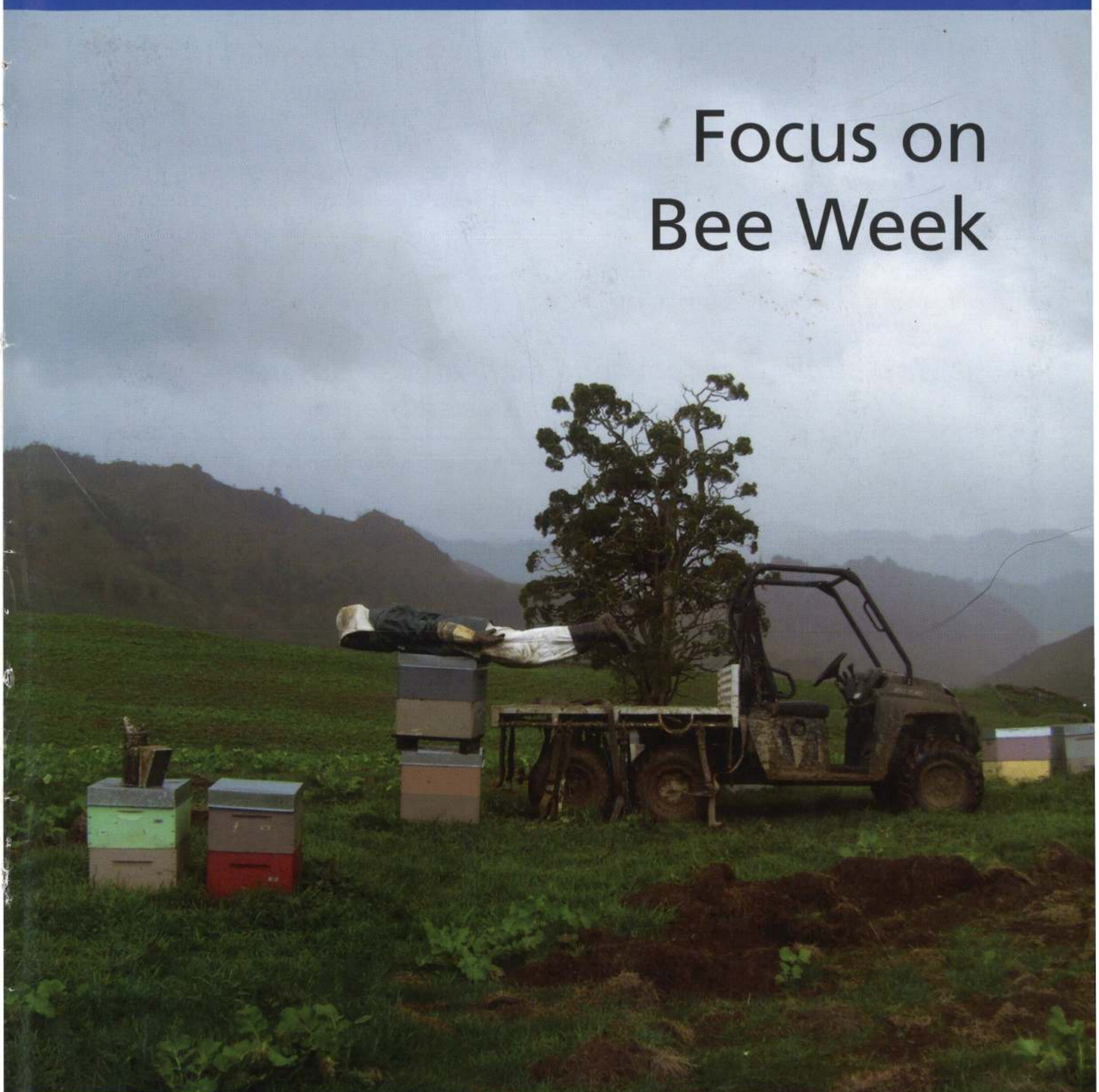
July 2011, Volume 19 No. 6

The NEW ZEALAND BeeKeeper

Focus on Bee Week



- Helping to contain Psa
- Thank you, bees
- Employment agreements mandatory
- NSWAA 2011 Conference report

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Front cover: Cambridge Bee Products staff member demonstrating his proficiency at 'planking', the latest craze. Photo: Richard Haddrell.

