Millennium Hotel, for a really interesting annual conference.

From the BOP team, have a sunny, warm and plentiful honey flow and find time to have a great festive season as well. Take care of yourselves and those nearest and dearest, and catch you in the new year.

- **Barbara Pimm, Branch Secretary**
(Barbara, Dennis and the team)

Poverty Bay Branch

It seems like a good season coming after a good spring, even though the main flow is three weeks later than usual. The NZFSA is pushing this submission information on tutu: the problem was highlighted over nine months ago and now they decide to have meetings right in the busiest time of beekeeping. As usual, bureaucrats have a habit of pushing things and want submissions just before Christmas so they have minimal opposition. Anyway, good luck for the flow and enjoy Christmas before the fun of harvesting. God bless.

- **Don Simm, Branch President**

Hawke's Bay Branch

Unlike most of the country we could use some rain at the moment. Spray poisoning has been light or nonexistent this year: two years without any serious incidents has got to be a record—a great cooperative effort by all involved.

Hives generally are in good order although I have had a lot of reports of swarming. A dry spring coupled with reasonable weather means that most hives are heavier than normal for this time of year, with substantially less feeding required than normal.



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BK193a

Over the last few days I have been considering writing a submission on the AFB NPMS and while I consider it necessary to have some legislation, I believe that it has caused a lot of divisiveness among the beekeeping industry and would dearly like to return to the days of the Apiaries Act: at least then we all disliked the same people.

- John Berry, Branch President

Nelson Branch

Spring build-up in Nelson has been very good this year. The hives wintered well, partly due to the cold weather and less bee activity, but we have had good pollen and nectar sources combined with settled weather for both the willow and hawthorn/barberry season. Every good factor always balances out and of course we now are facing the worst swarming season we have experienced in many springs.

One would think that this is the perfect spring, but in fact all beekeepers are in agreement that the season is running about two weeks behind schedule in terms of build-up and queen matings, which have been below average this year. Part of the reason for this situation has been the cold snaps that have created unseasonable weather right in the midst of some of the spring heat waves! Yes, always challenging, and I guess that is what makes beekeeping always so interesting: there is never one season the same as another!

This is our first full season dealing with the reality of varroa being widespread in our area, so we are no longer looking to see if it has arrived and we are finally free of movement control lines. We are adapting our regular hive visits to include treatments going in and coming out of the hives. We have yet to deal with the problem of re-invasion: we'll save that challenge for next year.

In the meantime, our trusty rusty flask has gone walkabout and we are missing our favourite pristine hot coffee spots.

- Merle Moffitt

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BK08

Canterbury Branch

The season started off very wet with access to hives a primary concern. I had to do my first two rounds with a ute and a trailer! What a hassle trying to plan when I had to return to the shed during the day to restock; however, I didn't get too far behind.

Finally spring is underway with a reasonable willow flow, few but very strong northwesters and a continuous dandelion flowering. This has led to colonies being in a fairly good condition if out on the plains, but honeydew hives are still suffering from the cold start to the season.

The ground is starting to get very dry on top; however, the subsoil still has good reserves, which bodes well for at least an average season.

Varroa is now a reality in Canterbury. Now is the time to be vigilant as the North Island experience suggests that it appears in the least likely places and very quickly builds to destructive levels. Hopefully most of us can get through the honey flow before we commit to treating our colonies from here on in. For those of us who are involved in beekeeping full time for a living, now is the time to revisit our business plans and see if they still stack up. If not, work out what is the most economical track to take. For those of us who decide to hang in there, talk to your neighbours and keep informed.

I enjoyed the article in the October issue by John Berry on beekeeper attitudes and ethics—very timely for us in Canterbury especially with the increase in canola plantings for biofuel and the arrival of varroa. As an aside to my neighbouring beekeeper, there are 3000 metres in three kilometres, not 300 metres: perhaps we could go halves in the AFB levy? (Thought not.)

