May 2011, Volume 19 No. 4

The New Zealand BeeKeeper

A more productive future

- NBA activities for members
- Exotic Disease surveillance
- Tribute to Ivan Dickinson
- Saving your back

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10:30–11:00 am..... Dr. M Goodwin, Fungicide and Movento
11:00–11:30 am..... Blake Shook, Texas Beekeeper—TBA
11:30 am–12:00 pm..... G Ratia, President of Apimondia
12:00–12:30 pm..... Dr. L Peacock, Environmental Adviser, Surveillance Group, MAFBNZ

12:30–1:30 pm..... Lunch

1:30–2:00 pm..... Randy Oliver, scientificbeekeeping.com – TBA
2:00–2:30 pm..... Dr. M Goodwin & M Taylor, Bees and biosecurity
2:30–3:00 pm..... Dr. Claudianos, The University of Queensland—AFB Detection

3:00–3:30 pm..... Afternoon tea

3:30–4:00 pm..... Blake Shook, Texas Beekeeper—TBA
4:00–4:30 pm..... G Ratia, President of Apimondia
4:30–5:00 pm..... Dr. R Frew, University of Otago—Honey Vault

** Please note that all times and speakers are subject to change**

Thursday 30 June

9:00 am..... National Beekeepers' Association AGM

The Chief Executive of Business New Zealand, Phil O'Reilly, has kindly agreed to be a 'keynote speaker' at the AGM. Phil is one of the country's most influential lobbyists and advocates for business and it'll be interesting to hear his view on the agri-economy and what needs to happen to ensure it performs at its best. He understands bees are an integral part of NZ's rural export infrastructure.

NBA CONFERENCE

The Roy Paterson Trophy

By Jane and Tony Lorimer, NBA Life Members

The Roy Paterson Trophy is presented annually in recognition of an invention (or similar) by a beekeeper to help in a beekeeping situation in their day-to-day operations.

Roy served in World War II, and on his return started beekeeping in the Oamaru area in the South Island. He then moved to the West Coast as an Inspector with the Department of Agriculture, transferring to Hamilton in 1936.

Roy came from an engineering background, which helped greatly as his inventive mind pondered problems encountered in his beekeeping operation. He designed equipment for beekeepers including heating and straining of honey by immersion strainers, which ensured no damage to honey by using a hot water jacketed tank. Also in the processing of honey, he designed a creamer to cream granulated honey so the honey did not go rock hard in the jar.

He also designed a saw bench where the blade came up from underneath the bench when a pedal was pushed down. This made it easier to cut timber for making supers and lids, etc for beehives.

Roy was the eyes behind finding the cause of Tutu honey poisoning. He camped in the Pongakawa Valley for a week after a serious Tutu poisoning incident in a bush camp where some people had been hospitalised after eating honey.

He observed bees feeding on a sticky sweet substance on the Tutu plant. Roy saw that the passion vine hopper was responsible for this substance appearing on the Tutu plant. Samples of the Tutu plant with the honey dew were sent to Mt Albert to be tested. There Dr Sutherland isolated the melitoxin as well as tutin from the honey dew.

From his observations on the Tutu problem, Roy was offered the post of Superintendent in Wellington. He turned down this post as he wanted to remain in the Hamilton area until his retirement.

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Front cover: Auckland Beekeepers Club president Kim Kneijber checking the two sentinel hives under the Auckland Town Hall clocktower where bees have been busily making honey above the unsuspecting heads. Photo: Fiona Goodall/Suburban Newspapers.

A more productive future

By Frans Laas, NBA President

On 14 April bee industry representatives met with senior MAF officials to continue the formal dialogue that began with the meeting held in December 2010.

The April meeting was quite productive. Among the issues discussed were:

- border surveillance issues and how the bee industry could be more involved
- operational issues surrounding the use of sentinel hives
- the use of swarm traps as a means of early detection of organisms such as the Asian and Africanised honeybee, and possibly small hive beetle as a possible addition to current surveillance systems.

While the bee industry has a strong interest in contributing to a more robust border system, the use of these tools is not a guarantee of success in early detection of a new organism. Swarm traps that have been used in the past in a number of countries generally don't attract swarms of any nature, including local bees. So one must question how effective they will be in the overall process. However, the use of swarm traps may still provide some use, as they may attract an exotic primary swarm that can be eradicated before it is too late. Any surveillance system is only as good as the people doing the work.

If the beekeeping community wants to participate in an early detection system, then individuals must actually do the job and commit without fail to the process. Can this be done?

Exotic Disease Hotline

Another issue we raised was the use of the Exotic Disease 0800 number. Last spring beekeepers in some North Island regions had very high bee losses due to an unknown cause. Some beekeepers may have suspected a possible reason and left it at that, or approached MAF in a way that they were unable to deal with due to strict protocols.

If a beekeeper is experiencing unusual symptoms or abnormal colony losses, please ring the Exotic Disease number 0800 809 966 and talk to MAF. Please indicate that you are experiencing an abnormal event that could be an exotic disease or pest. Don't assume it is something you may wish to get tested for; rather, assume it is completely unknown. It is better to have it confirmed that it is a current problem rather than miss the arrival of a new pest because you thought otherwise. The 0800 number responses to your enquiries are somewhat scripted, so please make sure that you convince the listener that what you are experiencing is something distinctly unusual that warrants further investigation.

> "I find it somewhat disturbing to hear that some sectors of the organisation believe that debating issues with MAF face to face is selling out to the devil."

Relationships with regulators

I find it somewhat disturbing to hear that some sectors of the organisation believe that debating issues with MAF face to face is selling out to the devil. Proponents of this view hold that we should be attacking them mercilessly from all sides: none of this talking over a cup of coffee! Is this a really productive line of thought?

Tensions will always exist between industries and regulators; that is the nature of the beast. Despite some Stone Age thinking within our organisation, regulators generally don't create rules just because they can. Regulations are developed in response to actual problems that have occurred in the past, in order to make sure that they don't happen again. While some may criticise bureaucrats for being reactive rather than proactive, nobody has ever thought about all the permutations and combinations that could occur. Hence reactivity is often the most common way to deal with issues. Solutions to perceived small problems sometimes require complex regulatory intervention.

Although regulators sometimes don't get it right the first time, a healthy dialogue about perceived problems with regulations between industry and regulators often resolve the situation satisfactorily. The Bee Products Standards Council is a valuable tool [lever?] in this process.

While MAF is not exactly in the industry's good books due to the handling of the varroa incursions and their dealings with the AFB NPMS, both sides need to learn from this and move forward to a more productive future.

Maintaining a healthy and profitable commercial beekeeping sector is vital for the wellbeing of New Zealand's primary industries, and it is in the Government's interest to ensure that this remains so.

Conference programme announced

Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre, 58 Waipuna Road, Mt Wellington

Sunday 26 June — Small and Hobby Beekeepers' Forum

8:00 am — Registration
9:00 am–4:15 pm — Various topics covered by local and international speakers (Room 1)
9:15 am–12:30 pm — Introduction to Beekeeping (Room 2)
4:15–5:00 pm — Beekeeping Tools & Toys
meet the team and overseas guests

Monday 27 June — Specialty Group Meetings and Other

(Group contact details inside page 63, April 2011 issue)

8:00–10:00 am — Comb Honey
8:30–10:30 am — Pollination
8:30–1:00 pm — Disease Recognition and Competency Course
(For details of course and registration contacts, see page 37, April 2011 issue, or visit nba.org.nz)
10:00 am–12:00 pm — NZ Honey Packers and Exporters Association
10:45 am–12:00 pm — NZ Queen Producers Association
1:00 pm–Finish — Food Safety Course
(For details, see page 35 April 2011 issue. Registration form can be downloaded from nba.org.nz)
1:30 pm–Finish — AFB National Pest Management Strategy Open Forum
(For details of forum, see page 42 of the April 2011 issue and the Agenda on page 16)
2:00 pm–Finish — AMHA members only

Entries for the Honey Competition, Photo Competition and Roy Paterson Trophy
(For entry details, visit nba.org.nz)

Tuesday 28 June

8:30–9:00 am — Russell Berry, Beekeeping for profit/Working with nature not against it
9:00–9:30 am — Auckland Mayor, Len Brown, Official opening
9:30–10:00 am — Randy Oliver, scientificbeekeeping.com—TBA

10:00–10:30 am — Morning tea

10:30–11:00 am — Hon David Carter, Minister of Agriculture
11:00–11:30 am — David Boldt, Australian honey imports
11:30 am–12:00 pm — Mary van Andel, MAF Incursion Investigator
12:00–12:30 pm — Miss Bumby, Beekeeping in New Zealand

12:30–1:30 pm — Lunch

1:30–2:00 pm — Randy Oliver, scientificbeekeeping.com—TBA
2:00–2:30 pm — Brian Alexander, Living with resistant mites
2:30–3:00 pm — Blake Shook, Texas Beekeeper—TBA

3:00–3:30 pm — Afternoon tea

3:30–4:00 pm — Dr. Claudianos, The University of Queensland—Bee navigation
4:00–4:30 pm — G Ratia, President of Apimondia
4:30–5:00 pm — Dr. M Goodwin, CCD

Wednesday 29 June

8:30–9:00 am — K Vetharaniam, AgResearch—Beehive spacing
9:00–9:30 am — D Keppel, What Power Crisis?—Alternative energy
9:30–10:00 am — Dr. Claudianos,The University of Queensland—AFB Detection

10:00–10:30 am — Morning tea

→

Mother and daughter (the mother was moved from another frame for the photo). Photo: Frank Lindsay.

weighed down overnight so that any wax in the bag is floated off. Once the majority of the wax has been drained off and the melter has cooled sufficiently for the remaining wax to go solid, (put some cut lines in it as it cools to enable the wax to be broken easily), remove it. The residue in the bags can be dumped on the garden to make compost. Water-blast the inside of the bags and they can be reused three or four times. This is perhaps a slower method from just dumping all the cappings into the melter but it's a far cleaner operation all around.