And it's farewell from Frans

By Frans Laas, NBA Past President

I have been asked to make a final contribution to the Journal while I am still President. Some people ask me what I am going to do with my 'spare time'.

No such luck, as I have a considerable number of scientific papers resulting from my Master's degree to publish, which have lain in abeyance since I have become involved in bee industry politics.

With the imminent arrival of varroa in our patch, I will also need to focus on getting to grips with managing the mite and changing the focus of our breeding programme to account for its presence.

GIA challenges

One of the very big issues that the bee industry will face in the very near future is the GIA. Apparently the Government is in no mood to back off with moving the process forward. While all affected industries have expressed concern about the process, none has been able to convince the Government to back down. Recently the Minister of Agriculture has offered to increase the Government's financial contribution to establishing the GIA infrastructure as an act of goodwill.

Quite clearly the bee industry has little choice but to engage in the process, whether it wants to or not. As I have stated before, the alternatives are to contribute and have a say in what happens, or be forced to pay and have no say in the matter.

There are some benefits to the process, in that it forces affected industries to develop robust and realistic response plans to new pests and diseases. While the bee industry has identified these threats and made some interim draft response plans, nothing is currently set down in a formal document. At least the GIA will formalise this process.

It is likely that funding for the process will come through a form of Biosecurity Levy similar to the Apiary Levy used by the AFB NPMS. A GIA levy will most likely be imposed regardless of whether all the beekeepers in this country vote for or against joining the GIA.

An additional hive levy will have some interesting complications for the AFB NPMS. It will not be surprising if some beekeepers will try to avoid paying their share by under-declaring apiary sites to the Management Agency. This would be a futile and dangerous action as it would actually damage the industry, possibly damaging confidence in the harvest declarations submitted to the NZFSA. Consequently there could be problems with the export of bee products and live bees.

> "The GIA process will not tolerate freeloaders; neither should those who contribute to industry good organisations."

Industry-good funding

On the topic of levies to fund industry good activities, recently I visited a beekeeper of note who suggested that it is now time to consider such a move despite his dislike for the idea. The bee industry is chronically underfunded to carry out projects that may help it in the future. The two industry organisations do not have the resources to fund large-scale projects. There are many freeloaders out there who benefit from our advocacy at no cost to them. The GIA process will not tolerate freeloaders; neither should those who contribute to industry good organisations. Now may be a good time to move on this initiative. While we may not like going down this route, no better alternative has been suggested as yet.

Be supportive!

The Association will have a lot of challenges ahead of it in the next year and the new President, Executive Council and the Secretariat will need a lot of support from the membership to get the Association through this period. Wasting time on trivialities is highly unproductive.

Conference was a buzz

It was great going to Auckland just for the weather, which consisted of mostly warm fine days without any wind (a lot different from Wellington where they were cancelling ferries). A lot more sponsors attended this year, which was pleasing. Three great overseas speakers complimented our local speakers. All were excellent and presented relevant topics. Dr Mark Goodwin was as questioning as ever. One of the main points Randy Oliver pushed: don't drop the ball on our mite research. Keep that funding going. Reports from Conference next month.

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!

From the incoming President

By Barry Foster, Vice President

Dear Members, I'd like to introduce myself as your new incoming President, replacing Frans Laas who is stepping down after four years.

I have been involved with beekeeping with my late father from a very early age and been a joint member with him of the National Beekeepers' Association for over 40 years until he passed away in 2005. I've run a successful beekeeping business in Gisborne for the past 30 years owning my own factory, pollinating various crops and producing manuka honey and other varieties (much the same as many of you have done and are doing as I write).

I have been on the executive of the National Beekeepers' Association plus the Management Agency of the AFB NPMS for the past eight years and have been involved with many of the changes since then. I look forward to this next year as your President, after which I plan to step down and devote more time to my business and hobbies. I am a keen tramper and involved with conservation through the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, plus I am on the committee of our local marine reserve just north of Gisborne city.

We all know the changes that have happened within the industry in recent decades. The development of manuka honey as a premium crop has been a real plus for New Zealand beekeeping. On the downside, the discovery of varroa in New Zealand in 2000 brought significant changes to our businesses and hobbies. Change is constant and we have to adapt to it or suffer the consequences of missed opportunities and stagnation.

