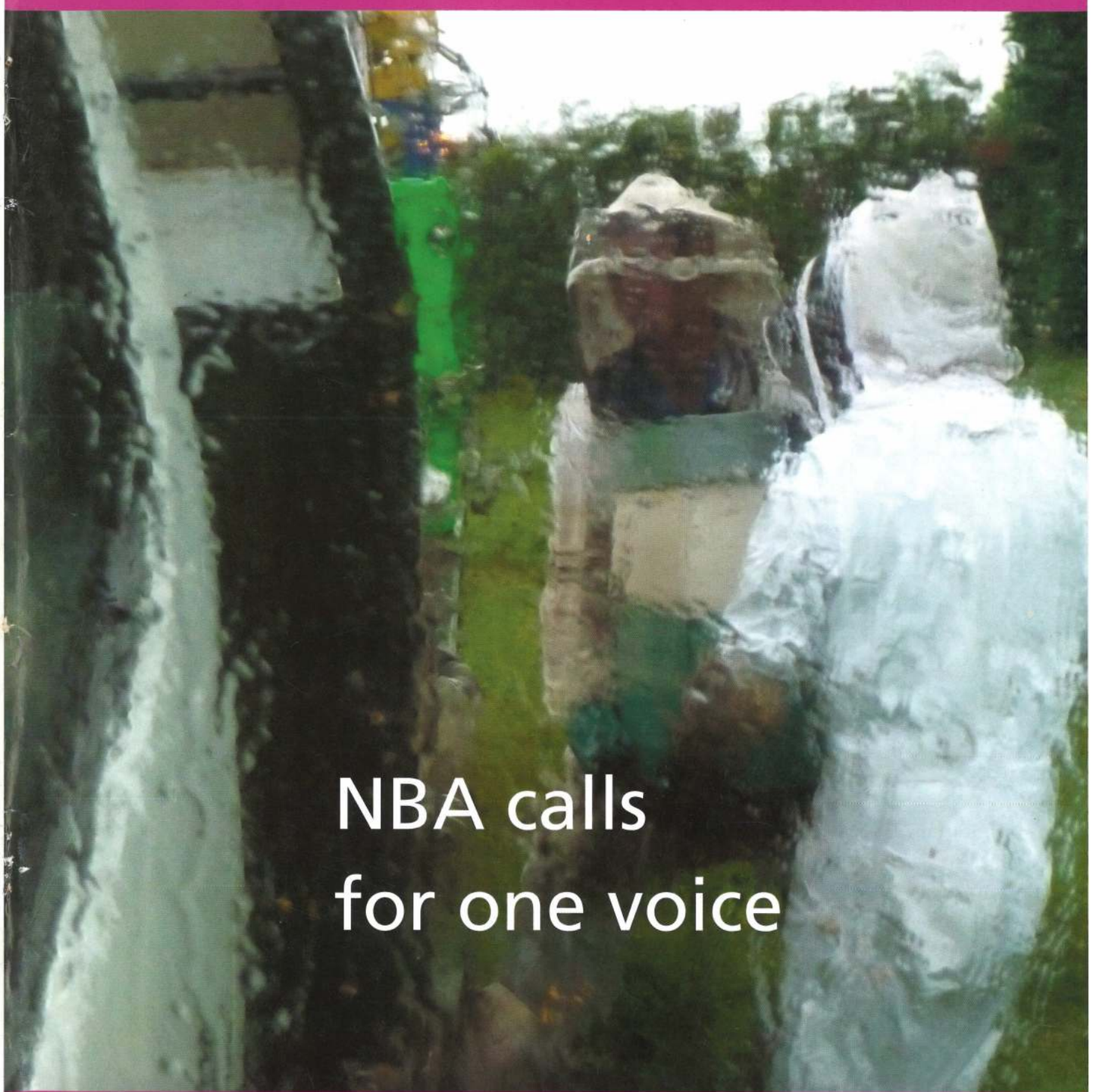
August 2010, Volume 18 No. 7

The NEW ZEALAND BeeKeeper



NBA calls for one voice

- Honey and photo competition winners
- A beekeeper looks back
- EFB control in Australia

HIVE DOCTOR

We're buzzing after our success at the 2010 NBA conference.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER:
Daniel Paul
PO Box 10792
Wellington 6143
Ph: 04 471 6254
Fax: 04 499 0876
Email: ceo@nba.org.nz

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY:
(including NBA Membership & Journal Subscriptions)
Jessica Williams
PO Box 10792
Wellington 6143
Ph: 04 471 6254
Fax: 04 499 0876
Email: secretary@nba.org.nz

EDITORIAL/PUBLICATION:
Nancy Fithian
8A Awa Road, Miramar
Wellington 6022
Ph: 04 380 8801 Fax: 04 380 7197
Mobile: 027 238 2915
Email: editor@nba.org.nz

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Phone: 03 455 4486, Fax: 03 455 7286
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CONTACTS TO THE NEW ZEALAND BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY:
Rex Baynes, AFB NPMS Manager
PO Box 44282, Lower Hutt 5040
Email: rbaynes@ihug.co.nz

American Foulbrood Management Strategy
www.afb.org.nz

AsureQuality Limited
Ph: 0508 00 11 22
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Cover photo: On reflection: the spring of 2009 was wet from beginning to end! Jeremy O'Brien and Shaun Mason are busy hand loading the truck. Rain, hail or shine, hives must be removed from the kiwifruit orchards like clockwork. Photo: Fiona O'Brien. (People's choice winner of the 'Staff at work' category, 2010 Ecroyd/NBA Photo Competition.)

NBA calls for one voice

By Frans Laas, NBA President

The Minister's comments at the NBA conference regarding honey imports into this country were rather interesting.

He clearly indicated that other trade issues were paramount in forcing New Zealand's hand in ensuring that Australian honey would be allowed into this country. The recent announcement that Australia would allow the imports of Chinese apples into their country is quite interesting as Chinese apples carry a far greater biosecurity risk than do New Zealand apples. This raises questions about apples-for-honey trade off deals.

The discovery of *Paenibacillus alvei (P. alvei)* in New Zealand is not good news for the industry. However there are still some other pathogens to consider as well and the situation in Australia has changed quite substantially in recent times, which effectively renders the current suspended Import Health Standard (IHS) void. With the presence of the Asian honey bee in Australia, what new pathogens have been introduced there? Small hive beetle and *Nosema ceranae* are now present in Western Australia. This means that heat treatment is now required for all Australian honey. The other interesting aspect is that Australian honey is processed in the same premises as foreign honeys and is blended. How is separation and clean down of equipment going to be enforced to ensure compliance with the IHS?

We know that the Australian authorities have had problems with certifying exported honey that contained undeclared foreign honeys. MAF is creating the potential for honey-laundering activities to be carried out in New Zealand with the potential to damage "Brand New Zealand". The false certification and laundering of food products is a major problem in the world. We are relatively immune from this problem as far as honey goes, as all honey exported from New Zealand at the moment is guaranteed to originate in New Zealand. If honey is imported, that certainty goes out the window.

Another interesting aspect about this decision is its effect on is the equivalence of laws, especially the AFB NPMS. The Australian AFB management system has some interesting problems (and is in reality a bit fraught) and they acknowledge this. There is widespread misuse of antibiotics in Australia, which clearly hampers their ability to eradicate AFB or even keep the levels down to the very low rates that we have here.

What is legal there is highly illegal here. For example, New Zealand beekeepers who use antibiotics for any reason break Section 14 of our Strategy rules, which prohibit the use of drugs if they have the potential to mask AFB.

> "New Zealand's AFB NPMS is our one great tool to ensure an orderly and robust beekeeping industry in this country."

Also, Australian beekeepers are allowed to recover honey from AFB-infected hives. That is clearly illegal in this country and is an offence against sections 28, 29 and 31, which prohibit dealing with honey from infected hives. So much for equivalence. In fact, it could be argued that since it is permissible to deal with infected material in Australia, a person importing and or selling honey or products containing honey into New Zealand from Australia could be liable for prosecution under Section 31, as they knowingly deal in material that comes from infected hives, which is illegal in this country!

We are trying to eradicate AFB in this country. Some areas and many beekeepers do not have the disease. The importation of honey from Australia clearly interferes with the fundamentals of our AFB NPMS, which has as its main aim eradication rather than maintenance.

New Zealand's AFB NPMS is our one great tool to ensure an orderly and robust beekeeping industry in this country. It is of vital importance that the integrity of this tool not be undermined by policy decisions that don't fully reflect long-term consequences.

Unified industry

At the AGM and Conference in Nelson, Daniel and I presented the concept of an overarching industry body to include all industry stakeholders. The concept seems to have general approval from NBA members. While we haven't proposed any models as yet, the Secretariat will soon present a variety of potential structures for consideration by stakeholders.

This concept has been proposed in the past but there was no real pressure to make such a change. The world is constantly changing and with the current issues causing some disturbance in the stability of the industry the Executive and Secretariat considered it was time that this concept was moved to the fore. At the end of the AGM we had an informal discussion with those members who remained. It was clear that people felt strongly that the NBA should remain as an entity as it has a lot of history. Any loss of identity would be considered unacceptable.

Pollination group

Prior to Conference, while sounding out opinions in relation to an overarching industry body, it became clear that the pollination provision sector may need some assistance. The provision of pollination

continued on page 6

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services is becoming a more prominent factor in the industry, but the pollination sector seems to lack a formal, industry-wide structure. Consequently the Executive Council has formed the pollination committee to deal with all aspects of pollination in the country. Executive members Neil Mossop and Barry Foster are leading the group in the interim.

Honey Industry Trust changes

After the AGM the Executive Council met with the members of the Honey Industry Trust to discuss a variety of issues. Ivan Dickinson tendered his resignation as a trustee due to ill health. The Trust also recommended that Allen McCaw be nominated as his replacement. The Executive Council approved this recommendation. Congratulations, Allen.

Ivan has been involved for a very long time in the industry and is a NBA Life Member, NBA past president and has served on the board of the old Honey Marketing Authority and the New Zealand Honey Cooperative.