You can do the same thing during the winter with your old frames but it's quite labour intensive breaking down the frames.
Forty years ago, Tweeddale's in Taihape used another system to recover the wax out of old frames. They welded three 44-gallon drums together to form one long drum. Rails were welded along the inside to hold up full depth supers in a line. Each super had a metal queen excluder under it to stop any comb residue falling into the bottom of the drum. The drum was insulated and slightly sloped down towards at the entrance. The opening was covered with a sack and steam was injected in via a pipe that melted the wax, which then ran out of the entrance (with water) into a drum. This wax was then processed in a melter again and poured into blocks.

Tweeddale's now uses stainless steel cylinders as this material doesn't discolour the wax, and stainless steel tends to reflect the heat inwards so insulation around the cylinders is not necessary. The molten wax falls into a double boiler system and then is put into moulds. Each cylinder holds eight supers and takes an hour to melt out. The process is so efficient that the residue is not worth pressing to try to recover the last little bit of wax. The scale of this system is designed to work in with the large number of hives they run.

Plastic frames

When recovering wooden frames after removing the wax, I use a hot air gun and a thin chisel to clean the groove in the top bar. It just takes three or four passes with the gun and the whole lot comes out cleanly. I use an old dental probe to clear the wire holes in the end bars.

There is nothing worse than cleaning and wiring a frame, only to have it snap when it's tensioned on a wiring jig. So before cleaning the frame, I whack the end bars with the thin edge of a hive tool. These days, the majority of the old frames (or those that have been in the wax melter) become brittle and will crack, but 20% are still sound and these will give me a few more years of service. Going through the frames I have come across the odd one that was more than 40 years old (a previous beekeeper used to date stamp the top bar each time the wax was changed), but most frames these days are made of soft timber and so don't last long if they have been in damp hives. Those that break are used as fire starters.

A lot of beekeepers have changed to plastic frames and these offer a challenge to clean. I have a few full-depth frames but mostly use plastic frames in the honey supers. Often I get the odd frame where the bees have stored pollen in them or the queen has laid in them when the honey was dribbling in.

To clean out the pollen or restore the frame for honey storage, I generally scrap back the comb to the midrib with a hive tool. Put a cut along the top edge and bottom edge and then, starting at the side, a whole slab of wax with come off in one go. A water blaster will clean out the bottom of each cell.

One commercial beekeeper made a box with several water blaster heads in each side. As a frame was pushed through, the blasts of water cleaned off everything. Very effective.

Don Tweeddale cleans his frames manually by scraping them back but beforehand he takes them to near zero in temperature: at this temperature the wax is easy to remove. To remove the wax/cocoon residue in the bottom of the cells, he gives the frame a gentle tap and it all comes out. They clean hundreds a day using this method.

Things to do this month

Winter down, dispose of honey: prices have increased due to the shortage of honey. Grade and sort combs into brood, extracting and damaged. In fact, all frames these days should be as white as possible. Control wax moth. A few beekeepers are shrink wrapping pallets and freezing them for a week in the local coolstore.

Check for wasps: common wasps seem to be disappearing (these did not attack hives) and are being replaced by the German wasp again (which does), so keep an eye on things. Control the growth around hives. I use a weed wacker: it's slower than spraying but at least I don't get any residues in the hives, as noted by USA researchers when analysing brood frames to find the cause of CCD.

Resistance to both synthetic pyrethroid based strip treatments has now been confirmed.

Whether resistance has been found in your area or not, don't take any chances this coming Spring, use Apivar® and kill any pyrethroid resistant mites that you may have and avoid the risk (and expense) of having to treat twice.

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What's the NBA been doing for us?

By the NBA Secretariat

The NBA is finalising a draft strategic plan that it will present to industry for discussion at conference.

The plan considers the key issues facing industry and proposes actions to address them. A key component of that plan will involve proposals for ensuring industry is represented by an effective, respected, well-funded and well-supported industry body.

The plan will be presented to industry for consideration, consultation and—hopefully—ratification in the very near future. The NBA will be on hand during conference so delegates can ask questions about it.

The strategic plan is just one of several major initiatives the NBA has been working on in recent months. We have endeavoured to list below some of the major initiatives we've been working on since February this year. You may be interested to learn just what we've been doing for you.

Strategic planning day

The latest initiative was a strategic planning day the NBA arranged to consider the major issues affecting industry. Twenty delegates attended the day in Wellington in late April. Delegates comprised NBA and BIG members, and people who are not members of any industry group.

The nearly seven hours of discussions covered a range of industry issues that have been included in the draft strategic plan the NBA is finalising.

Neonicotinoids

In other developments, the NBA has been working closely with the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) to check whether there are grounds for a re-assessment of the continued use of neonicotinoid-coated seeds. Concern has been expressed that the use of these seeds is affecting bees. The NBA is finalising this ERMA application.

The NBA also fronted media at Parliament with Green MP Sue Kedgley, who launched a national Save the Bees campaign. The key planks of this campaign are a petition calling for a moratorium on the use of neonicotinoids, and for the Government to undertake annual surveys of bee populations.

> "The strategic plan is just one of several major initiatives the NBA has been working on in recent months."

Executive Council sub-committees

The Executive Council has restructured to form sub-committees focusing on Biosecurity, Research, Pollination, Industry Structure and Strategy, Policy and Code of Conduct, Technical/Submissions and Special Projects. This move was taken to ensure the EC can work more effectively and process member requirements more speedily.

MAF Memorandum of Understanding

The NBA has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MAF. The MOU, which was also signed by the Bee Industry Group (BIG), sets out how industry and MAF will work together to achieve common goals. This is a major step forward that is already paying dividends in terms of positive activities we are now working on with the regulator.

As part of this, we are developing with MAF a joint venture (JV) project designed to provide early detection of exotic diseases and pests. More than just the use of sentinel hives, this JV project will be quite comprehensive in its use of various resources to provide all-important early warnings of biosecurity incursions.

These early warning systems should be in place for the World Cup.

Australian honey imports

The NBA has met regularly with MAF to stay abreast of its work on Australian honey imports. At the moment MAF is still working through a range of issues around testing and compliance and they expect this process to continue for the rest of this year.

We don't expect any decision from MAF on imports until then.

Government Industry Agreements

The NBA has attended several meetings with MAF and other agri-industry stakeholders to discuss the proposed Government Industry Agreements (GIA) and how they will function in the event of a biosecurity breach. The NBA is still undecided about the value of the GIA process, how it will be funded and how effectively it will work in practice. We will keep you informed as we find out more about this important government initiative.

Bee Week

Plans are well in hand to launch Bee Week. The Week runs from May 30 to June 3. This year we have secured sponsorship from the makers of the Buzzy Bee toy. This will provide valuable funding for the NBA.

We have also gained the active support for Bee Week of a range of other high profile companies that are keen to support the cause. As another measure of public interest, 850 schools around New Zealand have been sent information Bee Week packs and classroom resources.

New NBA website

The new NBA website is now up and running. It's still a work-in-progress so visit it regularly for updates.

Wax rendering

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

For some, the beekeeping season is still in full swing: extracting, shaking bees for the package bees, wintering down hives, and checking that mite treatments have worked.

For the more efficient and smaller beekeeper, the season is nearly all over, just requiring the occasional check to see that all is well with the hives.

Around Wellington we have had a mild couple of months, which has fooled some plants into thinking it's spring. A few of our native pittosporums, dandelion, ink weed, willow weed—along with the usual late autumn sources like lacebark and koromiko—are still flowering in the warmer areas, producing a dribble of nectar and pollen. I even saw avocados starting to send up flower spikes again.

Autumn requeening

The bees are expanding (some have four frames with brood in them) and are putting fresh nectar in and around the brood nest. Luckily the mites and the cool weather are holding the bees back a little (I was late putting in my mite treatments).