- Brian Lancaster

Otago Branch

As is normal for this time of year, the province has been alternately buffeted by hot northwest gales and cold southwest fronts every few days—or even hours! As a result we at least have had a few good days for beekeeping and have had enough warmth for some hives to be self-sustaining these last few weeks.

Bush and thyme areas are off to a reasonable start but the winds seem to have taken their toll on queen matings, with beekeepers reporting trouble again this year. I checked a yard yesterday and after 16 days not one top had mated yet despite a few very nice days. Maybe a few of the virgins were caught out by the northwest winds.

The freezing days like today, where it is currently trying to snow outside my window, at least give an opportunity for easy hive moving, some work on equipment or a chance to do some office work.

One such day was our Otago Branch field day held at Outram on Saturday, 1 November. Perhaps the cold weather was one

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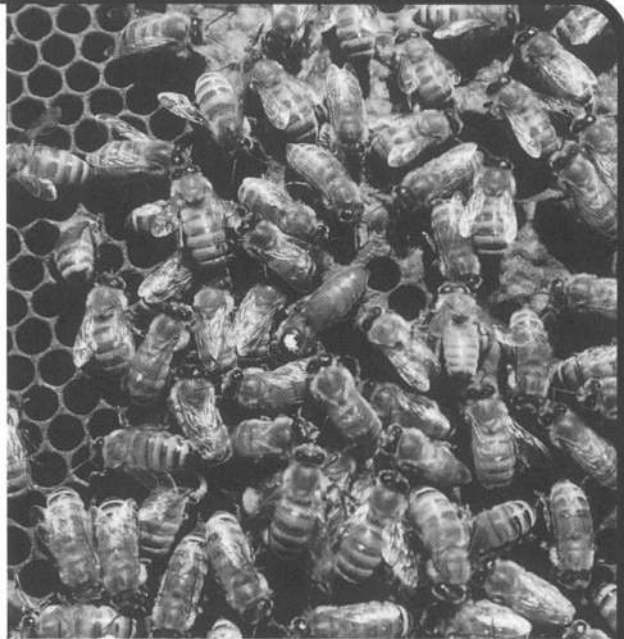
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of the reasons we had a good turnout of over 60 beekeepers. This was great to see, especially as many were relatively new to the game.

The Branch was very pleased to welcome one and all. A special thanks is due to our guest speakers, some of whom had travelled quite a way to attend (despite the wind grounding two at Christchurch Airport for a while).

All beekeepers were keen to lap up the information on varroa management from Paul Bolger, MAF Biosecurity and Marco Gonzalez from AsureQuality Limited. Peter and Susan Lyttle, Brian and Heidi Pilley and Trevor Cullen gave good presentations on varroa treatment products. A few brave souls managed to do some fieldwork with sticky boards etc., keeping hats on and not freezing being the main problems.

On the topic of varroa, Frans Laas gave an update on the work being done by Betta Bees Research on hygienic behaviour selection. There are some positive results, with a few of the colonies moved to the North Island showing good resistance to varroa. It is quite a stretch to get these traits effective across a population of bees that are also productive and gentle, but the breeding project is certainly making a good attempt.

Rex Baynes gave an update on the AFB NPMS and a good discussion was had on the current review of the strategy and our proposal to attempt an AFB-free region. All present showed enthusiasm for the idea and it is now up to us to develop the plan more fully. For example, we may like the strategy review to allow for possible controlled areas in the future. One proposal is for the Branch to fund additional efforts to support those beekeepers that have outbreaks in their areas.

Allen McCaw, a member of the Bee Products Standards Council, provided an overview of the implications the degree of AFB presence has on honey exporting and also the work being done on honey standards. There was also a clear message that you cannot keep bees or expect to sell honey in isolation; joining an organisation like the NBA to be well informed is strongly recommended. The recent tutin honey poisoning was an example that had very serious consequences.

The day provided plenty of information to enable beekeepers to look forward positively, despite the imminent arrival of varroa, and was a good example of the value of the NBA to all beekeepers.

So if you are a New Zealand beekeeper reading this journal and are not a member, how about doing your bit and joining up?