I believe that our industry and Association has to embrace change yet not lose sight of our ideals, values and history, or be hamstrung by them. It is a balancing act that I hope to help facilitate over this next year. I would like to see our Association become more integrated, not just with other like organisations such as BIG, but vertically integrated as well with packers and suppliers. These groups will bring new ideas and cohesion to our Association, not the least of which will be a greater focus on the value and importance of our export markets, as these affect every beekeeper in New Zealand through the value we consistently receive for our products compared with other countries. They have significant stakes in our industry and it is a constant anomaly to me to see areas of our industry not fully represented in a truly national organisation, as they should be.

I've seen our Association become more professional in its appearance and delivery since we first employed a professional secretariat with Jim and Pam Edwards, and later over the last two years with Daniel Paul, Pauline Downie and Jessica Williams at Four Winds Communications. The adaption needed to constant change is to be more professional, businesslike and open to change and future trends rather than be driven by them.

The next year is going to be a challenge but more importantly, an opportunity.

Here are your newly elected Executive Council ward representatives. Front row: Barry Foster (President and East Coast), Stephen Black (Vice President and Waikato Ward). Back row: Mary-Ann Lindsay (Southern North Island), Neil Mossop (Bay of Plenty), Trevor Corbett (Central South Island), Neil Stuckey (Northern), Daniel Paul (joint CEO). Not pictured: Kerry Gentleman (Upper South Island).

What's the NBA been doing for us?

By the NBA Secretariat

It's been a bit frantic this past month preparing for the upcoming conference and AGM.

We have had a significant number of Notices of Motion and rule changes to process, as branches will know because you've had to consider them all, so we've been head down and backside up making sure everything's in order for what promises to be an interesting AGM.

Pauline was also in Auckland last month assisting that branch with training on our online Xero accounting system. Not that budget allows it that often, but it's great to get out of the office and around the country to meet members whenever possible.

Nosema ceranae re-testing

A formal request has been made to MAF to have the *Nosema ceranae* samples re-tested that were taken by the Ministry when this incursion was first discovered.

The Waikato Branch asked that the original samples be re-tested by two independent laboratories and we will advise on the results when they are available.

GIA discussions

Daniel also attended a special agri-industries meeting called by Agriculture Minister David Carter to discuss changes to the GIA.

He's since been asked to sit on a MAF–industry panel to help the agri sector prepare for the launch of the GIA.

There is still much concern about how the GIA will work and how various industries will be affected by it.

The Minister made it clear that Government wants to work as much as possible in partnership with industry, but he said the GIA will happen regardless of what industry thinks.

The beekeeping sector has a lot of work to do in coming months to make decisions about the GIA and that will be a large part of our focus after the conference.

Pollinator security

Pauline worked very closely with Dr Linda Newstrom-Lloyd, Barry Foster and Frans Laas on a comprehensive briefing paper requested by the Local Government and Environment Select Committee after the hearing in May on pollinator security. This paper was presented to the committee members prior to the second evidential hearing in June.

> "The beekeeping sector has a lot of work to do in coming months to make decisions about the GIA ..."

The goal was to impress the MPs with the massive value to the economy of bees as pollinators and supporters of our major agri-industries, and to alert them to the many and varied threats and dangers our bee populations face.

The team spent many days putting this presentation together and they were rewarded with a major show of support from the Select Committee members, who also asked very searching questions of both MAF and Agcarm.

Agcarm represents more than 30 manufacturers and distributors of crop protection and animal health products, including Bayer, which manufactures the neonicotinoids about which beekeepers are so concerned.

Pauline attended the second hearing with questions being asked of both MAF and Agcarm as to whether they felt a single agency would improve the situation for the bee industry, and what they considered to be the biggest threat to the industry at this time. Both MAF and Agcarm felt pyrethroid resistance was the biggest imminent threat.

By the time you read this, we will have lodged an application with ERMA on whether there are grounds for reassessment of neonicotinoid-coated seeds. We will report on the progress of that application.

So that's the month in review. We encourage you to write your own letters to the editor. It really is useful to have your views, as members, expressed in the NBA's journal.