When checking my hives I found a lot of hives had superseded their queens and some still have mother and daughter in the hive. Generally as the bees come into winter the older queen disappears, but not always. I have seen several hives with both queens laying in the spring, usually with the younger queen in the second super. (I don't use queen excluders).

A lot of commercial beekeepers requeen their hives in the autumn to help set their hives up well for the next season and to control swarming, plus you can get more production from a first year queen. With varroa killing all the ferals, it's very important that we maintain some genetic diversity in our bees to prevent inbreeding, so a number of different breeders should be used each year. Comments from the B-List indicate some beekeepers produce queens in each apiary to maintain this diversity. We saw a similar thing in Australia, where the beekeeper carries queen cell bars in the truck and grafts from the best of the colonies in each apiary. Bill Ruzicka (www.mitegone.com) brings all his hives into one area and grafts 100 cells from each of 20 breeder queens. A little later he splits all his hives and puts a mature cell in each half at the same time. Entrances are kept closed on the splits until the queens emerge, which eliminates drifting. (You can read about his methods on his website "Old Beeman Series Part II" or purchase his DVD.)

> "...it's very important that we maintain some genetic diversity in our bees to prevent inbreeding..."

Honey production below average

We have been hearing of the crop reports from around the country, varying from very poor to average honey production. I know that all of my supers that went on at Christmas weren't touched, and I have had a hive I got going late in the season die of starvation, which reflects the poor yield in that area. Although I haven't seen high scolypopa numbers on the blackberry, the dearth of nectar this season will be a real test to determine whether we have a tutin problem.

Processing wax

For those that have finished outside duties, it's time to render cappings wax and old dark combs. Generally processing wax is not difficult but it can be messy. We use a lot of newspaper on the floor, as spilt wax is hard to clean up.

For the hobbyist, you may be able to use the kitchen stove. But if you make a mess and the wax boils over, that will be the last time you will be able to use it as it takes hours to clean up.

Before you start, select a container to use as a mould that has sloping sides so the block of wax will exit easily. A plastic pail is OK. Spray a little cooking oil around the sides to prevent it from sticking to the sides. The most important thing for a small beekeeper is not to heat the wax too much. Use a double boiler system rather than putting the wax into a container of water and watch it continuously. (Purchase an old second-hand pot for this purpose.) Once melted, pour a little boiling water into the bottom of the mould so that any impurities (slum gum) will sink into the water and then slowly pour in the wax. Cover the mould so that the wax cools slowly, otherwise it will crack in the middle.

Allow a day to cool then clean the impurities off the bottom of the wax. I have heard of beekeepers using planers or a gas torch to melt this off the bottom, but I use a water blaster to clean the bottoms of the wax blocks.

For the larger beekeepers it's a lot easier, given the availability of a commercial model wax melter manufactured in New Zealand. It has two stages of heating: one to warm the wax so any honey residue in the wax sinks to the bottom and can be run off; and another setting that melts the wax. Some beekeepers just tip the day's cappings into the melter until nearly full, add half a dozen buckets of water and use a kitchen strainer to collect any cocoon particles in the wax as it is poured off into moulds.

A few beekeepers bag their wax in cheesecloth bags (a metre-long length of cloth with a knot tied in one end and a bow tie with string at the other). The bag holds the residue and when melted, the bag is →

I will do this with three full-depth frames, then transfer them to the waiting plastic storage box a distance from the hive. The plastic box can be in a wheelbarrow for transporting or can be in the car boot.

I never carry more than three full-depth frames of honey, but if you use three-quarter-depth frames and supers, carry more if you wish.

Olivia's plastic box and lid with wooden rungs screwed from each side of the box to support the frames. Photos: Carol Downer.

The further advantage of the plastic storage box is that it has a locking lid and is bee- and wasp-proof. The box will take nine to 10 frames of honey.

If you are careful, bee loss is kept to a minimum. If there are a few bees still on the honey frames when you shift them into the plastic storage box, they can be easily removed.

When the plastic box is full and the hive box is empty, I take the box off to scrape clean. Lots of propolis to be had here. Take a jar to collect—it's worth money.

Now the hive is ready to receive the wets for the bees to clean out or repair (or refill).

Using this method, I can have only one or two boxes on each hive instead of a tower of them. Manageable!

Don't forget the bucket of water and soap. When gloves/hands become sticky with honey and you can't hold on to the hive tool, wash them and the hive tool.

Remember to remove the bucket of water when finished as bees will drown.

After I introduced my method to the Auckland Beekeepers' Club, of which I am an active member, I received many positive comments from both men and women who work their hives alone and are concerned with protecting their backs.

Of course, if you have gone to half-depth frames and supers, you will not have that weight of honey in each super to lift. Still, protect your back. It's the only one you have and it's got to last a lifetime!

Wishing you happy, healthy and safe beekeeping.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ensuring food security

By Gordon Ledger

This is a proposal for the NBA to adopt a new view, a slight resetting of the compass.

This is not about honey or money; it is about perception: how others perceive us, how we perceive ourselves as beekeepers. After attending the conference in Nelson, it became clear that we as beekeepers could do with a higher profile and hopefully a bit more leverage.

The NBA has done an excellent job of regrouping and rebuilding in the past decade, and now looks to the next decade and how it wants to be seen. Two facts have emerged:

1. feral hives have been killed off
2. the remaining bees require beekeeper intervention to ensure their survival.

I believe a subtle but poignant shift has occurred. The role of the beekeeper is far more critical for we are now the keepers of the bees. Not only are our bees providing the great annual pollination, mostly unpaid, we're now keeping them alive so they can do this job. I say we own that result. Though our collective efforts, whether you own a nuc or 1000 hives, we are ensuring food security. This is the prime effect of our labour, money, pain and sweat.

Food security is linked to price and supply. The terminology acknowledges the role of beekeeping in the economy is positive and works on strengths and commonalities. Pollination is said to be worth $3 billion to the New Zealand economy. What isn't said is the cost to New Zealand if there is a lack of bees: far more than $3 billion. Bees are as essential as air, water and sunlight.

Should the NBA adopt the concept of food security as a point of their raison d'être? If so, should these words be included on their monogram? I look forward to discussion being made in relation to this, our extended role in the New Zealand economy.

The NBA and BIG have generated a lot of media activity about bees in recent weeks. Much of it has been around biosecurity issues, but it shows the general media, as well as the rural media, are taking the issue seriously and we are getting lots of airplay with our key messages, especially around neonicotinoids and Aussie imports.

Growsafe Trainers day

The NBA arranged for Roger Bray to be the first-ever presenter from the bee industry at a Growsafe trainers' day. Growsafe trainers run courses attended by contractors responsible for chemical spraying. Roger did a good job of stressing to these trainers the best-practice-for-bees messages they need to deliver to people who are involved in rural spray programmes.

Bi-monthly teleconferences

The NBA has initiated bi-monthly teleconferences so that Branch Presidents can talk directly to the CEO and Secretary about issues at the coalface. These teleconferences are slowly gaining attendance and have produced a raft of issues that we are acting on.

The growing popularity of top bar hives was brought to the NBA's notice. At members' request, the NBA asked the PMS Management Agency to investigate this matter, which they did. The Management Agency sought a legal opinion on the wording around this as written in the Pest Management strategy 1998. The outcome of that opinion was that top bar hives are illegal under the PMS. *[Editor's note: the issue of top bar hives was covered by Frans Laas in his AFB NPMS Chairman's report (April 2011, p.19, and in an Editor's note to this topic in the Hobbyists' Corner article written by the Auckland Beekeepers' Association (pp.51 and 53 of the April issue).]*

That's what we've been up to since February. We'll keep you posted with other developments at the NBA in the next issue.

In the meantime, we encourage you to write in your own letters to the editor. It's always useful to have your views, as members, expressed in the NBA's journal. It's your magazine. Make use of it.

Cheers,
Daniel, Pauline and Jess

Conference registration changes

There have been some small changes to the Conference registration form that was inserted in the April issue. Please refer to the NBA website www.nba.org.nz for the latest version of this form.

NBA presents to Growsafe Trainers

By Roger Bray

NBA member Roger Bray reports on the NBA presentation to Growsafe Trainers, Wellington, 5 April.

Monday, 4 April dawned with rain confining beekeepers to barracks. Significant rain fell on Monday night so I was up bright and early on Tuesday and headed to Wellington to buy a ticket in the $32m Lotto.

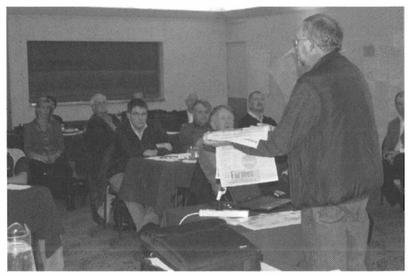
Why Wellington? If I had bought the ticket in Ashburton and won, the town would be abuzz with excitement and everyone would wonder who the recipient was. A beekeeper would not be able to buy much—particularly this year—without people wondering where the money came from!