Keep your hats on.

- Peter Sales, Branch Secretary

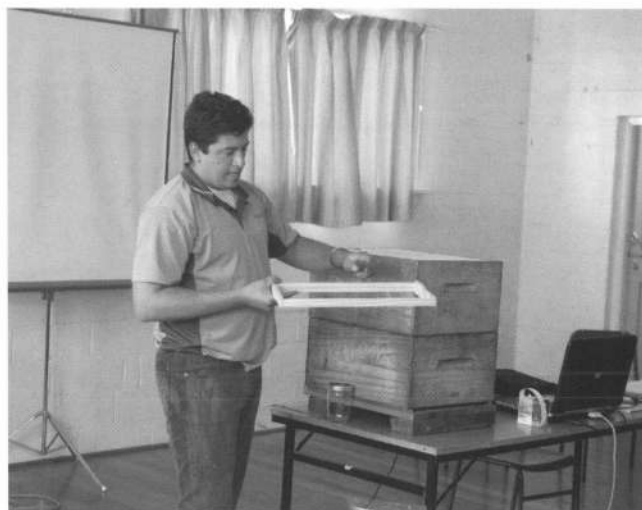
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Top to bottom: Marco Gonzalez, Rex Baynes, and a fieldwork demonstration. Photos: Neil Andrews.





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Draft specifications for an NZ standard for gathering honey samples

Prepared by Peter Bray and Steve Lyttle

[Editor's note: this article was first published in the Autumn 1992 issue of The New Zealand BeeKeeper. At that time the Executive was seeking comment on the draft standards. We are reprinting the article now in the light of the current New Zealand Food Safety Authority consultation document for managing tutin in honey.]

Samples

Samples must be representative of the entire parcel they relate to.

Taking samples

They should be prepared for each BATCH as follows:

As drums are filled from the extraction holding tank:

- For batches that are five drums or less, a sample should be taken from every drum.
- For batches that are greater than five drums, a sample should be taken from every second drum.
- At the end of the tank mix these together to create one total sample of the entire batch.
- This total sample created from the batch should be approx 2 kilos.

From this several samples of the batch can be supplied, should it be required while still keeping some in reserve. This remaining sample must be kept for at least nine months after the honey has been sold.

Sample containers

The producer should keep the master sample in a[n] airtight container to prevent moisture being absorbed into the honey. It should also be stored in the dark.

There are a number of suitable containers for sending samples through the post. Nexus Packaging supply Polyjars of 150gm, 250 gm, and 500 gm sizes with good sealing caps. Salmon[d] Smith Biolab can supply a 50gm (30 ml) polycarbonate container. These are indestructible.

Batch numbers

- Batch numbers must identify the batch that each sample and drum came from.
- Every sample and drum must carry a batch number.

- Batch numbers should consist of two parts. One part should identify the batch and the other the drum in the batch.

E.g. in a batch of five drums the first drum could be marked **A1**, the second drum marked **A2**, the third **A3** and so on. The sample should be marked **A1-5** in this case. If you like you can add other figures to the first part of the batch number for your own reference e.g. **HDA** to remind you that this is "Honey Dew" batch "**A**". Don't get too complicated though. The industry can supply appropriate drum labels as required.

Marking samples

- **All sample containers** must be marked with the **batch number and producer's** name on the container, not the lid because lids have a habit of getting swapped from one container to another.
- There is an industry standard label for marking samples. It should be used if possible.
- **Use a permanent, black felt tipped pen.** E.g. a "Sanford Sharpie Extra Fine Point Permanent Marker". These pens don't fade and will write on most surfaces.

Drum labelling

- **ALL** drums must be labelled, preferably with the industry standard label. To prevent errors this must be done at the time the drum is filled.
- Stick the label on a **CLEAN, DRY** part of the drum so it is there to stay. Place the label near the edge on the top of the drum. If placed near the middle the label may be damaged should another drum be stacked on top. **Use a permanent, black felt tipped pen** (see above for suggestion) to write on the label. Note: Ballpoint fades and may be completely unreadable six months later. Remember that the label could be needed for up to **two years**.