I bought my first 50 hives from Ivan in 1997 when he was "retiring" from the industry. He still has a few hives but they keep spontaneously dividing on him.

Executive Council changes

Lewis Olsen has retired as the Waikato Ward representative. I would like to thank him for his service to the Council.

Stephen Black has replaced Lewis as the Waikato representative and Kerry Gentleman has replaced Glenn Kelly as the Northern South Island representative. Welcome aboard. The next year or so will be quite eventful.

As of the next AGM I will be retiring as President and Southern South Island Ward representative. I will have by then done four years as President and six years as a Ward representative. I still intend to keep my role as Chairman of the AFB NPMS until the changes in the new Strategy Order are implemented and the Operations Manual is rewritten to reflect these changes.

NBA CONFERENCE

Thanks to you all!

By Glenn Kelly

Lots of sponsors, lots of speakers, lots of attendees.

Thank you to every one of you, who, by your being there, made it a successful and invigorating event, hosted by the Nelson Branch on behalf of the NBA. Special thanks to Rae Butler for a great job organising the Hobbyist Day at late notice, and to Kerry Gentleman and Frazer Wilson for doing the lion's share of the work. This wife-and-husband team are now the Upper South Island Ward Representative and Nelson Branch President, respectively.

Here are some of my impressions and comments as a member of the Nelson Branch organising committee:

- Speciality Groups meetings: the timing of these meetings needs to be reviewed.
- Mix 'n' Mingle: a great catch-up; good to see you. (It was an 'aren't we all looking older?' evening ☺.)
- Seminar Days: I enjoyed them. Thank you speakers, and thanks to the timekeeper and the microphone men for keeping it tight.
- Sponsors' Night: You guys are first class and without your substantial input, Conference would be such a small event.
- Dinner 'n' Dance: Well, that seemed to be overwhelmed by the Honey Competition award presentations: more on that below.
- Honey Competition: it is an excellent idea and Maureen is doing a great job. The NBA Executive has the IP rights to this and needs to examine and decide where to take the Honey Competition. A great, great, great marketing opportunity and possible income source for the NBA here.
- AGM: A bigger room is needed, as many people wish to attend this meeting.
- Presentation by the Minister of Agriculture and Biosecurity New Zealand: well, the Government Industry Agreement (GIA), or as one local wag called it, the government imposed agreement, appears to be about to happen. Let's hope that the Minister and his fellow parliamentarians remember that a substantial majority of the New Zealand voting public believe that honeybees are essential to the ability of people to produce food. The scenario that the demise of the bee industry in New Zealand could lead to public perceptions of food shortages, thereby creating social disorder, is not much of a vote winner.

So once again, thank you all, and see you in Auckland in 2011.

A truly beautiful array of trophies for the National Honey Show. Photo: Mary-Ann Lindsay.

Roy Paterson Trophy 2010

SNI Branch member Stu Ferguson was judged as the winner of the competition for the Roy Paterson Trophy for 2010.

The trophy, which honours the late Waikato beekeeper and inventor, Mr Roy Paterson, is awarded annually at conference to the most innovative ideas or inventions for beekeeping put forward by industry members.

Congratulations to Stu for his Hive Doctor new generation bottom board.

Stu and Jan Ferguson of Hive Doctor with the Branch and Roy Paterson Awards. Photo: Mary-Ann Lindsay.

New & Small Beekeepers' Forum informative

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

A very good hobby day programme was held on Sunday as part of the NBA Conference at Nelson.

We had presentations that could have easily fitted into the main seminar programme. Dr David Woodward of Telford Polytechnic gave the new beekeepers present the fundamentals of setting up a beehive and a break down of what to do during the seasons.

Tony Roper followed on from David Woodward with a presentation on "the mistakes I have made", giving beekeepers valuable tips on what to do.

Carol Downer of the Auckland Beekeepers Club showed us how to improve our clubs and use the opportunities out there to publicise beekeeping and our club activities. I believe a club will now be formed in the Nelson area.

Unfortunately our US visitors, Michael and Kirsten Traynor, went through their presentation pretty quickly as they normally talk for an hour on each of their topics. For those that couldn't take in the German method of mite control (by trapping drone brood, splitting colonies in the spring, and rearing the main to maturity and then uniting the field force to the split in the autumn: a complete change of brood combs each year), you can view it on www.iwf.de. Go into the website, click on the Union Jack (right top corner) and use the search section: enter the term 'bees rotation'. You'll see the heading 'Beekeeping by Rotation System' C 1896). Click on the name and then click on English, high resolution and it will play for 45 minutes. Clubs can purchase the video for 37 Euros. Michael and Kirsten had seen this method used by beekeepers with 400 and 1000 hives.

Rex Baynes, our AFB NPMS Manager, advised beekeepers of their responsibilities under the Biosecurity Act and suggested all to take the AFB recognition course so they could identify this disease at an early stage. Once every beekeeper is trained to recognise AFB, we will be well on the way to eliminating this disease.

Jim Sim of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority reminded all about the implications when selling honey and cautioned those present that there were possible tutu problems in the area, so be on guard.

> "... 74% of beekeepers' family members become allergic to bees."

I talked about how I have made my sons allergic to bee products through my lack of knowledge. It's a disturbing fact that 74% of beekeepers' family members become allergic to bees. Help prevent this by putting your bee suit immediately in to soak outside the house when you have finished working your bees, and wash any area that has been stung. I also gave a run down on the history of apitherapy. Apparently the Russian antidote for a bad reaction is 30–50 millilitres of vodka.

Yukiyasu Uda, a Japanese qualified apitherapist and acupuncturist living in Nelson, gave us a demonstration of how he administers bee stings. The Japanese technique is to only touch the tip of the barb on the skin surface to provide a measured amount of venom and there is no pain associated with the treatment. (This technique could perhaps help new beekeepers gain immunity to stings quicker.) Yuki also gave tips on how to restart the liver after a bad reaction with a series of hot and cold compresses. Over lunch he told me what to do with that drone brood taken out to reduce mite numbers; he suggested frying it. When fried, drones have a nutty taste and provide good protein.

Maureen Maxwell finished off the day by going through the procedure to make homemade skin care and soaps. She provided an incredible amount of information, plus a handout so beekeepers could go away and try things. She suggested that adding a little honey to most moisturisers and skin care products makes them into a far better product.

Well done to the organising committee.

Conference organising committee (front desk team)

Photography competition results

The second annual photography competition was held as part of the NBA Conference in Nelson, 27–30 June 2010.

This year the competition was branded as the 2010 Ecroyd/NBA Photo Competition, reflecting the co-sponsorship of the NBA and Ecroyd Beekeeping Supplies.

Competition entries were received in three categories:

1. Then what happened (two photos);
2. Staff at work;
3. Lunch/picnic spot.

The competition judge was Michael Traynor, one of the guest speakers at the conference.

And the winners are …

Tony Valentine of Kai-Iwi Honey won the Supreme Award for his photo of 'Staff at work'. Stuart Ecroyd of Ecroyd Beekeeping Supplies chose Tony's photo, shown here. Sorry that we couldn't use it on the front cover—the dimensions didn't work out.

Other winners in the 'Staff at Work' category were Fiona O'Brien (people's choice), and Anne Walsh (guest judge's choice). Fiona's photo graces our front cover this month. Maggie James was the people's choice winner in the "Then what happened" category, and Judi Ferris was the guest judge's choice.

Fiona O'Brien was both the people's and guest judge's choice for her photo in the 'Lunch/Picnic Spot' category.

Congratulations to all of the winners and thanks to those who entered and participated in the judging. Thanks also to Ecroyd Beekeeping Supplies for co-sponsoring the competition, and to our guest judge Michael Traynor.

We intend to run more of the winning photos in upcoming issues.

We are hoping for a larger turnout of photos for the third annual competition at the NBA Conference in Auckland: don't be camera-shy photographers!

Joshua Valentine (age 3) stands on the deck of the truck, watching Kai-iwi Honey beekeepers move hives into manuka. Photo: Tony Valentine.

The categories for next year's competition will be announced shortly, so watch this space!

Media round-up

The 2010 NBA conference brought an abundance of media coverage, in various media, throughout New Zealand.

The Nelson Mail was a popular newspaper for the NBA with articles published on the inaugural honey competition and the use of bees for natural remedies.

An article written by Nelson journalist and NBA member, Nigel Costly, appeared on the Stuff website, which discussed the Traynors and the promise of their talks being a real 'buzz' at conference.

> **"This positive media coverage will help raise the profile of the NBA and the beekeeping industry ..."**

Frans was interviewed by various radio and television stations, including Radio New Zealand (RNZ) twice and SKY's Country Channel 99. Radio NZ broadcast a piece on beekeepers discussing authenticating honey. Michelle Taylor was also interviewed by Newstalk ZB, Rural News and Nigel Costly on her presentation topics.

Various news-related websites also published conference material including Scoop, Voxy and AshburtonOnline. Also, for those of you that missed out on hearing Hon. David Carter's address to conference, visit www.beehive.govt.nz/minister/david+carter to view a copy of his speech.

This positive media coverage will help raise the profile of the NBA and the beekeeping industry—now for Bee Week …

NELSON NBA CONFERENCE 2010

Thank you to all sponsors, speakers and conference attendees. We had a fantastic level of support from our sponsors this year. Their financial support means that conference is affordable for you! Please support them with your business throughout the year.

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National Honey Show award winners

The first New Zealand National Honey Show was held at the NBA Conference in Nelson, and was a roaring success.

Here's the list of winners.

The New Zealand Honey Co Trophy for the highest scoring "Liquid Honey": Jane Besley, Nelson.

The Arataki Trophy for the Naturally Granulated Honey classes.

The Arataki Hawke's Bay Trophy for the highest scoring Naturally Granulated Honey (Colour Light): Jane Besley, Nelson.

The Arataki Hawke's Bay Trophy for the highest scoring Naturally Granulated Honey (Colour Medium): Murray Ellwood, Nelson.

The Arataki Hawke's Bay Trophy for the highest scoring Naturally Granulated Honey (Colour Dark): Murray Ellwood, Nelson.

The Ecroyd Beekeeping Supplies Trophy for the highest scoring Creamed Honey: Allen McCaw, Otago.