NBA supports government's announcements on the GIA

Media release, 3 June 2011

The National Beekeepers' Association (NBA) welcomes the government's announcements on the GIA, particularly the move to increase the Crown's minimum financial contribution to biosecurity incursion response initiatives.

NBA joint-CEO, Daniel Paul, said NBA members have not yet decided whether to sign a GIA deed of agreement. However, the announcement by government shows it appreciates, and is trying to reduce, the significant financial burdens the GIA would impose on industry.

"We see this as a positive step. It confirms the government is trying hard to make the process work with as little pain as possible for industry."

Reports from a very buzzy week

Bee Week featured numerous activities to raise the profile of bees and the bee industry.

Here are a few examples sent in by NBA members: well done all!

Bay of Plenty

It was a little ahead of Bee Week, but Team 4 at Tahatai Coast School were studying insects this term, and there's no better way to start a new subject and a new term than with visitors to the classroom.

We visited one class at this school last year (see page 22 of the September 2010 issue), and it was a roaring success by all accounts. This year we had four classes to visit, organised into two lots of two.

We waded our way through the important stuff—how much of our fruit and veg relies on bees for pollination, the number of hives brought into the Bay of Plenty each year for kiwifruit pollination, and how we have to keep away pests and diseases so our bees stay safe and can do their job.

My husband Glen and I were both tickled by a wee dialogue that occurred in the midst of the fruit and veg discussion. This was early May, right in the middle of kiwifruit picking. Glen asked, "There's something that bees pollinate that we grow lots of right here in the Bay of Plenty, especially Te Puke. Does anyone know what it is?" Lots of hands went up. Glen pointed to a likely face near the front.

"Daisies!"

(Trying to keep a straight face) "No. It's being picked right now."

"Sunflowers?"

An explanation of kiwifruit picking season and the bees' pollination role ensued. Maybe we should have been clearer about the fact that we hadn't moved away from the topic of fruit and vegetables!

Kids love anything they can do in a hands-on way. We had brought in a built-out but empty frame that we passed around so the kids could touch and press the wax and feel how fragile it was. An empty base, box, feeder and lid showed them how the hive parts all went together. Glen demonstrated his bee suit—a nice clean one especially for showing off. I had struggled to get him to wear it. He wanted to show off his everyday working suit in all its grubby glory. He said he didn't want to give the kids a false impression about the realities of being a beekeeper. I said they'd figure it out for themselves soon enough if they ever wanted to give it a go. After all, I did, and wasn't I still here?

Kushla with the kids feeling the bees' wax. Photo: Craig McDonald.

I had worried about the logistics of having two classrooms at a time trying to spot the queen in our one display case. We had made a few phone calls prior to our school visit, and we have to offer a huge thank you to Dave McKean from Te Puke, who loaned us his display case so we could spread the kids out a bit—it made things much quicker and easier.

Glen and kids spotting the queen. Photo: Craig McDonald.

One of our display queens was particularly black compared to the other bees in the frame, so when we received our thank-you letters there were quite a few mentions of

Appreciation: Four classrooms' worth of thank-you letters—88 in total—plus a lovely box of chocolates, which didn't last long enough to make it into the photograph. Photo: Kushla Haenen.

"I learned that the queen is a black bee." If your child was present during our talk and has come home with this little nugget of misguided wisdom, we apologise!

As always the lifecycle of the drone was a big hit. The idea of girl bees "cleaning up poohs" from the lazy boy bees got its share of attention. As did the girl bees' autumnal revenge. There was lots of gory mention of this in the letters we received—how "arm and legs" are pulled off and drones are kicked out to die a cold, miserable death come autumn.

Someone asked how the bees carry nectar from the flower back to the hive. I explained the concept of the bee's honey stomach. I thought I'd done okay with my explanation, as he seemed happy enough with my answer. Later we reviewed written evidence of the learning that took place. I read the comment "honey is bee vomit" and knew instantly that while technically not far from the mark, it was the slightly dramatised and unintended result of my answer to this question. Again, if this is your son who now refuses to eat honey because it's vomit, we apologise!

Despite these few mis-learnings, the kids and we learned a lot of valuable things. Hopefully by doing our part and introducing young minds to the importance of bees and their fascinating lives, we're ensuring the survival of bees and the beekeeping industry for generations to come.