Documentation

The producer should keep records of all extractions and samples.

The following information should be kept:

- Batch details including
 - * Date of extraction.
 - * Apiaries the batch came from.
 - * Number of drums.
 - * Approx. type of honey.
- Details of where and when samples are sent.



About the Apiary

All the wet weather we have been having through the spring has set everything up well. The grass is green, the bush is putting on lots of new growth and the predicted warm, dry summer is something we can all look forward to. There are lots of pollen sources around and the hives are expanding.

This month it all happens for most of us. All the winter work and spring preparation, inspection, feeding, requeening, equalising and splitting of hives culminates in strong hives going in to the main honey flow.

A strong hive—two full-depth supers high bubbling over with bees—can put on a super of honey in a week under good conditions. So put two (or even three) honey supers on now. Don't wait until you see the bees building white wax on the top bars of the centre couple of frames.

I have a large number of frames to draw out this year and have been interspacing drawn frames with foundation frames to encourage the bees into the supers. If you placed a super of new frames on a hive, often the bees will not go up into it unless you have a very strong hive.

Uniting hives

Hives that have swarmed will only gather enough nectar to see them through the year. If you are into honey production you have to be ruthless. Weak hives should be combined with another weak hive to make a viable unit, but before doing this check at least two or three frames of emerging brood to see that the hives are free of AFB.

Generally I look at both the queens' laying patterns, select the best queen and put that hive on top of the other weak hive. If both queens are good and I come across one, I place her and a couple of frames of brood (with a frame of honey and pollen) into a nuc box to develop through the summer into a hive, or use as a replacement should another queen fail.

Combining hives is fairly easy. Wait until the nectar flow is on. Once the main flow is under way, it's possible to put a queenright hive on top of a queenless hive and they will unite without fighting. Another method is to spray air freshener into both hives (a quick burst between the frames from above and below) to disguise each hive's individual scent and then combine them; however, it takes experience to know when to do this.

Yet another method is to find the queen and leave her in the hive, then shake all the bees from both hives on to the ground in front of the hive. They will march in without fighting. Some beekeepers just alternate the brood frames from each hive into the same super.

The best method is to combine them slowly using two sheets of newspaper between each unit (hive). You can assist a little by making one or two thin slices in the newspaper with the tip of your hive tool, which will allow them to combine a little quicker.

If it's particularly hot, I also slide the top super back a little to make a top entrance so the bees in the top unit don't suffocate. The bees combine and once the brood emerges, half will become field bees because they are not required to maintain 'two' brood nests. A couple of weeks later, go through the hive and sort out the pollen frames and put these into the bottom or second super at the sides. That way you will not be extracting frames of honey with pollen in them.

Maximising honey production

I've described what to do if you have lots of spare hives but for some this is not an option: they want to keep hive numbers up but also produce honey. The late Trevor Rowe of Eltham had a clever little trick. A week or so before the main honey flow, he would go around his hives and if he came across any that were still in a single super, he would find and pinch out the queen (kill her), and put on a honey super. The bees, being queenless, set about producing another queen but in the meantime, the brood was emerging with nothing to do so became field bees and filled up the super with honey. Others use this method but instead of letting the hive raise its own queen, they put in a two-day-old queen cell so they end up with a desirable queen and the same result.

A less dramatic but more labour-intensive way that still keeps the queen intact is to Demaree the hive. This is done about five days before the main honey flow starts and relies on the beekeeper finding the queen. Once found, place the queen and the frame of brood she is on in the centre of a new super full of foundation frames. Put the queen and frame of brood onto the bottom board and place a queen excluder on top. The space in which the frame has come from is replaced with another (undrawn) foundation frame, then the rest of the supers are put on top in the order they were removed.

The queen can only lay on the frame she is on until the bees draw out the foundation, which creates a brood break. Five days later, check all of the brood above the queen excluder for queen cells and destroy any found on the face of the combs. Add a couple of honey supers and watch the bees fill them up. This system works particularly well when there is a short sharp flow from a single source.