Tuesday, 5 April was also the day that the NBA was asked to speak to the Growsafe Trainers' meeting in Wellington about pesticides and bees.

The trainers run courses on the safe handling of chemicals and prepare farmers, spray contractors, etc. for an 'approved handler's certificate'. This certificate is necessary to produce when buying chemicals, a bit like a driver's licence is required to drive a car.

Because the trainer's role is to promote safe handling, any of our issues concerned with the bee safety of approved chemicals such as neonicotinoids do not come into the scope of their activities.

My presentation explained 'bee losses' and the major factors that cause losses, such as varroa (and other diseases), chemical poisoning, high power/volume irrigation systems and, in some cases, poor beekeeping. My use of pictures perhaps gave the participants an appreciation of the effects of bee deaths on a hive. I also showed photos of situations where I considered the chemical applicator did not follow the label instructions, such as spraying a flowering crop in the morning and thus compromising any bees that may be present (or about to go into the crop).



Roger Bray with some of the session participants.

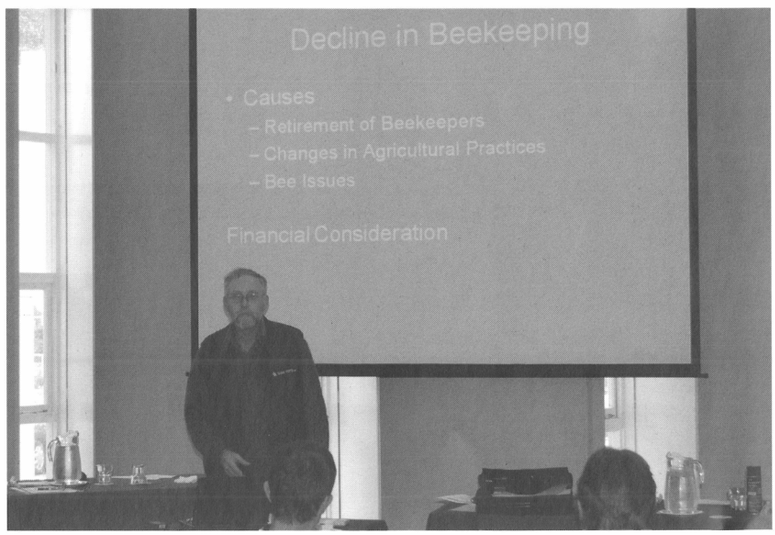
> "... the integrity of any training/approval system is judged [by] .... those who have completed training and passed the qualifications."

I also mentioned the effects of surfactants and how they may affect bees, as this message should be given to the chemical applicators regardless of any of the NBA's further input to ERMA on these chemicals.

I believe it was worthwhile to meet with these folk, as the Growsafe Trainers are perhaps the only link between the beekeepers (as affected parties) and the chemical users, where they may point out the bee and product safety issues to address our losses.

I referred to the highlighted examples of improper use of chemicals at the end of the session and commented that it would have been 'approved handlers' who were involved. I hope that the Growsafe organisation can take this on board with their future training, as the integrity of any training/approval system is judged in part by the actions of those who have completed training and passed the qualifications.

[Editor's note: to learn more about the Growsafe Training Programme, go to http://www.growsafe.co.nz. Roger Bray can now walk freely in Ashburton, as the winning Lotto Powerball ticket was not sold in Wellington.]



Roger Bray addressing the workshop. Photos: Graeme Peters, Agcarm.

The art of saving your back

By Olivia Sheehan, Auckland Beekeepers' Club, Inc.

I started beekeeping in later life and after 24 years of beekeeping, mostly on my own, I have a fully functioning back and hope to beekeep for another 20 years ☺

This is my method:

- Whether you have one beehive or ten, the hive boxes with nine or 10 frames of bees and brood, pollen and honey are HEAVY. The books advising you to "just lift up the box and check along the bottom of the frames for swarm cells" are written by men.
- I NEVER lift a full super (hive box) and my hives are all full-depth frames and supers. I will lift out one frame at a time or a hive box with two frames (usually the ones at each end full of honey) or three frames of honey in a cardboard box (more about this later).
- This method requires more frequent extractions of honey during the season, but is ideal for a solo beekeeper with one or even a few hives.

Equipment

First, collect your equipment:

- 2 cardboard banana boxes free from Pak'n'Save)
- 2 plastic liners (also from Pak'n'Save – to be found wrapped around large packs of toilet rolls – also free)
- 2 clean damp cloths or light towel to cover the boxes
- 1 or 2 plastic storage boxes with lids (approximately 52 x 47 x 28 cm in diameter, from Payless Plastics or wherever)

  HINT: When buying, take a clean frame with you to fit into the box—some are just that much too small.

  HINT: It helps to screw in wooden battens at each end to support the frames, whether full depth or three-quarter depth (but make sure the lid will still lock down).

- A wheelbarrow or nearby car boot
- A sturdy low table – chair height (easy to build or find from an op shop)
- Bucket of water and bar of Sunlight soap
- For honey harvesting—a bee brush or large clean, soft paintbrush.

Method

For routine hive inspections

I place a banana box with the plastic liner on the low table near the hive and cover it with a damp cloth.

Then I remove a frame second from the end, inspect it and place it in the banana box and cover it.

1. If it is honey, it is protected from robbing
2. If it contains brood, it is kept from exposure to the weather.

Other frames can be added as necessary; the box will hold nine to 10 frames from one hive.

If I intend taking that hive box off, I will transfer all but the two outside frames into the banana box one at a time, checking each for brood distribution, cover of bees, whether the queen is present, how much honey and pollen is there, etc., and also inspect for American Foulbrood disease.

I then lift the hive box off with its two frames and place in the upturned hive lid.

With the second super, I will take out the second frame in, check it and put it into the empty hive box. The covers keep the bees quiet and prevent bees robbing and wasps attacking.

Now I have room to check each frame and slide it over.

HINT: It's a good time to collect propolis—from the ends of the frames and down the sides as you slide the frames over.

Reverse procedure to re-assemble hive.

Wash hands/gloves in bucket with soap between opening hives.

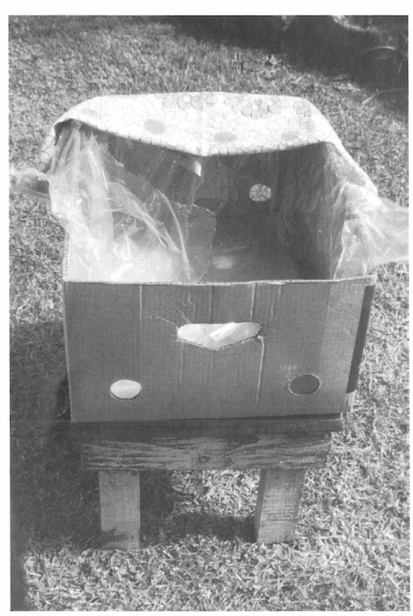
Honey harvesting

First place the plastic box in the wheelbarrow or car boot away from the hive.

Place banana box with plastic liner and cover on the table a little distance from the hive.

Place another banana box close to the hive or in front to collect the bees you will brush off the honey frames. They seem to settle better than brushing them on to the grass in front of the hive. (If you have a spare frame of drawn comb, put that in the box. The bees will cling on it and you can shake them easily back into the hive.)

Remove a honey frame, gently brush the bees into the empty banana box then place the bee-free honey into the prepared box and cover. →



Small table with banana box, plastic liner and cover

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Exotic disease surveillance programme

By Byron Taylor, Apicultural Officer, AsureQuality Limited

The field surveillance component of the Honey Bee Exotic Disease Surveillance programme, funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), is under way again for 2011.

Every year a number of apiaries throughout New Zealand are selected to provide samples for the programme. Hives are surveyed during the autumn by experienced apicultural professionals who have a keen interest in the wellbeing of the New Zealand beekeeping industry.

The annual surveillance programme has two primary goals:

1) to detect an exotic pest or disease early enough for an eradication attempt to be considered.
2) to enable New Zealand to make country freedom statements with respect to exotic pests and diseases which help facilitate the negotiation of more favourable overseas market access conditions.

The sampling specifications for the programme this year have remained largely unchanged from last year. A total of 650 apiaries in two risk categories will be sampled for a range of pests and diseases of importance to the beekeeping industry. Every hive in each of the apiaries is required to be inspected and tested in order to maintain the sensitivity of the surveillance programme.