The Comb Honey Producers Association Award for the highest scoring Comb Honey: John Wright, Auckland.

Carol Downer receiving award from Bill Floyd for natural wax presentation. Jane Lorimer and Jane Besley are on either side of Carol.

The NZ Honey Packers and Exporters Association Trophy for the most excellent Beekeeper's Special Reserve Honey: John Berry, Hawke's Bay.

The Honey NZ Inter-Bee Club Trophy: Auckland Beekeepers Club, received by Carol Downer.

The Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies Trophy for the highest scoring Natural Beeswax Block: Carol Downer, Auckland.

The New Zealand Beeswax Award for the highest scoring Cleaned and Dried Pollen: Jane Lorimer, Waikato.

The Wild Forage Award for the highest scoring entry in the Products of the Hive class: Barry Foster, Gisborne, for his Honey Meads.

The Wild Forage Award for the winner of the Products of the Hive class.

The SUPREME 100% Pure New Zealand Honey AWARD WINNER for the highest scoring beekeeper overall was Jane Besley, Nelson.

The honey medal, awarded to all first-place getters as a keepsake. Photos: Mary-Ann Lindsay.

Congratulations to all of the winners and place-getters, and thanks to everyone who participated. Thank you also to the sponsors for their generosity in providing the magnificent trophies. These trophies are perpetual so must be returned by the winners, but all first-place getters were awarded the NBA honey medal as a keepsake.

Finally, thanks to the judges, Bill Floyd and Maureen Maxwell, whose expert palates and descriptive flair made for a memorable experience.

Bee posters available!

The NBA has produced this poster for the second annual Bee Week, 26–30 July 2010. Each branch was sent 10 copies, and posters can be purchased from head office.

If you are interested in purchasing a poster, please contact Jessica Williams at secretary@nba.org.nz or ring 04 471 6254.

A wide world of natural sweetness

By Peter Watson, *The Nelson Mail*

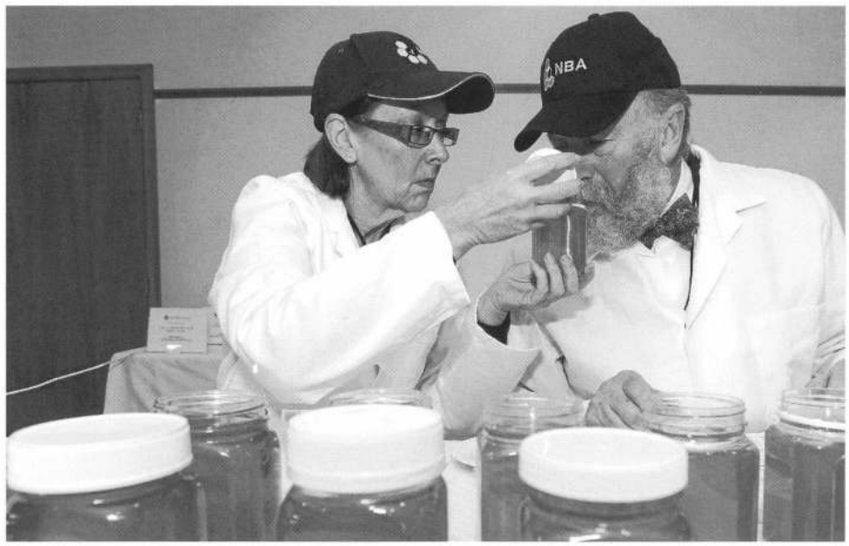
Some were like butterscotch, others had hints of apricots and limes, yet another had a strawberry aftertaste, while one brought back memories of milk bottle lollies.

The adjectives flowed like . . . well, like honey as judges Maureen Maxwell and Bill Floyd worked their way through about 40 entries in the first national honey show at the National Beekeepers' Association annual conference in Nelson, before announcing last night that local hobbyist Jane Besley was the overall supreme winner.

Ms Besley won two classes and was placed in the top three in five others. The unmarked jars of honey Ms Maxwell and Mr Floyd examined, smelled, tasted and then marked had them waxing lyrical about the exceptional quality and range of the varieties produced in New Zealand.

> "Ms Maxwell ... described each jar as 'a little pot of landscape'..."

Mr Floyd, a honey marketer and researcher, likened it to tasting "the finest sauvignon blanc through to an amazing malt whisky", while Ms Maxwell, an international honey judge and food and wine consultant, described each jar as "a little pot of landscape", such was the regional diversity in New Zealand.



Busy bees: Maureen Maxwell of Auckland and Bill Floyd of Marlborough judge the honey competition at the National Beekeepers' Association conference at the Rutherford Hotel. Photo: Martin De Ruyter.

Honey was no longer just about what you put on your toast, she said, but was something to be enjoyed every day on a range of foods. Robust bush honeys suited savoury, stronger flavours such as pepper and chilli, while delicate, more floral honeys went well with cinnamon, vanilla and white chocolate.

Mr Floyd said that while New Zealand was famous for manuka honey, it was only one of "a dozen stars" when used for culinary purposes. Rewarewa honey was excellent in Asian cuisine, and he had tasted an "amazing" rata honey ice cream.

Like wine judges, they kept their palates from getting dulled by sipping water, nibbling on a cracker or a piece of apple between tastings, and starting with the more floral honeys before advancing to the stronger ones, judging each for colour, cleanliness, aroma, flavour and texture.

The toughest part, Mr Floyd said, was picking the subtle differences when comparing honeys in the same class.

Ms Maxwell said the show was a way of encouraging excellence among producers, who often worked in remote regions.

"It's nice for them to have the opportunity to bring forward their product for peer review."

It also acknowledged the importance of the bee industry in food production, and celebrated "the uniqueness and quality of our honeys", which were some of the finest in the world.

"New Zealanders have been very shy about acknowledging that," she said.

Source

Watson, P. (2010, June 30). A Wide world of natural sweetness. *The Nelson Mail*, 3. Reprinted with permission.

Steve Lyttle presents the National Honey Show Supreme Award to Jane Besley, of Nelson. Photo: Mary-Ann Lindsay.

EFB control in Australia

By Brian Lancaster, Central South Island Ward study group representative

I was lucky enough to attend the NBA's Small Hive Beetle Study Tour to Australia in May 2009.

The trip was instigated by the Auckland Branch and used industry funds to sponsor eight beekeepers (including myself) of our group of 14. We spent nine days travelling between Brisbane and Sydney, visiting beekeepers, universities, research institutes, a sterilisation plant, honey packers and meeting with biosecurity officers and apiary inspectors en route. We exchanged knowledge on many evenings at branch or beekeeper meetings. It was a very hectic time, but also very satisfying, interesting and we learned a lot.

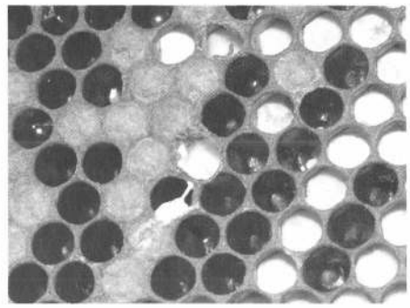
I have been elected to write up our observations on EFB (European foulbrood) as we travelled between Brisbane and Sydney on the study tour, primarily looking at the SHB (small hive beetle).

Talking to beekeepers in Queensland, it became obvious that the warmer, drier climate of this region limited the severity of the impact of EFB. SHB and AFB were of greater concern and beekeepers looked at our Pest Management Strategy with some envy. No one we talked to needed to use antibiotics after several years of bee selection. Moves are afoot in Queensland to try to enact similar legislation to prevent the spread of this "beekeeper disease". Although they weren't advocating the burning of infected material, they have the option of irradiating infected equipment, enabling beekeepers to sterilise any beekeeping equipment they choose at cost-effective rates.

The current situation with EFB can probably be attributed to the efforts that Queensland queen breeders have put into selecting lines of bees that are resistant to EFB. We spent an evening being hosted by Col Wilson from Heatherbrae on this topic. Col described how he now produces lines of queens that are actively selected as resistant, to the point where his queens don't require antibiotic treatment in commercial honey-gathering hives. We as a group (and I in particular) found this information quite exciting. We too in New Zealand could produce similar queens in short order if and when required, and thus would not need to abandon the AFB NPMS as so many in our industry assert will need to happen.

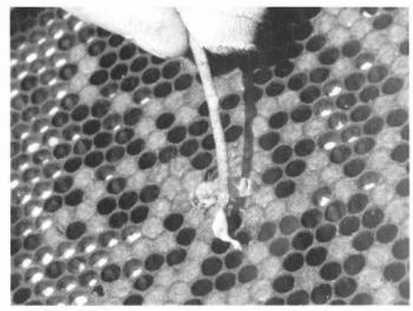
> "... the warmer, drier climate [in Queensland] limited the severity of the impact of EFB."

As an aside, after visiting the Queensland Brain Institute at the University of Queensland, it became obvious that the technology is just around the corner to produce a gizmo to detect the smell of AFB in hives at a level better than the most diligent visual inspection. Perhaps the AFB NPMS committee could explore this further? Imagine a device that could consistently detect AFB after several seconds in the front of a hive? I think anything in the range of five to ten thousand dollars would be cheap for individuals, and the labour savings would be incredible. Anyway, I digress.



Typical EFB brood frame. Photo by Jody Mitchell.

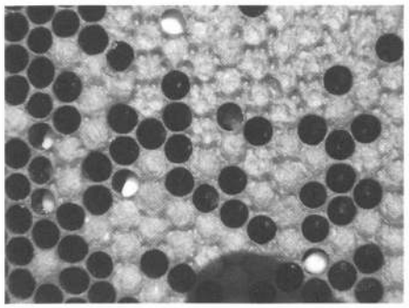
The first clinical signs of EFB that we saw were at Queanbeyan, New South Wales, not far from Batemans Bay. This yard of bees had been on a flow of spotted gum for several weeks. The bee yard had been inspected two weeks prior and as more than 10 percent had clinical signs of EFB, the entire yard had received a blanket treatment (except for five hives that had been left for our benefit). These hives were lethargic, were low on bee numbers and were generally failing. The clinical signs of EFB that we saw were the typical scattered/spotty appearance of brood that is slightly sunken, with the white larvae doing the corkscrew up the side of the cell (very similar to our half-moon syndrome). The infected larvae also took on an opaque, glassy appearance. EFB also roped out in a thin even line, but would contain several lumps unlike AFB. Interestingly the larvae would also rope out in the white larval stage if stirred up and tested.