Queen excluders

Check that the wires are straight before putting them on. Run your eye down the wires, looking for a kink or bend in the wire. It only takes a slight bend and the queen will get through.

I generally don't use queen excluders. They work best when the queen is restricted to a single super. If put on above the second super, the bees sometimes will not put the honey above them, and once the second super is full the bees stop working. Because I don't use them, I don't mind finding a little drone brood in my honey supers (along the bottom edge) and I scrape the cells off before the frames are extracted.

For those that do use queen excluders, I suggest they set the third super back a little at one corner to create a top entrance. Close this off after a couple of weeks so that the frames are fully capped.

Comb honey, and extracting honey supers

Some may be thinking of producing the odd super of comb honey (those beekeepers away from passion vine hopper areas, of course). The Demaree system works well for this, but place a three-quarter (normal honey) super between the brood nest and your comb honey supers to stop the bees putting any pollen in the comb honey supers. That way, if it rains, the bees will still continue to collect pollen even though there is no nectar for a day or so, and often they will put the pollen directly above the brood nest. This super gives them somewhere to store it while the comb honey supers are being drawn out and filled.

During those rainy days, prepare your honey processing area. Clean everything down so it is absolutely spotless and fill in your pre-season checklist. Honey frames can be extracted as soon as they are fully capped.

Later on in the season (late January) you will be able to extract frames that are not quite fully capped. The bees will have processed the nectar into honey and dried it, but will have not fully capped the frames. Give the frame a quick jerk and if no honey comes out, it's ready to extract.

Hives tend to produce more honey if the honey is removed progressively through the season. When supers are just about full, more should be added. The best way to stimulate the bees into gathering more is to 'undersuper'; that is, place the new super under the third super. Undersupering creates a lot of work, so I prefer to just put the new super on top of the existing one. Before doing so, bait the super by putting a half-filled frame from the super below into the new super to draw the bees up. They will keep gathering honey as long as the nectar is available and there are bees to gather it.

Sometimes the honey flow is short and sharp, cut off by a storm delivering snow and hail to an area. If keeping bees and producing honey were predictable, everyone would be doing it.

Every couple of weeks I visit my hives, remove the roof and feeder and see what the bees are doing. Often they will not work the cold side of the hive so I adjust the order of the frames, putting the undrawn or not worked frames into the centre and the full or partly full to the outside, then add another super just in case they fill it.

One of the problems for the up and coming commercial beekeepers is ensuring that they have enough honey supers. Nothing is worse than hitting that one in five year heavy honey flow, only to find all your honey supers are full and you can't get them extracted. All is not lost: bees will build in anything. Get hold of some cardboard boxes, cut a hole in the bottom, hang a frame in the box and place it on the hive. If it's an exceptional flow, the bees will fill the box. At extraction, remove the frame, cut out the natural wax and crush everything. This can result in another 20 to 30 kilograms of extra honey.

All the best for the coming honey flow and have a nice quiet time with the family over Christmas. Generally we don't celebrate New Year's Day; it's all bee work once the flow starts.

Things to do this month

Check feed. Check for failing queens and introduce nuclei to failing hives. Remove all miticide treatments from the hives as soon as the honey flow starts. Fit foundation into comb honey frames. Super hives. Prepare the honey house equipment—clean and sanitise. Undertake first honey extraction in some areas. Check for AFB before any honey or brood frames are removed from hives. Continue swarm control in some areas. Control weeds around the hives: mow—do not spray. Monitor mite drop. Cover all honey when transporting it.

Christmas shopping for the new and expanding commercial beekeeper: *Some Important Operations in Bee Management* by TSK and MP Johansson. It's a 145 page, International Bee Research Association publication from 1978 that gives you lots of alternative methods of doing things like uniting colonies, establishing nucs, feeding hives and queen rearing, and will stand you in good stead for the future. Go to their website: www.irba.org.uk/store. It's on page four and only costs £5.00 plus postage.