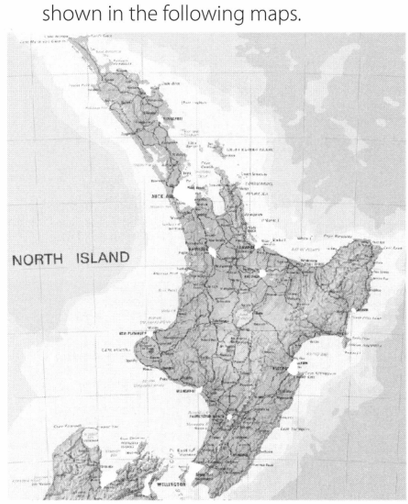
Exotic pests and diseases of interest have not changed from previous years and include:

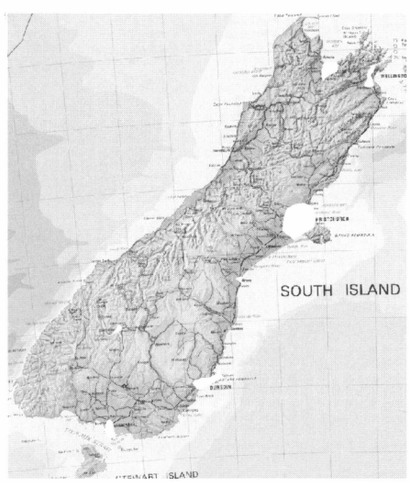
- Africanised Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera scutellata*)
- Cape Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera capensis*)
- Other Apis species (*cerana, dorsata* etc)
- Asian mite (*Tropilaelaps clareae, Tropilaelaps koenigerum*)
- Tracheal mite (*Acarapis woodi*)
- European foulbrood (*Mellisococcus plutonius*)
- Small Hive Beetle (*Aethina tumida*)
- the Parasitic Fly (*Braula coeca*)

Inspection programme outline

The programme is split into two components:

1) the inspection and sampling of a number of apiaries in high-risk areas, as shown in the following maps.





Photos supplied courtesy of AsureQuality Limited.

2) the testing of bee samples provided from apiaries for which clearance is required to supply bees for export.

High-risk areas

350 apiaries from within high-risk areas will be inspected and sampled for the exotic pests and diseases mentioned above. High-risk areas are areas that have been identified as most likely points of introduction of an exotic bee disease and include:

- seaports
- airports
- large population centres
- tourist areas
- transitional facilities

This year we are surveying apiaries from the same 19 high-risk areas as last year (as shown on the accompanying maps).

The sampling methodology for the larger population centres including Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin differs slightly from last year. The methodology was changed to incorporate apiaries that are close to transitional facilities (places where imported consignments are unpacked), in particular those close to ports and airports. Transitional facilities are likely to have higher incidences of unwanted organisms due to high numbers of containers being devanned at these sites. Given that this programme is highly targeted to areas or sites of highest risk, it is likely that some apiaries will be sampled more frequently than others from year to year.

The beekeepers carrying out the inspections, in addition to being highly experienced, are recognised as Authorised Persons (Level 2) under section 103 of the Biosecurity Act. This means that they have the legal authority to enter property for the purpose of inspection and sampling hives under the direction of an AsureQuality Apicultural Officer. However, the inspector will endeavour to contact the owner prior to any hives being inspected to arrange a suitable inspection time. →

Sticky boards being removed after a 24-hour miticide and sticky board test. Photo: Murray Reid.

In order to achieve the required detection sensitivity, every hive in each of the selected apiaries is to be tested. Hives will receive a 24-hour miticide and sticky board test to detect infestations of external mites and will have an adult bee sample taken to be tested for Tracheal Mites (*Acarapis woodi*).

In addition to the routine sampling, hives will receive a visual inspection for signs of European foulbrood, Small Hive Beetle, Africanised Honey Bee, Cape Bee, other *Apis* species and *Braula*. In some cases, suspect samples will be taken, while in others (particularly if there is a threat to human safety), the hive will be reassembled and marked for further investigation and/or sampling. The inspectors will also note any unusual symptoms. All samples are sent to MAF's Investigation and Diagnostic Laboratories (IDC) for identification.

If your apiary/s is selected to be inspected you will not be advised of the results of the tests unless they are positive. If a test does come back positive, an exotic disease response will most likely be launched.

Bee samples from export supply apiaries

300 apiaries, from the population of apiaries supplying bees for export, will have an adult bee sample taken and tested for both internal and external mites. Each supplier is required to provide samples from up to 25 apiaries that they use to harvest bees for export. All samples are sent to MAF's Investigation and Diagnostic Laboratories (IDC) for inspection.

As with the high-risk samples, beekeepers are not informed of negative test results.

> "Read the pamphlet on exotic bee pests and diseases of honey bees and when you are inspecting your hives, always look for signs of an exotic disease."

Apiary database

The Honey Bee Exotic Disease Surveillance Programme relies heavily on the apiary database for the design of the surveillance programme and the selection of apiaries to inspect. Because of this, MAF provides 25% of the funds through the Honey Bee Exotic Disease Surveillance Programme to collect and maintain the information on the database. MAF also funds a further 25% of the costs towards the upkeep of the apiary database from other areas.

What you can do

While it is important for the surveillance programme to inspect and sample hives, it is even more important for all beekeepers to be always on the lookout for an exotic pest or disease. Read the pamphlet on exotic bee pests and diseases of honey bees and when you are inspecting your hives, always look for signs of an exotic disease. If you suspect an exotic pest or disease ring the MAF Exotic Disease Hotline 0800 809 966, or contact your local AsureQuality Apicultural Officer.

Lastly, thanks to all those beekeepers who are taking part in the 2011 programme. Your continued support is very much appreciated by both AsureQuality and MAF.

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Town hall the bee's knees

By Karen Mangnall, *Manukau Courier*

A buzz is in the air around the Auckland Town Hall mayoral offices—and it isn't about politics.

It's the sound of more than 100,000 honey bees going about their work from two hives on the balcony under the clocktower.

The bees are there as biosecurity "sentinels", hive minder and Auckland Beekeepers Club president Kim Kneijber says.

"The reason for these sentinel hives and hives close to ports is to have an early warning system so something doesn't get in and spread out of control," she says.

The hives were presented to the city last July by the National Association of Beekeepers to raise the profile of the role bees play in New Zealand's economy.

Around a third of what we eat and about $3 billion of our annual horticultural and agricultural production depends on pollination by bees.

Kim Kneijber inspecting the hives on the balcony of the Auckland Town Hall.

So preventing invasion by the likes of the destructive Varroa mite, discovered in New Zealand in 2000, is part of Ms Kneijber's role as co-ordinator of exotic and pest surveillance for Auckland.

Several times a week she climbs the narrow wooden stairs on to the balcony to check on the bees and their sister queens Victoria and Lynne.

Victoria's bigger hive is doing better, she says.

"It might be to do with position, hers has a bit more shade."

The town hall bees certainly appear happy in their work.

They've got plenty of sources of nectar and pollen in nearby Albert Park, Myers Park, the Auckland Domain and Grafton gully's motorway plantings.

"The honey is very light so the sources are definitely pohutukawa and some of the garden flowers we find in Albert Park," she says.

The first harvest has produced around 100kg of honey for the new Auckland Town Hall label.

Some will go to mayor Len Brown for civic gifts and the Auckland Beekeepers Club will sell the rest to pay for the upkeep of the hives and research.

Ms Kneijber hopes the town hall hives will help encourage more urban beekeeping in Auckland.

It's a growing movement worldwide with hives on the roof of the Paris Opera, St Paul's Cathedral in London and on the White House south lawn.

Ms Kneijber also hopes the hives will help to educate Aucklanders about the importance of bees and planting bee-friendly plants and trees.

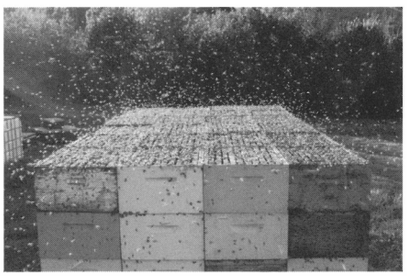
Go to www.aucklandbeekeepersclub.org.nz for information on hobby beekeeping or www.nba.org.nz for more information on the industry.

Kim with the first harvest of Auckland Town Hall Honey. Photos: Fiona Goodall/Suburban Newspapers.

Buzzy history

- Honey bees have been kept in New Zealand for more than 150 years
- Around 3000 Kiwis keep bees, with 287 of the biggest beekeepers managing most of the 377,574 registered hives
- Urban beekeeping is becoming more popular here and overseas
- Michelle Obama keeps multiple beehives at the White House and uses the honey and pollinated vegetables as gifts for visiting dignitaries
- Around a third of everything we eat is pollinated by bees
- Bees contribute around $3 billion to New Zealand's GDP by pollinating horticultural and agricultural crops
- New Zealand honey exports earn $71 million annually
- The invasive Varroa mite is estimated to have cost New Zealand's economy up to $900 million over 35 years.