Typical smooth whitish rope of EFB. Photo by Jody Mitchell.

The treatment consisted of one gram of active ingredient of oxytetracycline (OTC) per hive, mixed into a sugar powder and sprinkled over the top bars of the brood nest. The results of the treatment were truly amazing. The treated hives were vibrant and clean, with no visual signs. Many commercial beekeepers in this area accepted EFB as a fact of life and simply blanket treat all hives (as required) when 10 percent exhibit disease. To have a saleable product, all beekeepers have to work within a farm gate MRL (maximum residual level), which is currently set at 300ppb (parts per billion).

Honey is not only tested for antibiotic residues but also the isotopes that the →



Textbook corkscrew larvae killed by EFB. Photo by Sarah Peacey.

antibiotics break down into. Producers are asked to sign a Vendors' Declaration indicating the level of OTC feeding that has been done in the last six months (spot feeding, 10% or blanket feeding). The Vendor Declaration question is, "Is this the first box of honey extracted since treatment?" This honey, so identified, is not packed into retail lines but utilised "elsewhere".

This system works well in Australia when the average production is in excess of 100 kilograms per hive and, from what we experienced at least, a large proportion of beekeepers don't use antibiotics on a regular basis. The potential problem can either be packed into industrial lines or diluted away. I can't help but relate this to the Canterbury (and New Zealand) situation. With an average crop of 35 kilograms per hive, we would be able to package only a third of our current crop into specialty lines, as the first box would be downgraded to manufacturing grade. The returns to New Zealand beekeepers under a similar 'Vendors' Declaration' would put many out of business. While it will be tough to get through the first couple of years without OTC, the Australians have proved that bee stock is available to remain drug free. The abovementioned marketing issues and market access issues are of the greater importance in this debate. One can only imagine the damage this would do to the current high value of manuka honey if antibiotics were required. Questions would be asked as to whether the activity comes from the bottle or the plant. Not a good look, in my opinion.

The further south we went, the more problems EFB caused. This situation appeared to be related to the colder climate, the fact that EFB is stress related and anecdotally related to poor or mono-pollen availability.

In summary, if/when we get EFB in New Zealand our industry needs to be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. It was obvious to us on this tour that AFB is the worst of the two brood diseases by far, as EFB can be controlled successfully through selection but no resistance is available for AFB. Our AFB NPMS is the envy of many and once we give it up we will never get it back. The industry needs to think very carefully prior to any incursion what path we want to pursue. This needs to be developed through a robust debate with all the facts on the table.

Many people gave their time freely in Australia to make this trip the success, but in relation to this topic I would like to thank Col Wilson, the Kershaw family, the Bingley family and Des Cannon.

[Editor's note: This is the ninth and final of a series of reports on the NBA's Small Hive Beetle study trip to Australia in May 2009.]

SECRETARIAT REPORT

What's up at HQ?

The past couple of months have been a hectic time for the secretariat, so we thought we'd share with our members what we've been up to.

Preparing for the annual NBA conference kept us busy with sending out media releases and arranging interviews to gain publicity for the conference.

We continued to work on the BPSC representative nomination policy, and have been liaising with NZFSA and the management committee over the proposed code of practice for FGMO.

We met with the AgriBusiness Group (an organisation which helps build business capability in the primary sector). MAF commissioned them to consult on the possible impacts of GM forages on the beekeeping industry, and we have liaised with MAF about the list of priority biosecurity risks to the beekeeping industry in advance of Government Industry Agreements (GIAs). For more information on the proposed agreement, visit www.biosecurity.govt.nz/biosec/new-post-border/gia.

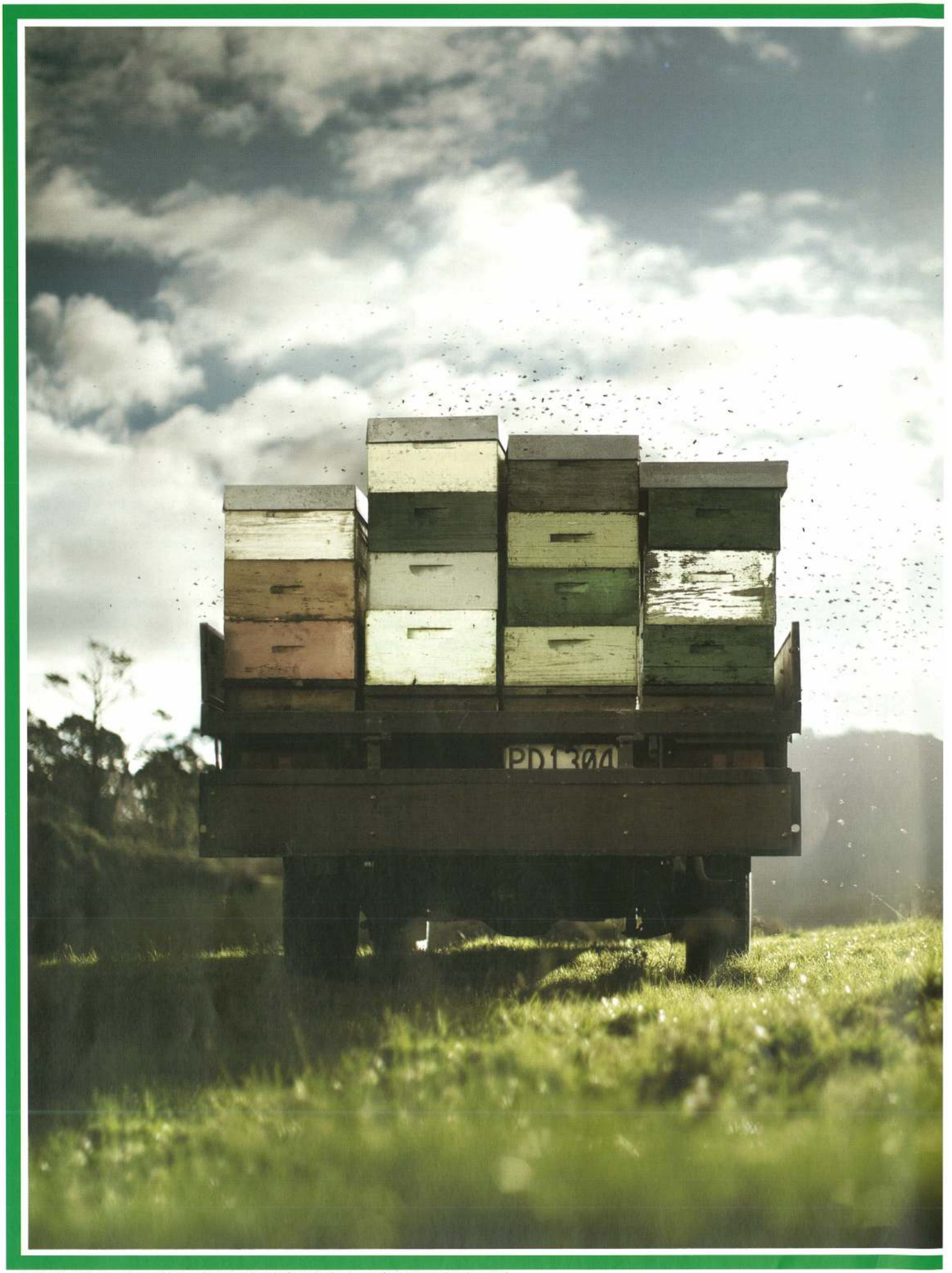
> "Bee Week has also been a main focus for the secretariat."

During this time we have continued to communicate with the management committee, Executive Council and all NBA branches on day-to-day matters. And we have been engaging steadily with potential member benefit partners.

Bee Week has also been a main focus for the secretariat. We've been drafting plans, organising posters, competitions, giveaways and media. By the time you receive and read this journal, Bee Week would have been and gone—so stay tuned next journal for an update of what we achieved.

Don't forget to update your Branch details!

If your details have changed, please email editor@nba.org.nz and secretary@nba.org.nz so that we can update your details in the journal and the NBA website.



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Together they worked through a plan and the decision was made to go for it. The National Bank backed Darren and twelve years on his business, The Honey Company of Blenheim, is exporting bulk products into the EU and UK. More recently, his Sweet Nature pack products have been sold into the Asian and New Zealand markets.

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A beekeeper looks back at the industry

By John Wright

On a recent trip to Tauranga and observing the large acreage of kiwifruit, I mused over our 25-plus years of moving hives into this crop for pollination.

My first involvement with kiwifruit pollination was with a small orchard in Bombay, South Auckland, back in the late 1970s. Our numbers increased in the heady days of 1985 to 1990, when growing kiwifruit was the golden egg.

I remember going to a meeting in South Auckland when a speaker predicted that all the flat land in Franklin County would go into horticulture, with the only pastoral farming being on the hills of the west coast travelling down towards Raglan. All of a sudden, shelter was put in and kiwifruit seemed to be planted everywhere, some by genuine growers and others by big business consortiums whom, I believe, wanted the tax write-offs, after which they could then flick the orchard off for a large capital gain.

With all the increase in plantings, there was no real research into what was required to attain good pollination or, in fact, how this was achieved. A trip was sponsored for a Professor Cam Jay and his wife to spend a spring in the orchards and determine what brought about pollination and the other factors that were required to achieve this end. It was soon evident that honeybees were the main pollinators. Lots of other factors became evident, such as positioning and ratio of male vines to female.

Growers could not wait to harvest their first fruit. I remember one orchard where the vines were planted before the shelter so when the first buds opened and we introduced our beehives, the shelter was so small that a row of maize had been planted to shelter the shelter. One grower ordered hives which we duly delivered and when we were asked to remove them from the orchard, they were not sited where we originally placed them—the grower would move the hives in the evening into different blocks, not realising that the work force of bees relocated back to the original spot. Also in those days prior to Hi-Cane® use, in many instances, the male vines would be finished flowering before the female flowers opened.