- Frank Lindsay



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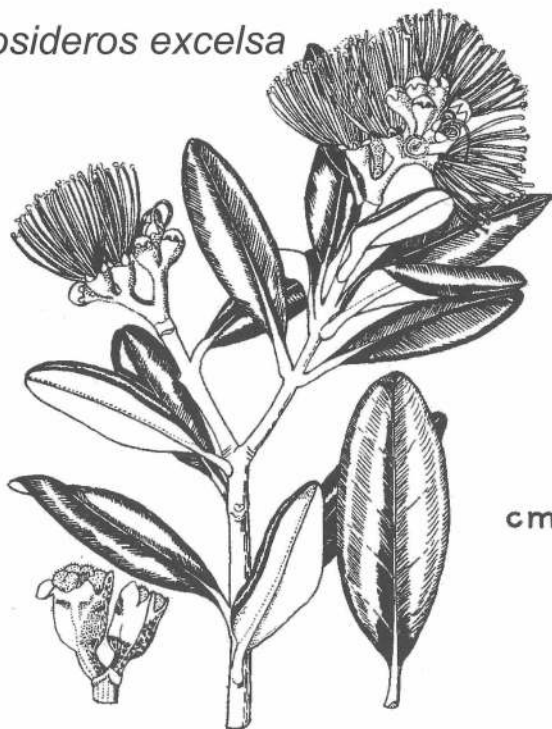
Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand

Metrosideros excelsa

Maori name: Pohutukawa

Common name: New Zealand Christmas Tree

Metrosideros excelsa



Often claimed to be the most handsome tree in New Zealand, the pohutukawa has glossy dark leaves with white undersides, and when in full bloom a great splash of scarlet.

The tree can reach a height of 50 metres and naturally only occurs on the coast (often in the spray zone), but does grow well inland. It can be planted as a hedge, which provides good shelter if well trimmed.

The pohutukawa is able to find a foothold on the side of cliffs in what would look like an impossible place for a large tree to hang. Sometimes the tree produces great bunches of red fibrous roots, which do not reach the ground—these roots are breathing roots.

The leaves are up to eight centimetres long with a white downy undersurface: these defend the tree against any excess of salt in the air. The flower buds are snow white with scarlet flowers.

High winds during the flowering season play havoc with the flowers and greatly shorten the duration of the honey flow. Dry seasons result in the heaviest flows from pohutukawa: the bees working the flowers from dawn until after dark. Bees have been reported to work the flowers well after dark during a full moon.

Nectar secretion begins in late November. In wet seasons the sugar concentration of the nectar appears too low to

attract the bees until mid-afternoon. The flowers produce ample greenish-yellow pollen that covers the nectar-gathering bees. The bees collect no more pollen than that required for immediate needs, so copious is the nectar flow. This is unfortunate, as good pohutukawa areas are often zones of pollen shortage. Pohutukawa honey is water white when extracted and granulates in a matter of days. Unless processed under controlled conditions, the grain is generally coarse. The unique salty flavor of the honey is much appreciated.

The shape and ocean-loving nature of the pohutukawa led Maori to think that the bough was the last earthy handhold of the spirit when it leapt off from the world above into Reinga (the underworld).

The Maori used to collect the nectar to drink for a sore throat. The inner bark was steeped in water and the solution used to cure loose bowels. The inner bark was also held in the mouth to cure toothache. An old custom in Kawhia was to place the placenta of a newborn child into the branches of an old pohutukawa tree (Tangi-te-Korowhiti) to ensure the health of the newborn and to speed the recovery of the mother.

Early colonial settlers placed pohutukawa flowers in their Christmas tree as decoration, as tinsel was unknown.

- Tony Lorimer



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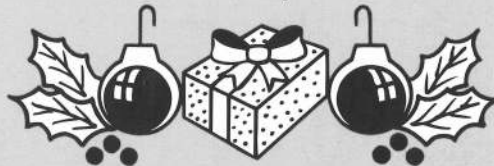
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