[Editor's note: This article is reprinted with the kind permission of the Manukau Courier. *The NZ statistics have been updated since this article was printed. The number of beekeepers and beehives has increased, as has the value of honey exports now estimated at $81 million and the contribution of pollination, bees and bee products to the NZ economy which is now valued at $5.1 billion. The introduction of the varroa mite is an example of an incidental pest organism that Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) has estimated will cost the New Zealand economy between $400 and $900 million over 35 years.*



Feeding time at the zoo. Photo: Greg Wagstaff.

And here's one at my expense. Yes, I made a boo-boo... It was getting on toward evening, the sun was touching the horizon, as I brought home a trailer load of wets. It was a warm March evening and I planned on getting them safely put away in the shipping container without being bothered by bees. On reflection, I reckon that the colonies in my home apiary smelt me coming down the drive. Within moments of pulling up in the yard, the bees were under my poorly fitting covers—all of them! Standing back and pondering my very limited options, I decided to leave them to it and take a photo for your amusement. Apart from the neighbours in our valley having to keep their doors and windows closed to defend themselves from hyped up marauding bees, collateral damage was limited and 24 hours later good neighbourly relations were restored and I had nice clean combs. Some of us are slow learners, but like many rewarding activities, I've discovered this one is best performed under the complete cover of darkness ☺

- Greg Wagstaff

Hawke's Bay Branch

I had a call from a hobbyist today. He only has two hives and unfortunately they both had AFB. His hives are fairly isolated from other hives and while they may have both picked up disease from someone else, chances are that some of the old gear was infected when he brought the hives last year. I hate killing bees and I hate watching good gear go up in smoke. This story has a moral: never use old gear lying around in someone's shed!

I have had two reports of attempted theft of hives in the last few months. Bee thefts have happened in the past and will happen again, but it is still disturbing. Still at least in one case they didn't get very far and by all the signs they had the #*@$ stung out of them. ☺

- John Berry, Branch President

Nelson Branch

Autumn has started off well for the top of the south with mild temperatures and not much rain.

There's been a good late honeydew flow for those that have hives in bush areas, and also dribs and drabs of pasture honey coming in.

The mild weather and lack of rain has seen a huge amount of wasps around. Those people that got onto it early with poisoned meat out have had good kills. Those of us who didn't are kicking ourselves for not being onto it soon enough!

This week we will be pulling varroa strips and checking on stores. There seems to have been a lot of varroa around this autumn so it would be wise to do some testing.

The last couple of days have brought some rain and lower temperatures. I hope that will put a dampener on some of the wasp activity, but it also means that winter's not far away and it won't be long before we are waking to frosts and turning the lights on at 5 pm ☹

We are looking forward to conference and a lot of us have been lucky enough to get some cheap grabaseat tickets with Air New Zealand.

Hope everyone gets some well-earned rest over the next few months.

- Gareth Ayers

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Shifting hives

By Gary Jeffery

Breeding always presents a challenge.

One feature you may not have considered relates to shifting hives. Some hives cluster outside the entrance when moved, while in other hives the bees seem to disappear and if you lift the lid the bees will all be concentrated under the lid.

If you are involved with moving hives for pollination, bees that stay inside are an advantage as blocking during moving is unnecessary.

I have studied the way bees behave during moving and found that if you breed from a hive that stays inside then her daughters will produce similar behaving bees. It appears that this feature is controlled by a dominant gene.

An example of the benefit of this feature occurred a few years ago. I was taking a load of hives from Canterbury to work the kamahi on the West Coast. Just after Springs Junction an axle broke. I called on the help of the Local DOC and one person volunteered to use his truck to transfer our hives onto and take the bees through the Rahu to their site. I offered him gloves and a veil but after he looked at the hives sitting quietly on the truck he helped us without them. During shifting I doubt if more than three bees left the hives. However, on unloading, the bees were working the kamahi flat out within minutes.

If you come across a hive that you think could be a good breeder, the first thing is to put the hive on the back of your truck and drive around the block, preferably on a rough surface. If the bees remain inside, then it is worthwhile using it as a breeder.

Ivan James Dickinson, QSM, 8.9.33–27.3.11

By Allen McCaw, Otago Branch

The following tribute to NBA Life Member Ivan James Dickinson, QSM, was presented on the occasion of his funeral, at Milton on 31 March 2011, by Allen McCaw.

It is a considerable privilege to be given the opportunity to offer a few words of tribute on behalf of the New Zealand beekeeping industry, to Ivan Dickinson, a beekeeper whose dedication to the profession he was a part of for over fifty years, has been unwavering and significant.

Indeed, a "few words" seems hardly adequate, but if pressed to find just a couple to summarise Ivan's contribution to our industry, my choices would be 'leadership' and 'service'. Ivan's diverse interests in the community and beyond will be evident from the accounts of his lifetime of hard work and community involvement we will hear today. He was many things to many people, as evidenced by his Scouting, educational, Rotary, outdoors activities, District Council and numerous others. But above all, he was a skilled and dedicated beekeeper whose "Cloverland Apiaries Limited" business of which he was owner and Managing Director, has been a successful and highly regarded part of the industry in Otago for many years.

The beekeeping industry in New Zealand is quite small and we are thinly spread throughout the country. Beekeepers tend to talk about their "neighbours" as being the nearest other beekeeper to their own location. Ivan, and his company, Cloverland Apiaries Ltd., have been the neighbour to our own beekeeping business at Milburn since the late 1950s, when coincidentally Ivan and the founder of our own company, the late John Heineman, arrived in the Milton area at almost the same time, and both began building up to commercial levels.

Ivan and John soon learned of each other's activity and established a typical 'gentleman's agreement' regarding the areas they would each occupy—Milburn Apiaries spread northwards, and Cloverland Apiaries moved to the south. That understanding and friendship between our two businesses has held steadfast to this present day.

Over the years Ivan grew his beekeeping business to a maximum of 2,200 beehives, and during the peak of the operation he employed up to three full-time staff, as well as casual labour for seasonal work such as operating the honey extraction plant at Milton. The training and mentoring skills Ivan provided to his staff has resulted in a number of beekeepers carrying through to become full-time beekeepers themselves, and some are here with us today to share this tribute to him.

> "if pressed to find just a couple to summarise Ivan's contribution to our industry, my choices would be 'leadership' and 'service'."

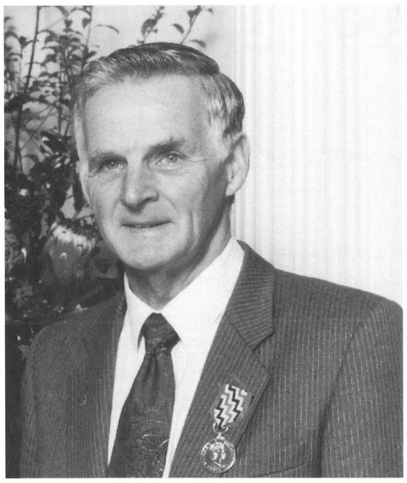
Around 1997 Ivan began to reduce his hive-holdings, and over the years since then has gradually sold-off beehives as he neared his retirement, although never quite giving up completely. He always seemed to find a little more spare equipment in the back of the shed that he could not quite resist putting bees into, and a few colonies still remain today. As a result of this 'winding-down' of his beekeeping Ivan has left a widespread legacy in many parts of Otago and beyond, and there are few beekeeping operations in the region that do not have at least some of his distinctive silver-painted hive equipment with a "**P17 CLA**" brand burned prominently into the woodware.

It seems almost inevitable that a person with strong organisational and leadership skills does not become involved in an industry for long before taking an interest in its administration. Ivan was no exception to that, and has been a member of the National Beekeepers' Association for over 40 years, during which time he served in a number of the highest offices of the organisation, locally and nationally.

He was elected as South Island representative on the NBA Executive for 10 years in the early 1970s, four of which he was National President of the Association. He later became an elected member of the New Zealand Honey Marketing Authority, which was the Government-appointed body responsible for the acquisition of a significant quantity of the country's honey crop, and the sole agency for all of our honey exporting activity. Ivan spent three years as Chairman of the HMA, and presided over one of the most controversial periods of our industry's history in that role at the time.

In 1980, following strong industry pressure to relax the HMA control over honey exports, and a shift in policy away from single-desk selling, the government of the day disbanded the Authority. This meant the sale of significant property assets of the HMA, and dispute soon arose over who should benefit from the proceeds of that sale. Very acrimonious debate took place during the negotiations of a solution to this impasse, and tales of 'blood-on-the-carpet' at industry Conferences were rife, although thankfully, not literally true!

As Chairman of the Authority, Ivan was deeply involved in the debate and attempts to resolve the controversy at hand. This was never an easy task, and it was a measure of his considerable leadership skills and ability to consider both sides of an argument, that he helped guide the issue through to an acceptable industry compromise. The →



Ivan Dickinson after receiving his QSM. Photo provided by Merle Dickinson.

assets of the Authority were sold and the proceeds placed in an Industry Trust Fund for the benefit of the whole beekeeping sector.