Of course, notwithstanding all this, the bees were always blamed for crop failure. At that time a pollination unit was classified as a box of bees and brood with a second box for the bees to develop into whilst the hive was in the orchard.

> "An orchard environment seems to be becoming more toxic to bees ..."

All of a sudden with a big demand for more and more hives required for pollination, beehive theft became a big problem, to the point where you would have to virtually sleep with the hives to ensure they remained in the paddocks. With so many complaints to the police re hive theft, whenever the police saw any beekeeper working his hives in a paddock, he became suspect. I used to carry my registration forms with me to prove ownership of the hives I was working. On one occasion while I was working a yard, I saw a police car stop at the road gate. The constable left his car and, with his notebook in hand, approached me across the paddock, at which time my bees introduced themselves when he was approximately 100 metres away. About a mile along the road he considered it safe enough to stop, lower his window about one inch for me to push in his discarded notebooks and he never actually stayed and asked who owned the hives which I was working.

All this coincided with a time when our state services such as MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries), changed from being a free advisory service to a government department which was required to earn a percentage of their costs from the industries they were serving.

Suddenly there was a spate of claims that beekeepers were "ripping off the growers", claims like beekeepers were dividing hives on the back of their trucks in the middle of the night, etc. At one field day I attended, a MAF officer gave a report on an audit he did in one orchard when he alleged that the busiest hive there had no bees in it—there was just a pot of honey in the hive and the activity was created by the bees robbing the honey. Stories such as this did create a feeling of distrust between some growers and beekeepers. At this time the Kiwifruit Pollination Association (KPA) was formed and a standard set to be adhered to by its members, which still stands today. I was actually elected onto the foundation committee of the KPA as a representative of beekeepers involved in pollination outside the Bay of Plenty.

However, at this point in time there was a sudden request for tens of thousands of hives and in a lot of instances very little or no prior planning or indication given by some growers of the next season's requirements. In those early days when bees were placed in an orchard they did, in fact, develop to the point where their increased strength created large 'moustaches' hanging out the front of the hives. In other words, more bees than the hives could hold inside the boxes.

Over the last 10 to 15 years, I find this trend has reversed and, in most instances, the health of the bees has deteriorated to the point whereby at the time of removal of the hives they are not in as good a condition as they were when placed in the orchards. An orchard environment seems to be becoming more toxic to bees—whether it is a build-up of spray residues or the new range of sprays. I also note that a new systemic spray is now being used. The early systemic sprays were very toxic to bees according to A.S.D.A research.

Although it is vital to deliver the hives into the orchard on time for the grower's sake, it is equally important to remove the hives just as quickly. Every day that the hives remain there, they decline in strength. It is very distressing for a beekeeper to be called to →

quickly remove the hives when it is obvious that there have been no flowers for some days. I know of beekeepers who, this season, have some hives which have produced $300 to $500 worth of honey. This amount of production cannot be obtained on weak hives.

A great deal of research was carried out by Von-Frisk *[sic: von Frisch]*, a world-renowned scientist who interpreted the bee language or bee behaviour. He noted a very interesting aspect regarding bees' loyalty to species of plants whereby, with her first visit to a flower, she must learn the art of collecting pollen or nectar from that particular species. Once this information is gathered, she then works a relatively small area ranging over a small number of metres. By marking the bees, he found that the same bees returned to that small area each day even to the point where the flowers have been pollinated and starting to dry up. These bees retained an affinity to their flowers in their patch long after the flowers were viable.

Through the enormous amount of research carried out on bees and pollination, it was discovered that they develop a positive electrical charge when in flight. The amount of this change has been measured and this is discharged and earths when the bee alights on a flower. Some scientists believe this electrical discharge assists pollination.

Pollination is not just the matter of placing bees into an orchard. Many times I have noted paddocks white with flowering clover, but there hasn't been one bee visiting and working them.

Before fertilisation can take place, a whole range of conditions must be present such as soil temperature, air temperature, humidity, etc. Only then will the plant send a signal to a pollinating agent like bees, through making food such as nectar (energy) or pollen (protein) available to them.

Last spring, a packhouse instigated a policy of auditing hives and this will be increased next season. Should the policy of auditing hives in orchards be continued, then I believe hives should be audited twice—once when they are introduced into the orchards and secondly when they are removed. If the condition of the hives has deteriorated, then a surcharge comes into effect. This is the same scenario as the hireage of anything from your local hire centre.

When kiwifruit was first planted, I travelled to California to discuss with local beekeepers the best methods of moving hives. One prominent keeper I met, who owned 7,500 hives, also oversaw the placement of 70,000 hives into almond pollination. A comment he made to me at the time was that it was important to have a standard, but to be careful not to set the standard too high as the industry may have a problem. Bees are not machines. They are living things and are affected by other factors such as the weather and the mere moving of them (they are livestock), can create stress and ultimately their health and wellbeing.

Ten years ago when varroa arrived in New Zealand, I again travelled to California to discuss this problem with several American beekeepers who had been working with it for the previous 10 years. One comment made at this time was that their main treatment was no longer effective, with mites still evident in the hives after treatment. Now these signs of resistance are showing up in New Zealand. Unfortunately, America and other parts of the world now have a much greater problem called Colony Collapse Disorder where some beekeepers are losing up to 80 percent of their hives. This has led to large numbers of packages of bees being sent to California from Australia and New Zealand to supplement their hives for almond pollination.

Beekeeping in New Zealand is not getting any easier. Recently a new virus, Deformed Wing Virus, has shown up and is having a devastating effect on a colony. I often look back somewhat whimsically *[sic: wistfully]* at the pre-varroa days and remember how relatively simple it was to maintain healthy beehives.

Source

Wright, J. (2010). A Beekeeper looks back on the industry. *NZ Kiwifruit Journal*, May/Jun, 62–64. Reprinted with kind permission of the journal editor.

NBA MEMBER PROFILE

A man who helped shape our industry

This profile is a little different to others we have done in the past.

This month we are going to say thank you to Ivan Dickinson, who recently tendered his resignation as a trustee of the Honey Industry Trust.

Ivan has been heavily involved in the beekeeping industry for a number of decades. He is a NBA life member, past-president and has done a lot towards shaping and building the industry to what it is today.

For this, Ivan has more than paid his dues to the beekeeping industry, but he has also sat on the board of the old the old Honey Marketing Authority and the New Zealand Honey Cooperative. His service and support to the Honey Industry Trust is appreciated by all.

Ivan was awarded the Queen's Service medal in 1993 for his service to beekeeping, scouting and education. He was involved with setting up the apiculture trading unit at Telford and sat on the Telford apiculture advisory committee for a number of years.

Ivan, who lives in Milton and is a member of the Otago branch, is a valued member of the NBA and for that we wish to say thank you. Thank you, Ivan, for guiding and inspiring the NBA and helping make us in to what we are today.

We wish you all the best for the future and know that you'll put that extra time you now have to good use.

"I can no other answer make, but, thanks, and thanks." – William Shakespeare.

FROM THE COLONIES

Auckland Branch

We have had some very heavy repetitive frosts here as I write this. Bumble bees have been out flying the past couple of days.

- Bob Russell, Branch Secretary

AFB Recognition and Competency Course

Auckland Beekeepers Club will be hosting a Refresher/Test

When: Saturday, 18 September, 9:30 am
Where: Pt Chevalier Unitec
Cost: Full Course $50
Refresher $25
BYO lunch, tea/coffee provided

Register by 30 August.

For more details, contact: Kim 09 418 1302, email: kimk_bees@hotmail.com or Carol 09 376 6376, email: thefairy@xtra.co.nz

Bay of Plenty Branch

NIWA confirmed what we have been experiencing, that being double the normal rainfall in some parts in the Bay of Plenty region during June. So far July has been more settled and temperatures have remained mild for this time of the year. Some beekeepers have experienced brood rearing continuing late in the season, which has seen what would have been adequate winter stores now diminished and extra sugar feeding required. NIWA's outlook is for a La Niña climate pattern, which brings warmer than normal temperatures to the North Island, so here's hoping for a less challenging spring than last year

On behalf of those in the BOP that made it to the NBA conference, a vote of thanks to the Nelson Branch for organising and hosting a very successful conference—well done.

Taking a breather, getting away and winter projects are the priority for most right now but there are a few local events planned for August:

Next NBA Branch meeting and discussion group

A change in format for the Branch meeting this time, providing an opportunity for like-minded beekeepers to discuss and share your thoughts, ideas and experience on a range of topics.

When: 10 August, 12:30–3:00 pm
Where: Dennis Crowley's yard,
Otama Marere Trust Orchard
114 S.H. 33, Paengaroa
Turn right at entry; Dennis's shed is at the back of orchard.
Brown bag (BYO lunch)

Non-NBA members are welcome to attend this discussion group.

Topics for this discussion:

- Getting hives ready for pollination
- Raising spring queens
- Hive health.

Contact: Dennis via email: crowleys@slingshot.co.nz or 07 579 2554

BeeSafe meeting

When: 27 August, 1:00 pm
Where: Kaimai School Hall
1853 S.H. 29, Lower Kaimai, Tauranga

This is an open meeting to all those interested in promoting the safe use of agrichemicals and protecting the health of your bees.

Disease Recognition and Competency Course

When: 28 August, starting 9:00 am
Where: Te Puna Hall, 1 Te Puna Road, Tauranga
Cost: $50 (includes lunch and test fees)

Application for the course *must* be received before 14 August
Contact: Ross Carroll, email: robro@kol.co.nz

- Greg Wagstaff

Hawke's Bay Branch

Our annual conference held this year at Nelson was once again a very successful event and my congratulations to the organisers. A highlight for me was the honey competition. The amount of work that Maureen put into this is incredible, and I had great fun watching her and Bill Floyd judging some of the honeys. Listening to Bill going on about flavours, textures and aromas was an education and his enthusiasm is infectious.