- Kushla Haenen

East Coast

Willie Kaa, John McLean and I went to Awapuni School, Gisborne to speak to the Room Seven class. The pupils had done work on bees since the beginning of the year.

They were a very enthusiastic bunch, as the photo attests. We had a comb honey tasting, a mock-up hive to pull apart, beeswax, posters, printed material, etc.

We returned the next day to do the same presentation with about 120 kids in two large classes.

- Barry Foster, President

Canterbury

The 25 May edition of *The Ellesmere Echo* had a three-page feature written by local beekeepers Peter Bray, Linda Newstrom-Lloyd, Barry Sheehan, Barry Hantz and me. Our articles were accompanied by advertising. Topics covered were the changing face of beekeeping in New Zealand, the New Zealand apiary register, an overview of Trees for Bees, planting and spraying tips, and the impact of varroa on beekeepers. The following edition of the *Echo* had a one-page editorial.

Bee Week display at Leeston Library. Photo: Maggie James.

The Leeston Library has a Bee Week display that will be shown for one month. The librarians have commented that they have had really positive feedback from the public. The library is also used by the Leeston Primary School and the teachers are using this display for lessons.

- Maggie James

Bee Week takes flight … again

By the NBA Secretariat

This year's Bee Week (30 May–3 June 2011) was a huge success.

We generated massive publicity in all major media, securing coverage in 20 radio and television broadcasts, 17 Internet postings and 157 press clippings. We more than doubled the coverage received for Bee Week last year. This is a great achievement and a true acknowledgement that Bee Week is continuing to generate media interest throughout New Zealand. Kiwis just can't get enough of the humble honey bee!

Based on accepted advertising industry evaluation criteria, this kind of publicity is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars of advertising.

However, Bee Week, now in its third year, did not just revolve around media clippings. The colouring-in competition was a hit yet again. We received over 200 entries. Plus, the Word Puzzle and Bee Facts Kit were updated and sent out to schools across the country.

A selection of entries from the colouring-in competition. Photo: Jessica Williams.

Branches and clubs got involved and visited local schools in their area, teaching them about the importance of the honey bee and its value to New Zealand.

'Be good to bees because…' posters were sent out to all NBA branches. Various shops around the country placed the posters in their windows. Honeymeisters in Wellington had 'Beenut' (in a giant bee costume) walking the streets, handing out samples and delivering the message about bee-friendly seeds and why we need to plant now for pollinators.

Honeymeisters' 'Beenut' promoting Bee Week around Wellington. Photo: Jessica Williams.

Regional and district councils were invited to take part this year. Hamilton City Council invited NBA Life Member Jane Lorimer to speak at their pest management meeting. In addition, various councils expressed their interest in planting bee-friendly seeds in public gardens.

> "Regional and district councils were invited to take part this year."

The Wellington Botanical Gardens hung posters and educational information in their famous tree house learning centre. Various libraries across the country celebrated Bee Week by building stands dedicated to the cause.

Thanks to Maureen Maxwell, bee-friendly wildflower seed packets were developed and sold with all profits going to the NBA to help further NZ bees.

In addition, we have worked closely with the maker of the Buzzy Bee toy, Urban Licensing, to develop a partnership where a percentage of the wooden Buzzy Bee toy sales go to the NBA. At present, Urban Licensing is printing our logo on their product range. These bees should hit shelves in October and will start generating an extra stream of income for the Association. Thank you, Urban Licensing and Buzzy Bee!

Thank you to everyone who provided product for giveaways: Apicare, Arataki Honey, Mossop's Honey, J. Friend & Co, Burt's Bees, Raymond Huber, Buzzy Bee, Steens, and Palmers. We've had a great response from newspapers and websites running the colouring-in competition and giveaways.

Thank you to all those who got involved.

Bee Week has proven that New Zealanders and the media are interested in what the Association and its representatives have to say about a wide variety of issues relevant to bees. The amazing amount of coverage received shows just how much profile the NBA, and the industry, has.

The more people we educate, the more we can make a difference for the good of the industry.

NBA Vice President (now President) Barry Foster addresses students at Awapuni School, Gisborne, during Bee Week. Photo taken by the teacher.

Thank you, bees (part 1)

By Mary Allen

In this article, Mary reflects on her entry into beekeeping and what she has gained from it.