The Trust Fund continues today, providing annual support from investment of funds for research, marketing and educational projects in the beekeeping industry. Ivan was duly appointed as one of the three national Trustees to the fund at the commencement in 1981, and continued in that role for the past 30 years until late last year when his failing health led him to a decision to resign that post.

One of the side results of the dismantling of the HMA was also the establishment of a new marketing company called the NZ Honey Producers Co-Operative. Ivan was always strongly in favour of collective marketing, and became an elected Director of the Honey Co-Operative in 1989, including several years as Deputy-Chairman to the Board. Beekeeper education was another keen interest for Ivan over the years—in fact education in general in the region has benefited from his support and enthusiasm, as others have explained. He became a member of the Telford Farm Training Board of Management in 1985 until it became a Rural Polytechnic several years ago. Ivan advised on the establishment of an Apicultural Training Unit at Telford, and served as a member of the Telford Apicultural Advisory Committee, overseeing the training of a significant number of young beekeepers, many of whom are now active in the commercial beekeeping field.

Along the way Ivan has gained the appreciation and recognition of his peers through a well-deserved Life Membership to the National Beekeepers' Association of New Zealand in 1989. We also heartily endorsed his receipt of a Queen's Service Medal in 1993 for services to Beekeeping, Scouting and Community—small tokens of appreciation really for the work and dedication of many years' service to us all by this special man.

This brief review of Ivan's involvement is little more than an outline of his beekeeping life and industry dedication. It takes no account of the countless meetings attended, hours of telephone conversations, field days hosted and talks given at Branch meetings, personal and business advice to beekeepers—young and old, wise counsel to industry meetings and Conferences, and friendship to all. Little wonder when Ivan embraced new computer technologies as he readily did, that his e-mail address became "busybees@xtra.co.nz"—never a truer word!

It has been a considerable privilege and pleasure to have known Ivan and his family over many years and in many ways. I have spent some hours in conversation with Ivan over numerous industry matters—valuable time and advice I will always treasure personally. It is also opportune to offer a sincere tribute and huge thanks on behalf of the beekeeping industry to Merle, and the children in the Dickinson family. We are very aware of the commitment required to allow Ivan the time and space to carry out his appointed duties over the long years of his involvement in beekeeping. Their love and support has to have been considerable, and no doubt, not always easy.

I once heard a saying that went: "Old beekeepers never die; they just buzz-off somewhere else". We would all like to think that if that is true, the "somewhere else" might be a better place—somewhere where the sun always shines, the clover flowers all year-round, the bees never swarm, and the truck never gets stuck! We bid you fond farewell, Ivan, fellow beekeeper and friend to the industry. You leave us all with a fine example of generosity of spirit that truly is a very hard act to follow.

Tasty apples

Kerikeri beekeeper and Northland Branch member Dan Lambert sent in this photo taken at Wairere boulders in Horeke on the Hokianga. Dan writes, "I saw these apples today, the bees love 'em and the growers are rapt with the pollination this season." Landowner Felix Schaad and his wife Rita noticed that bees, not wasps, were feeding on the apples.

Bees' mandibles have smooth opposing surfaces and consequently it would be difficult for them to use it as a cutting or biting instrument, so wouldn't have cut through the skin of fruit. They are used as a grasping instrument for working wax, holding the base of the outstreched proboscis and pollen, etc. However, once a fruit skin is punctured by birds or wasps, they will take full advantage of the fruit sugars inside, especially if nothing else is flowering.
Photo: Felix Schaad.

FROM THE COLONIES

Auckland Branch

Going into autumn, some bees are finding small sources of nectar and some hives are still busy. This is different from mid-summer, when there didn't seem to be much happening. Wasps have been a problem for many this season and I can report finding several nests. Visiting other beekeepers during April, I found that many had extracted early and treatments have been done for varroa.

Conference update

We have just had our first cold snap: this always starts me thinking about winter fires and reading, and, of course, the annual conference. There is no better opportunity to learn, share and meet like-minded people than at a conference. I have been to several of the organising committee's meetings and planning is well under way. Here is a summary of our work to date.

This year there will be two rooms for the Sunday hobbyists' and new beekeepers' programme. Room 1 will run all day, with many topics being covered by international and local speakers. Several displays will be different from the seminar displays, including 'Beekeeping Tools and Toys', with a range of items that local beekeepers use but don't retail and would like to share. Honey and bee-related items will be on display, including some sale items not to be seen on the seminar days.

Room 2 has a half-day programme, which will be a very detailed "Introduction to Beekeeping" ("New Bees" has been the term used). This is a great opportunity for the 'spin-off' from Bee Week. Public advertising is planned, encouraging those that have an interest in bees to attend, including non-registered beekeepers and the council sector.

Monday has a full day of specialty meetings. The planned disease recognition course at the conference will assist beekeepers who are attending from outlying areas who have not been able to attend a course near them. This is also a good opportunity to refresh ourselves on the signs of AFB.

A honey-related Food Handling Course to be run by AsureQuality Limited will be new to conference.

The first "Best Dressed Drone and Queen" evening, instead of the usual Mix and Mingle, will be a nice way to break the ice of winter, and win a prize to boot.

The Annual Honey Show has several different classes to enter, and an entry form will need to be completed. Check the NBA website for entry details. The winners will be announced as part of the conference dinner.

The Photo Competition has four different classes. The classes and the rules are on the NBA's website, or contact the Auckland Branch for details.

The Roy Paterson Trophy competition is a time to bring and show your peers your innovative creation that helps you with your beekeeping work.

The two seminar days have programmes that are full to overflowing with topics which are sure to be interesting. Full advantage of the overseas speakers has been planned, with several opportunities to hear them talk.

We are expecting a good number of sponsors to attend both with booths and Big Boys' Toys, so conference could also be a good time to catch up with products and what's new, and we look forward to the Sponsors function on Tuesday night.

Conference Dinner will be a great evening with a buffet, band, and dancing.

On the Thursday the AGM is where your voice can be heard and your vote can count.

So remember to register on the form that was in the April journal or contact the Auckland Branch. And see the programme on pages 25 and 26 of this journal.

See you there!

- Kim Kneijber

Bay of Plenty Branch

The workshop/field day held on 29 March was well attended. John Burke from Kiwifruit Vine Health and Dr Mark Goodwin spoke about Psa. Mark also talked about resistance to Bayvarol and Apistan. A very worthwhile meeting.

On the bee front, honey from this year's crop is not memorable and now the bees are needing sugar feeding. Otherwise all good.

- Barbara Pimm, Branch Secretary

Bee Week visits

After a successful visit to Tahatai Coast School last year during Bee Week, we've been asked to attend again—but we'll be faced with four classes instead of one! That's happening in early May, ahead of Bee Week to fit in with the classes' "bugs" studies.

And a bit of a side topic: I started learning patchwork last year, and am working on my first quilt, "bees and hives", which is generating lots of discussion within my patchworking group about bees, what they do, and how they live. Which is great, as many of the women there are orchardists and farmers, and benefit greatly from bees, but don't know a lot about them. It's funny how the opportunity to educate people about bees comes up in the most unexpected places!

We've noticed winter is definitely on the way, despite warm weather so far. We've started feeding out syrup to some of our smaller hives. Larger colonies are looking strong and healthy and well prepared for winter.

- Kushla and Glen Haenen

Recognition course and apiary reports

A disease recognition course is planned for August 27 at the Te Puna Hall. Ross Carroll is now accepting registrations of interest. This year the class size will be limited to 30, so get your registration in early. Contact Ross directly via email: robro@farmside.co.nz or mobile 027 497 8930.

It is mid April as I write this and daily temperatures have dropped quickly in the last two weeks. Discussions I've had with local beekeepers highlight that: hive health is generally good; no one talked to has been overly troubled by varroa; many hives are requiring more feeding this autumn, in part due to limited nectar supplies on many Western Bay apiary sites; and sourcing quality mated queens in a timely manner has been challenging. →

What to do with frames

I have removed eight fully capped frames in one of my hives. Should I have just left them in, or leave them out of the hive for a later date and then take them and put them back?

I did notice that there was not much food (pollen and nectar), but a fair amount of brood. I can't recall whether this is typical at this time of the year.

The bees think it's spring again here in Wellington as there's a dribble of nectar coming in from eucalyptus trees, stimulating them into brood production again. Best to leave the frames on the hive. A good two-super hive needs a full box of honey to winter over on and build up in the spring. Even with this amount, some will run short of honey in the spring.

If the frames are left off, depending how you store them they will most probably get wax moth and the honey could start to ferment if they are stored in a damp place. If you want to store them, freeze them for 24 hours to kill any wax moth eggs and seal in a thick plastic bag. However, I feel the bees may need them. Hives winter better with a large population of bees and if they don't use all their honey reserves during the spring build-up, use some of the frames to create a nuc when the hive starts building queen cells.

I have read that I am supposed to remove the darkened frames. The bottom super has very dark frames. There is nothing going on in the frames. The queen is laying in the second and third super. Should I remove the whole darkened super and reduce the hive to three supers?