Less pleasing was Minister of Agriculture David Carter announcing that Australian honey would probably be coming into New Zealand. It is beyond me why it is so important for free trade that a country that cannot produce enough honey for its own people should need to export both its honeys and diseases into New Zealand.

- John Berry, Branch President

Nelson Branch

A huge thank you to all of you for attending conference. It was a large one. We had record levels of registrations by both sponsors and attendees: we made up 340 name tags! Thanks to our locals for all their help and to Nelson for turning on the good weather. We had an interesting mixture of speakers—something for everyone, we hope.

Our charity auction raised $1300 for the Rescue Helicopter Trust. Thank you for your generosity.

I hope that you enjoyed yourself and that you took away a few new ideas to incorporate into your business.

We have had some constructive feedback (mostly good—phew!) but we would welcome your ideas for improvement for future conferences. Email me at beehaven@ruralinzone.net

Enjoy the rest of winter. I will!

- Kerry Gentleman,
Upper South Island Ward representative

Otago Branch

In my last report in May I noted a gentle slide into winter. Typically, within days it was a freefall with the heaviest rain in years, especially in coastal and North Otago, closely followed by a decent fall of snow to low levels. Farmers who would be normally →

lucky to get a 16-mm rainfall were somewhat unlucky to get 16 inches instead! Being away at the time, I made a few frantic phone calls to make sure hives weren't washed away, but it seems I and most beekeepers escaped any serious losses. Since then the winter has been pretty calm but a little colder than usual for those inland.

Those hard frosts might extend the broodless period in Central Otago and be helpful with varroa now well established. The hive movements associated with the spring thyme flow will see varroa dispersed even further, so we all expect to be dealing with it very soon. The Branch will be holding some field days this spring to help educate our members on control choices. In that regard I found the NBA Conference in Nelson very helpful, listening to seminar speakers and talking with other beekeepers who are currently dealing with the invasion phase.

I took a quick look at a few hives here in my breeder yard on a particularly warm day in late June. I found small patches of brood in most of the Italian hives and in one of the four Carniolans. In comparison most of the hives were broodless in late April, apparently responding to the dearth of incoming nutrients rather than day length or temperature. Handy for a pre-winter oxalic acid control, maybe.

- Peter Sales, Branch Secretary

Send us your burning questions!

We want to know your burning beekeeping questions. Do you want to know how to set up your hives for winter? Are you having problems with wasps? Whatever your question, simply email it to editor@nba.org.nz and we will post the answers in the next issue of *The New Zealand BeeKeeper* and on www.nba.org.nz.

RESEARCH

Acaricide effects on *A.m. ligustica*

By Ting Zhou, Quiang Wang, Pingli Dai, Feng Liu
Xiangshan 100093 Beijing, China Email: ztapis@263.net

Fluvalinate and amitraz are main acaricides for honeybee[s]. So far, there is no report in detail regarding the effects of these acaricides on honeybees.

Therefore the present study examined the effects of sublethal concentration of two acaricides on biological characteristics of the honeybee *Apis mellifera ligustica*. The LC_{50} [lethal concentration] was determined by curve fitting using log-probit analysis. The results showed that toxicity regression equation and LC_{50} of amitraz are Y = 2.1387X - 0.3064 and 302.784 mg/L, and those of fluvalinate are Y = 2.2323X - 1.6986 and 1001.755 mg/L respectively.

We then studied effects of LC5 *[sic: LC_{50}]* level of two acaricides on biological characteristics of *Apis mellifera ligustica* at different temperatures. The results indicated that the fecundity was significantly different between honeybees treated with acaricides and the control honeybees, and amitraz significantly reduced the egg weight and the larval length of honeybee, and the larval weight and the larval width of honeybee treated with fluvalinate were significantly lower than that of the control ones. The toxicity of these acaricides was significantly higher in spring than in summer, indicating that climatic change may affect the sensitivity of honeybees on acaricides. The period of development was not significantly different between groups. The toxicity of amitraz was higher than that of fluvalinate on honeybees. Amitraz and fluvalinate affect colonies in controlling mites. For these reasons, beekeepers should take into consideration of timing and concentration when using acaricides.

[Editor's note: The full title of this abstract is 'Effects of sublethal concentration of two acaricides on biological characteristics of honey bee Apis mellifera ligustica*'. Over the course of this year we will reprint some abstracts of the approximately 500 papers and other presentations to the 41st Apimondia Congress, Montpellier, France, 15–20 September 2009.]*

The versatile mesh floor and sticky board

By Anne Hulme

We now have varroa in our hives, which has changed our style of beekeeping considerably.

The 'leave 'em alone beekeeper' has gone and the hobbyist coming into the beekeeping scene hasn't known it any other way.

Of course there is the extra cost of treatment, and we spend more time administering it whatever the methods used, but we can still get the same amount of honey in a good season because the feral bees have been killed off by the varroa. However, if we don't regularly monitor the level of infestation, treating when necessary, we could lose our hives.

Many of the hobbyists in our club use a permanent mesh floor and sticky board on top of the original floor, because they find it an easy way to monitor the varroa level. Basically it is just a metal screen (we buy whitebait mesh from a hunting shop) set in a frame 40 millimetres thick that fits over the original floor, with a sticky board sliding in the back on top of the reversed floor. The bees use the mesh screen as their new floor, and the varroa that fall through the mesh can't get back up because they can't jump that high, so get stuck and die.

We use a sticky slide made from used aluminium printer plates, which we get cheaply or even free from the local newspaper print department. The aluminium lasts for years and doesn't bend like the coreflute real estate board that some beekeepers use, and it isn't necessary to make up a mixture of Vaseline and oil to coat the sticky board, either. Cheap cooking oil brushed on is quite adequate. The varroa falling through the mesh get stuck in the oil and suffocate. It is very easy to clean the aluminium sticky board with a hive tool.

Other advantages

The mesh floor and sticky board have other advantages too. In winter the sticky board is most useful for 'reading' what is going on inside the hive without having to open it. You can tell how many frames the bees are covering by the signs of their activity. The dark debris in the centre is from the brood frames that are being cleaned for the queen to lay in and the white wax is from the honey that they are using.

"... the varroa that fall through the mesh can't get back up because they can't jump that high, so get stuck and die."

When a hive is being robbed it shows up with a thick layer of wax cappings, and if a mouse has moved in you will see jagged wax debris with mouse droppings on the sticky board.

A sticky board shows that the queen is laying (photo taken 5 July 2010), and that the bees are bringing in pollen and have uncapped the honey frames on the left. Wax moth web can be seen at the right front, and no varroa have dropped. Photo: Graham Pearson.

The wax and pollen debris collecting on the sticky board makes a nice home for the larvae of the wax moth. They tend to stay under the mesh, reducing the number that could have gone inside the hive, and are easy to kill by scraping them off with a hive tool.

Condensation in the hive falls through the mesh, so if the edges of the aluminium are bent up the water can be tipped out, which keeps the original floor dry. The water is a sign that you will have to put an ice cream stick or a thin twig under the edge of the crown board at the top of the hive to leave an air gap.

The mesh floor is most useful when you have to move a hive. You can block up the entrance and pull out the sticky board to leave a gap, which gives the bees the aeration they need for quite a long time.

Admittedly the mesh floor is an extra cost, but the sticky board has the advantage of keeping the original floor clean and dry so it lasts longer, which helps to offset the cost involved.

Footnote

See page 94 of the manual *Control of Varroa* by Mark Goodwin and Michelle Taylor (revised edition) for construction details.

[Editor's note: the Control of Varroa *manual is available from the NBA: visit the NBA website http://www.nba.org.nz/node/437 or contact Jessica Williams, Executive Secretary for details.]*

Hollands Honey, part of the NZ Honey Producers Co-Operative Ltd., at Conference. Photo: Mary-Ann Lindsay.

Feeding and other field work

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

Generally during winter there's not a lot of field work but there are some exceptions.

In mid July, between showers, I was asked to move an apiary away so the landowner could clear the manuka and scrub off the property. Such a pity as this was a really good site, in the bottom of a small valley, sheltered with sun most of the day, which is relatively hard to find in Wellington.

On approaching the apiary I noticed a hive being robbed so opened it to see what was happening. The hive had reduced in population to three half frames, had developed PMS and half the stores were missing. Either the bees had originally moved away from the strips or had been out robbing and had brought back more mites at a later date.

At another hive I noticed about 20 black drones at the entrance, and jumped to the conclusion that this hive was most probably queenless and I had better do something about it before it was robbed out. Surprise, surprise: the hive was full of bees and the queen was happily laying in the three middle frames. The drones I had seen must have been coming back from a flight—or were possibly thinking of going out for one—but all was well in the hive. Because one hive has varroa I'll have to go back and treat the whole apiary again.

Why did this hive have brood in the middle of winter? As I've stated, it was a warm site and along the road verges were bushes of Spanish heath, a very good nectar and pollen source.

For those new to dealing with varroa mites, the acute stage lasts for three years. Why three years? That's how long the odd feral hive takes to get varroa. I believe the feral hives get varroa after they have swarmed, when all the drones in the area come en masse to the hive just before the queen goes on her mating flight. When they leave after the queen has mated, they leave behind the odd mite and so it spreads.

When I first got mites by natural spread, by June the first year only two hives were dead in half a dozen apiaries, but by mid July half the hives were dead and without immediately treating the hives again, I would have lost the lot. Telltale signs are shrunken young bees or small pupating bees at the entrance that have been thrown out by the bees. If the weather is warm you might see two or three bees crawling away from the hives on the ground. These look fully formed but can't fly (this is termed 'crawling death'). Or they might be bees with nosema. Remove the head and pull out the sting so the gut comes out still attached to the sting. At this time of the year the gut of a bee should be orange in colour from the pollen but if it's clear and swollen, it could be nosema. Another sign of nosema is a pile of dead bees in front of the entrance. Take a sample of 30 live bees near the entrance and send them off to a lab to confirm it. (The cost is worth the knowledge.)

There's not a lot we can do about nosema as Fumidil B is no longer registered. I mark the odd hive I find with a pile of bees outside, and in the spring I will shake the bees on to freshly drawn frames and replace the queen. The frames can be treated with acetic acid but generally if they are dark, I usually melt them out or burn them.