You have two options:

1. remove the bottom box now if there's no brood in it, or
2. remove it during the winter on a nice day when the bees will have broken their cluster.

I would do it now so you have all winter to clean them up ready to put new foundation in again in the spring. I know a commercial beekeeper that leaves his hives three high and in the autumn, he lifts the hives, removing the bottom super, recovers all the wax by melting it out and recycles the frames again. He changes his brood frames every three years this way.

Do you have a burning question about beekeeping? Are you worried about your beeswax? Mystified about moths moving in? Well fear not, help is at hand. Every keen beekeeper has a list of questions they'd love to know the answers to. Luckily, the NBA has our local beekeeping brainboxes on hand (Frank Lindsay for this issue) to answer any beekeeping-related queries, from giving your hives a helping hand to sussing out your swarms. 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.

PROGRAMME/AGENDA FOR AFB NPMS OPEN FORUM MEETING

Conference rooms 2 and 3, Waipuna Conference Centre
1:30pm, Monday 27 June 2011

(1) Short address from member of conference committee

(2) Chairperson (Allen McCaw) will state purpose of meeting and rules/conduct.
Chairperson to introduce to newcomers NPMS Manager, Management Agency Chairman and Contractors.

(3) NPMS Management Agency representative to speak for the benefit of newcomers to the industry, on the purpose and aims of the AFB NPMS.

(4) AFB NPMS Manager to explain job description and responsibilities of his role, and those of the Management Agency, contractors and beekeepers in relation to the AFB NPMS.

(5) Panel discussion moderated by Allen McCaw. Panel members: NPMS Manager, Management Agency representative, and Contractor representatives.
Topic: NPMS Problems and Solutions
Q and A.

(6) Open Discussion
Topic: The Way Forward

(7) Chairman to wrap up.

Refreshments served in sponsor room at 3.00 pm.

Managing *Apis cerana* risk from Australia

By Grant Knight, Tactical Intelligence Analyst, MAF Verification Risk & Support
Mark Mirkin, Senior Advisor, MAF Import and Export Standards

Recent media reports have highlighted concerns by the bee industry in New Zealand that the Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana*) could spread across the Tasman, posing a threat to New Zealand's bee population.

MAF has examined current border processes in light of the incursion in the north of Australia, and concluded that existing measures are effective and no changes need to be initiated at this time.

In recent decades, a large amount of New Zealand's imports have originated from parts of Asia where the Asian honey bee has long been present. MAF already has strict biosecurity measures to manage the risk of insect incursions and so no additional measures for Asian honey bees are required. The recent establishment of the Asian honey bee in a small area of Australia has not appreciably increased the risk of an Asian honey bee incursion into New Zealand.

The 2007 Australian incursion of the Asian honey bee in Cairns has since slowly spread to nearby areas. Following unsuccessful attempts to eradicate the bees, Australian biosecurity officials have now decided that this eradication campaign is no longer warranted.

Asian honey bees produce little surplus honey, and are not easily managed for crop pollination. In addition, this bee is a natural host for bee pests such as varroa mites, which are not currently found in Australia. Australian beekeepers have raised serious concerns about the possible impacts of the Asian honey bee because it competes aggressively for food and could displace European honey bees in parts of Australia. However, the Java strain of Asian honey bee that has established in Australia is of tropical origin, and Australian researchers do not believe it will establish in the cooler regions of New South Wales or Victoria.

Asian honey bees form small colonies and, as already mentioned, have a smaller honey yield. They also have greater migration and absconding behaviours, which means in times of food shortages they will abandon their current nest and move to a new location.

> **"...existing measures are effective and no changes need to be initiated at this time."**

The biosecurity implication of this behaviour is that there are some risks associated with swarms of the Asian honey bee arriving at New Zealand wharves from swarms on shipping containers, machinery and the vessels themselves.

This risk is present for all cargo originating from Asia, and has not significantly increased since only a small amount of trade originates from Australian regions where the Asian honey bee is present. Should the Asian honey bee become established in the major ports of Sydney and Melbourne, this risk will have to be re-assessed. As previously noted, the Australian authorities believe this is unlikely to occur.

The risk of hitchhiker bees on imported containers has been present for decades from Asia and MAF has various mechanisms in place to deal with this risk. These include:

- decontamination of containers either offshore or in New Zealand
- mandatory reporting of contamination
- all containers and other goods are checked by accredited industry personnel at ports and transitional facilities
- MAF audits and inspects ports, transitional facilities and their operators.

Incursions of bees of any type on containers and ships have been very rare, with debris from dead colonies occasionally being found.

As a further verification of bee health status in New Zealand, annual exotic bee surveillance is carried out on behalf of MAF. These surveillance activities are targeted at high-risk areas such as ports, airports and urban areas. There have been no Asian honey bee incursions identified during the many years these surveillance activities have been under way.

In summary:

- any risk to New Zealand from Asian honey bees has been present for decades.
- there has never been a confirmed incursion of the Asian honey bee into New Zealand.
- border inspection standards in New Zealand are strict and these, combined with the limited spread of Asian honey bees in Australia, make an incursion from Australia a remote prospect.

Comment from Frank Lindsay

This article doesn't fill me with confidence. Yes, maybe they have the major ports and containers covered but A. cerana came into Cairns in the mast of a yacht. Has MAF taken this into account?

The Java strain may be a tropical bee but all bees have the ability to adapt to their environment, and it's what can come in with the bees that is also very important. Hopefully the Australian Government will reconsider and continue funding the eradication programme.

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APIMONDIA 2011

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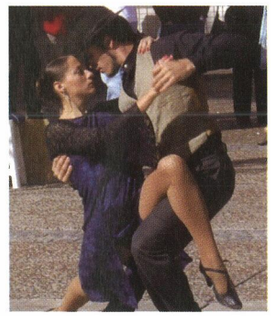

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Bee Losses Survey—a reminder

Thank you to all those who have completed the survey and returned it to the national office.

The information we are gathering as a result is of great importance and will be extremely valuable in building cases to ERMA, MAF and AGCARM for re-evaluating a range of pesticides and for raising the bar in horticultural application practices. Both ERMA and MAF have expressed their interest in the results of the survey.

We appreciate this is a very busy time for you all, but if you have experienced bee losses for whatever reason we would encourage you to take the time to complete the survey and send to us.

If you would like further copies of the survey, please email pauline@nba.org.nz

A copy is also available on www.nba.org.nz

NBA fetes young problem solvers

By the Publications Committee

In the March issue we reported that a group of school pupils from Oturu School, near Kaitaia, placed first in the junior community problem solving section of the Future Problem Solving National Finals in Auckland.

Left to right: Teina Snowden, Maureen Maxwell, Manaaki Jakobs-Te Paa, Annaleah Cassidy-Taylor, and their teacher, Mrs Heather Greaves. The fourth team member, Ayvran Mackie, was unable to attend. Photo: Rikki Robins.

The team identified the dangers facing honey bees in New Zealand, and set out to educate the Far North community on the importance of bees and to encourage them to plant bee-friendly gardens, among other initiatives.

The team, comprising Teina Snowden, Ayvran Mackie, Manaaki Jakobs-Te Paa, Annaleah Cassidy-Taylor, and their teacher, Mrs Heather Greaves, will be attending the international finals at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, USA in June. They will be competing against teams from America, the Asia Pacific region and South Africa.

Impressed by their efforts, the NBA invited the team and Mrs Greaves to a delicious honey-inspired lunch at BeesOnline café in Waimauku, where they were presented with BeesOnline honey cookbooks and 'Certificates of Appreciation for Services Rendered to the Honey Bees of New Zealand'.

NBA Northern Ward representative Maureen Maxwell, who organised the presentation, said, "The lunch, certificates and cookbooks went down a treat. What a super bunch of girls".

Mrs Greaves informed journal editor Nancy Fithian that Mike Moore, the New Zealand ambassador to the US, has invited the team to "stay with him in the ambassador's residence while the girls are in Washington. They are going to make a presentation to the staff at the embassy, showing them all about their project and the trip—very exciting stuff."

The team continues to work on their project and to fundraise for their trip. Mrs Greaves says that they have received "lots of support from local businesses". Arataki Honey has also provided financial support.

Check our their website: http://beefriendlyproblemsolvers.weebly.com.

If you would like to contribute to their fundraising, their address is: Oturu School, RD2, Kaitaia, 0482. Their bank account number is: 123096 0253320 01.

We wish the team the very best of luck in the international finals. Whatever the outcome, you will have done New Zealand proud.

New NBA Members' benefit

Now as fuel prices take another hike upwards, Shell Fuelcard has released a special offer for NBA members only. Receive a 5 cent a litre discount off pump prices on Shell fuels, diesel and LPG. Cardplus Shell Fuelcard is available to members' businesses, work colleagues and family members. Join the NBA today to access this great offer!

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