With luck, nosema-affected hives will recover before the honey flow. High levels of nosema in your bees means that you will be about a super of honey down compared to other hives. It's hard to spot, so learn everything you can about nosema. Spores are in all hives and when they get into the millions per bee, it shortens the life of the bees, hence a reduced honey crop.

After dropping off the hives at an apiary site I visited another site that contains my four-frame nuc hives. This is another nice apiary site next to a stream, surrounded by native trees. The owners of the property used to grow flowers commercially and apart from kohekohe and tree lucerne flowering, the bees have an acre of daffodils and jonquils to play with. I have nine plastic coreflute nuc boxes in two rows pushed up against each other and covered with a sheet of black plastic to keep them warm. A quick peek inside revealed that those that were queenright had bees covering all frames, but those covering only a frame or less I presume are queenless. One looked like it needed a frame of honey but before adding it I checked the middle brood frames and found it to be a drone layer. Not everything goes to plan.

I did a quick drive around more apiaries, checking the weight of hives for an indication of how they were doing. At one apiary a hive was dead after being bowled by stock and broken apart, a few splits I'd made in the autumn were very weak and in another apiary (after dark), three hives were dead and robbed out. I suspect this hive has varroa but I'll be going back soon to check these hives in case it's something more serious, and put strips into those that are left. I thought I was over this sort of thing but on reflection, this apiary swarmed a lot during spring so I reckon my bees have been out robbing the ones that got away as they collapse and have been bringing back mites. It only takes a few weeks after robbing occurs for these hives to collapse and then it snowballs. Hives in mild areas need to be checked more often, as winter robbing means mite reinvasion and therefore extra treatments are needed.

Feeding

Shortly your bees will start to expand rapidly as the first of the spring pollen comes into the hives. From July onwards, the queen has been laying eggs in the centre of the cluster at an expanding rate, using the stored pollen and honey reserves. As soon as fresh nectar and pollen starts coming into the hive, the queen will be stimulated to lay at a greater rate. Each bee produced uses a cell of honey and pollen, and if there is only a dribble of nectar coming into the hives, it doesn't take long for some hives to chew through their winter stores. When a hive is down to the last three frames of honey (a week's food supply), it needs supplementary feeding as the expansion of the brood nest will continue. →

Without this extra feed brood rearing will be interrupted, causing a loss of field bees at the time of the honey flow, or worse, the hive will die through lack of food.

Your feeding method will depend upon the number of hives you have, and how strong they are. Basically there are three methods of feeding: honey frames, and wet or dry sugar. However, there is also a rule with feeding hives: once you start you don't stop until just before the flow starts, so you are committed to feeding on a regular basis—like every three to four weeks for commercial beekeepers. This feeding allows the bees to expand quickly but shouldn't be enough for them to turn it into stored frames of honey. Those that get this wrong will find their honey rejected from sale. Cane sugar honey is not the same as regular honey or honey dew. New testing methods are now detecting cane sugar at lower concentrations so be warned.

"NEVER buy honey to feed your bees. Although the honey tested a few years ago showed supermarket honey was free of AFB spores, you can't rely on this, so it's a no-no."

Honey frames

A hobbyist can hold back a few frames of honey for each hive to carry them through in times of shortage. But be aware that there is a danger in feeding honey. It could contain AFB spores, which, in high enough concentrations, could cause the hive to come down with AFB. It's always a worry but if you are in an area that hasn't had any cases of AFB for a few years, you will be safe to do this. NEVER buy honey to feed your bees. Although the honey tested a few years ago showed supermarket honey was free of AFB spores, you can't rely on this, so it's a no-no.

Sugar feeding

Raw sugar or syrup—which to use? Raw sugar (not white sugar) is used as a 'stand-by' for strong colonies. It is used in those hives that are already strong (filling one and a half to two supers with bees) that you think have enough honey to get through to the pussy willow flowering, but might need a little more. Raw sugar can also be used on smaller colonies, again as a stand-by. Actually, the raw sugar in the top feeder helps insulate the hive to a certain degree. A lot of work is required by the bees to convert this into usable syrup, so this method does not act as a stimulant for swarming, nor does it attract robber bees. Sugar syrup feeding late in the spring to a strong colony can stimulate the swarming impulse.

The usual method for this type of feeding is a "top" or "Miller" feeder. As indicated by the name, it sits on top of the hive just under the crown board or roof. The sides can be anywhere from 75 to 100 mm tall. It has a hole or a slot in the centre or to one end that allows the bees to come up into the feeder to start dissolving the sugar. Ideally the bees must be encouraged to come up into the feeder. This is done by spilling a little syrup down onto the frames to where the bees are; i.e., adding a little water to the edge of the sugar at the feeding entrance so the dissolved sugar drips down on to the bees.

A few beekeepers (one being John Bassett of Te Kuiti) use a combined syrup/dry sugar top feeder. This feeder is divided in half with a slot in the middle to allow the bees to come up into it. The middle two pieces are 12 mm shorter than the sides to allow the bees to come up into each half under the hive mat or crown board. Each half is sealed so it is watertight. The end half nearest the front entrance is used to hold four to five litres of syrup and the back portion holds five kilograms of raw sugar. (The syrup comes up to the top of the lip of the feeder due to the forward slope of the beehive.) John uses plastic diamond shape mesh (used to protect young trees from stock and hare damage) as a ladder, and places a stick under it to form a slope and prevent the bees from drowning in the syrup. He suggested that it was much easier to use and more durable than putting in bark chips or bracken fern in feeders. Once cut to size, it lasts forever.

John pointed out another advantage to this dual feeding system. Some bees will sneak in and rob out sugar syrup from a hive, resulting in one dead hive. With the dual feeding system, robbers won't touch the raw sugar, and so a robbed colony is able to tick over using the raw sugar until the next feeding round.

John Bassett's combined feeder: half sugar syrup, half raw sugar. Photo: Frank LIndsay.

Syrup feeding

A few hives in the garden means you can feed a little and often: two or three litres of sugar syrup at a time from an inverted pail or glass jar (with 20 small brad nail holes in the cover), in an empty super on top of the hive or in a frame feeder in the top super. If the feeder is positioned away from the main cluster, you have to 'tell' the bees the syrup is there by dribbling a little of it: enough to make a trail to the feeder but not so much that it comes out the entrance and encourages robber bees. If the weather is not too cold, a few bees will break cluster and start feeding on the syrup. They will alert the other bees, and it's not too long before they will empty the feeder and store the syrup in the frames around the brood nest. The majority of beekeepers use a two-frame feeder but some beekeepers use larger feeders, feeding up to 15 kilograms of syrup at a time on a three- to four-week rotation. The majority leave the feeders in their hives all year round, putting the super that contains the feeder to the bottom of the hives when it's not in use. The only disadvantage is that you must remove the

roof and mat (or crown board) to feed the hives, alerting the bees and exposing them to the weather.

Mixing syrup can be a pain. Dissolving sugar in boiling water can take time and is labour intensive but the bees will then take down the syrup quicker if it's still warm. As you get more hives you will need aids to mix sugar. A simple method is to use a tank with a pump. The liquid is taken from the top of the tank and recirculated in at the bottom so it bubbles up through the sugar. An alternative is to use a vat with a paddle. After an hour or so it will have all been dissolved, or at least as much as possible. Commercial beekeepers purchase bulk supplies of 66% brix sugar syrup in Maxidrums and dispense it to hives using a similar system to pumping petrol, using a recirculating system when not actually delivering syrup to the hose. This is a quick dispensing system for large-scale beekeepers. All feeding systems break down when you can't easily drive to the hives. When hives are surrounded by water or mud in the spring as can happen, it's back to the watering-can method of transporting the syrup across the paddocks. You don't have an alternative; for once started you must continue feeding.

Things to do this month

Prepare for the new season's work: queen-raising equipment, feeding equipment, grass-spraying gear, etc. Stimulate drone production hives by feeding syrup and pollen supplement. Embed foundation into extracting frames. Undertake a quick hive check for weight by hefting hives. You can open a hive for a few minutes to check it if it's not too cold (i.e., not cold on your arms with your sleeves rolled up).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tip for cleaning tar deposits

Dear Editor,

In your April journal there was a request on how to clean the tar deposits from inside smokers.

This what I do and it works great. Brush methylated spirits onto the tar and then scrub it with a woven steel pot scrubber or equivalent. Comes up like new. No doubt turps or similar would do the job. It's messy, but a great result.

Kind regards,
Ian Story

Bee World is back!

Dear Editor,

I know many beekeepers were saddened by the loss of *Bee World*. Well some good news—it's back.

Even more good news: membership of IBRA offers more than ever before for the lowest price yet, GBP 30 (about NZD$64) a year.

If you can spread the good news I would be grateful. Here's to happy and informed beekeeping. Visit our website for more details: www.ibra.org.uk

Richard Jones
Director, International Bee Research Association

Deadlines for advertising and articles

Advertisers and contributors to The New Zealand BeeKeeper are advised that new deadlines are now in place for advertising and articles.

These changes will allow us to ensure that the journal hits beekeepers' hands at the same date each month. If you have any questions, please email ceo@nba.org.nz

Advertising deadlines

Advertising is now due on the 6th of the month prior to publication. Material received after the 15th of the month and prior to publication may not be published.

In order to be fair to all advertisers who occasionally offer deals for a limited time period in their ads, there will be no exception to these rules.

Article deadlines

Articles are now due on the 6th of the month prior to publication. Material received after the 15th of the month and prior to publication may not be published.

Key temperatures in beekeeping

Ambient air for safe flying (maximum)	40°C
Ambient air for safe flying (minimum)	8°C
Cluster formation	16°C
Brood nest	35°C
Granulation of honey	13–21°C
Granulation melting	60°C
Heating honey (maximum)	45°C
Honey straining	40–45°C
Hot room (optimal)	32–35°C
Queen mating (minimum)	19°C
Wax melting	62–64°C
Wax setting	61–62°C
Yeast control in honey	62°C

Source: Gulliford, Bob. 2001. *A dictionary of scientific and practical beekeeping / Robert B. Gulliford,* Tamworth, N.S.W.

Report of BPSC meeting

By Dr Jim Edwards, Chairman

The following report describes the topics considered by the Bee Products Standards Council (BPSC) at a brief meeting at the Rutherford Hotel, Nelson, on 29 June 2010.

Present: Jim Edwards (Chair), John Hartnell, Allen McCaw, Young Mee Yoon, Peter Bray, Jim Sim, Steve Lyttle, Jane Lorimer, Mary-Anne Thomason, and Philip Cropp.

Invitees: Hon. David Carter (Minister of Agriculture), Nevin Amos (Comvita Ltd), John Rawcliffe (AMHA), Gemma Collier and Daniel Paul, (NBA joint CEOs), and Frans Laas (NBA President).

Jim Edwards and Steve Lyttle gave a brief update on the development of honey standards including manuka. The industry had been consulted about monofloral standards.

The Minister noted that much of the controversy surrounding manuka honey had calmed down, and emphasised that the industry needed to keep control. The BPSC provided a good route for the work to be done towards setting honey standards.

Steve Lyttle highlighted the funding issues. There continued to be a free rider problem. He said that the BPSC and industry was underfunded. He said that NZTE may be able to help with some funding.

It was noted that not all members of the industry were beekeepers. A levy would therefore be difficult to manage. A multi-faceted collection mechanism would be required.

The Minister was interested in the possible industry co-ordinating model and was advised that this was currently under consideration.

Nevin Amos said that newly published papers from research initiated by Comvita had clarified the specific markers which he believes will become significant standards for manuka honey.

Update on mono-floral standards and inter-laboratory comparison (ILC)

The Council discussed the result from the initial ILC, which indicated a reasonable consistency across parameters measured.

There are currently no accredited labs within New Zealand compared to overseas. John Rawcliffe said that the BPSC should require labs to sort out the long-term provision of service for themselves, including ILC provisions.

The Council agreed to hold over the discussion until the next meeting and to keep working towards a 1 October 2010 implementation date.

Review of tutin standard

Jim Sim reported that NZFSA has no view on whether there should or should not be a standard. Market access will continue to require assurances.

The next Council meeting will review results of consultations.

The Council agreed for the need to continue communication to beekeepers and industry members through the BPSC website, mailouts and *The New Zealand BeeKeeper* journal.

BPSC structure, terms of reference and finances

Allen McCaw reported that the Honey Packers Association had agreed to provide a total of $10,000 for 2010 to the BPSC, with half immediately and a second half in September. Frans Laas said that NBA had the matter under discussion. It was noted that Federated Farmers Bees had contributed $3,500 and another $5,000 was being provided via the Honey Industry Trust following settlement of the South Island Varroa PMS funds.

Daniel Paul said that surety of funding should come from other sources outside of the existing industry organisations.

Active Manuka standards

It was agreed to establish a technical working group to provide non-peroxide activity and total peroxide activity standards to BPSC for adoption.

BPSC agreed to take up supervision of technical group to set the terms of these standards as an extension of the monofloral standards, and to identify issues that impact on those standards.

Terms of reference would be developed for the technical advisory group.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the BPSC will be held in Wellington during August.

How to change Garmin GPS units from NZMG to NZTM

Garmin 76 and 60 series

Page to Main Menu and choose Setup
Choose Units
Change the Position Format to NZTM and the Map Datum to WGS 84.

Garmin e Trex

Page to Main Menu, then scroll to setup <enter>, Units <enter>
User grid <enter>, Map Datum WGS84 <enter>
Enter the following parameters
Longitude Origin E173°00.000
Scale 0.9996
False E 1,600,000
False N 10,000,000 <enter> to save

NATIONAL BEEKEEPERS' ASSN OF NZ (Inc.) EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Lower South Island Ward

Frans Laas (President)
Wildlife Solutions Ltd
102 Gladstone Road
Mosgiel 9007
Ph: 03 489 4597
Email: f-laas@xtra.co.nz

East Coast Ward

Barry Foster (Vice President)
Tawari Apiaries Ltd
695 Aberdeen Road
Gisborne 4041
Ph: 06 867 4591
Fax: 06 867 4508
Mobile: 027 449 7131
Email: bjfoster@xtra.co.nz

Northern Ward

Maureen Maxwell
BeesOnline/Wild Forage Ltd
97 Taylor Road, Waimauku
Auckland 0882
Ph: 09 411 7065 (h)
Mobile: 021 956 349
Email: maureen@beesonline.co.nz

Waikato Ward

Stephen Black
Bees-R-Us
685 Uruti Road, RD48
Urenui 4378, Taranaki
Ph: 06 752 6860
Email: bees@beesrus.co.nz

Bay of Plenty Ward

Neil Mossop
Mossop's Honey
1064 State Highway 29
RD 1, Tauranga 3171
Ph: 07 543 0971
Email: neil@mossopshoney.co.nz

Southern North Island Ward

Mary-Ann Lindsay
26 Cunliffe Street
Johnsonville
Wellington 6037
Ph: 04 478 3367
Email: lindsays.apiaries@clear.net.nz

Upper South Island Ward

Kerry Gentleman
Ward-Holmes Road
RD2, Takaka
Ph: 03 525 7571
Fax: 03 525 7569
Email: frazer.kerry@clear.net.nz

Central South Island Ward

Trevor Corbett
PO Box 20
Waipara, North Canterbury 7447
Ph: 027 450 4567
Email: beeworks@xtra.co.nz

NBA Branches: First named is President/Chairperson. The second named is Secretary.

NORTHLAND

Sarah Peacey
Wairua Apiaries
76 Malone Road
RD 9, Whangarei 0179
Ph: 09 434 6344
Mobile: 021 031 9129
Email: sandspeacey@gmail.com

Simon Peacey
Wairua Apiaries
76 Malone Road
RD 9, Whangarei 0179
Ph: 09 434 6344
Mobile: 021 858 648

AUCKLAND

Ian Browning
1824 Great South Rd
RD 3, Drury 2579
Ph: 09 236 0764

Bob Russell
101 Kern Rd
RD 3, Drury 2579
Home Ph: 09 294 8656
Work Mobile: 027 284 8951
Email: bob.russell@paradise.net.nz

WAIKATO

Cameron Martin
Haumea Road
RD 1, Galatea 3079
Ph: 07 366 4804
Fax: 07 366 4804
Email: busy-bee@xtra.co.nz

Jane Lorimer
Hillcrest Apiaries 'Kahurangi-o-Papa'
RD 3, Hamilton 3283
Ph: 07 856 9625
Fax: 07 856 9241
Mobile: 027 294 6559
Email: hunnybee@wave.co.nz

BAY OF PLENTY

Dennis Crowley
PO Box 16156, Bethlehem
Tauranga 3147
Ph: 07 579 2554
Email: crowleys@slingshot.co.nz

Barbara Pimm
448 Woodlands Road
RD 2, Opotiki 3198
Ph: 07 315 7650
Email:hikuhoney@xtra.co.nz

POVERTY BAY

Don Simm
2 Walsh St
Gisborne 4041
Ph: 06 868 3866
Mobile: 021 150 3041
Email: donsim1@xtra.co.nz

Barry Foster
695 Aberdeen Road
Gisborne 4041
Ph: 06 867 4591
Fax: 06 867 4508
Email: bjfoster@xtra.co.nz

HAWKE'S BAY

John Berry
46 Arataki Rd
Havelock North 4130
Ph: 06 877 6205
Email: jrberry@ihug.co.nz

Mary-Anne Thomason
15 Sydney Tce, Takapau
Hawkes Bay 4203
Ph: 06 855 8038
Email: kintail_honey@xtra.co.nz

SOUTHERN NORTH ISLAND

Peter Ferris
PO Box 255
Masterton 5840
Ph: 06 378 7632
Email: happy.ferris@xtra.co.nz

Frank Lindsay
26 Cunliffe Street
Johnsonville
Wellington 6037
Ph/Fax: 04 478 3367
Email: lindsays.apiaries@clear.net.nz

NELSON

Frazer Wilson
Ward-Holmes Road
RD2, Takaka
Ph: 03 525 7571
Fax: 03 525 7569
Email: frazer.kerry@clear.net.nz

Michael Wraight
15 Titoki Place
Motueka 7120
Ph/Fax: 03 528 6010
Email: wraight@xtra.co.nz

CANTERBURY

Brian Lancaster
1195 Coaltrack Road
RD 1
Christchurch 7671
Ph: 03 318 7989
Email: be.lancaster@xtra.co.nz

Linda Bray
Braesby Farm, RD 1,
Ashburton 7771
Ph/Fax: 03 308 4964
Email: birdsnbees@xtra.co.nz

OTAGO

Allen McCaw
Milburn Apiaries
RD 2, Milton 9291
South Otago
Ph: 03 417 7198
Email: amccaw@clear.net.nz

Peter Sales
"Te Ora"
RD 1, Port Chalmers
Dunedin 9081
Ph: 03 472 7220
Email: foxglove@paradise.net.nz

SOUTHLAND

Carne Clissold
Glass Brothers Ltd
RD 5
Gore 9775
Ph: 03 207 1866
Email: carne@glassbrothers.co.nz

John Stevenson
Southern Lakes Honey
PO Box 163, Te Anau 9640
Ph: 03 249 7954
Email: sl.honey@gmail.com

NBA LIBRARIANS

Roger and Linda Bray
Braesby Farm, RD 1, Ashburton 7771
Ph/Fax: 03 308 4964
Email: birdsnbees@xtra.co.nz

If your details have changed, please email editor@nba.org.nz and secretary@nba.org.nz so that we can update your details in the journal and the NBA website.

NBA CONFERENCE

Lunch at the New and Small Beekeepers' Forum, 27 June 2010

Pat Berry's 75th birthday cake

Yukiyasu Uda speaking on Apitherapy

Keynote speakers Michael and Kirsten Traynor

EzyLoader Sponsors-Australia

Some of the Hobby forum attendees

Photos: Mary-Ann Lindsay.

Jeremy and Fiona O'Brien with Fiona's photography awards

NBA Conference, Nelson, 27–30 June 2010

Photo: Daniel Rose.