My husband Andrew and I shifted from Christchurch to Raetihi in 1987. Andrew ran the small sheep farm and had a winter job on Turoa Ski Field, Mt Ruapehu.

I wanted to contribute to the family income but in planning the move north, I knew my chances were slim of finding a job in a small town. To make matters worse, I was a disabled female. I took far too long to complete any task and my reading was slow (I could not read more than a page or two at a time). I became tired quickly, could not walk far and had poor balance and coordination.

I was not just going to sit around feeling sorry for myself so before we shifted, I went to a MAF shop in Christchurch. I found two books: one on keeping pigs and Andrew Matheson's book *Practical Beekeeping in New Zealand*. Andrew (my husband) told me to forget about keeping pigs, so that left bees.

I then went to Ecroyd Beekeeping Supplies and bought two kitset beehives. Shortly after arriving in Raetihi, my husband assembled them and I painted them (we first put one bit upside down).

Now I needed bees. I did not know anyone who kept bees so I looked in the Wanganui phone book yellow pages and found Canaan Apiaries. John Brandon sold me two nucs. He told me about the Wanganui Bee Club; so once each month I drove the 80-minute trip from our place to Wanganui. I was lucky as I was able to spend the night in Wanganui with Andrew's sister.

After two years I gave up the journey to Wanganui and did the Telford two-year correspondence course. I cannot praise this course enough. Gavin MacKenzie was more than just a tutor in that he advised me what to do with our hives. Because of the course I used the NBA Library and John Heineman also went out of his way to help me.

Reading stories of other beekeepers helped encourage me. One book was entitled *Bees are My Business* by an American author, Harry Whitcombe (Whitcombe & Douglas, 1955). Reading about how he won his struggle gave us confidence.

After completing the Telford course I found the confidence to attend the NBA Southern North Island Branch meetings. It was here I continued to learn and gained many very close friends.

Growing the business

I realised I did not have the strength to harvest a lot of honey so we decided to produce royal jelly. Andrew did the hive work while I grafted. This did not work for us and after three years we changed tack. The benefit found in this failure is that I now breed queen bees. We produce most of our own but still always buy a few to vary the gene pool.

> "I love beekeeping on a sunny day, in a beautiful private location."

At this time manuka honey had come into favour so we bought more beehives. Now we had more hives than I could cope with, so we leased our farm out so Andrew could work with me.

For several years I thought about bees all the time. Often after a day in the field I would relax in the bath or in bed and go over the day in my head, thinking about how we should have done something better, or why did we see this or that (e.g., slime on the inside of boxes in spring).

Bees were my life. I did try not to bore non-beekeepers, but a lot of people are

fascinated with these little insects. I think Andrew got sick of bees, as for a few years they were all I ever talked about. Now I do not have the same drive and it is Andrew who has to say things like, "We need to work this yard". I used to have a hive outside the bedroom window and would go out during the night and put my ear to the hive; it always impressed me how busy they were.

Becoming a teacher

Another big learning curve happened in 1998 when our local doctor persuaded me to run a course on beekeeping, under the Rural Education & Activities Programme (REAP). A handful of people turned up and during the next 10 weeks they all assembled two beehives each. Many people from the industry came or we visited them. We watched all the videos from the NBA Library. But before I could teach, I had to revise—I think I learnt more than anyone.

When the course finished, I was persuaded to run a monthly bee group. After three years I ran out of steam, but still had the occasional meeting. After doing this course there were other people who could collect swarms, which relieved the pressure on us.

Coping with ups and downs

We all have ups and downs and at times it was hard to keep going. I found I often had ➔

to pray hard as I got depressed and thought I would fail in my endeavour to farm bees.

At the start it was difficult to cope with those bee stings. I used to swell up so much it would be hard to move a joint or sleep due to itchy heat. Bees seem to love my hair no matter what brand of shampoo I use. Now it still hurts if I get a sting, but usually in five minutes I have forgotten about it. On one occasion when our teenage son was stung the school rang up the following day as his face and neck were so swollen he could barely see. The doctor told me it was too dangerous to keep bees, but our son insisted I keep them as he now had tablets to take. As the years went by, his reaction to stings also lessened.

When at beekeeping field days, I would overhear people criticising me for thinking I could keep bees. I have to thank all those people who assured me I could; I might just need to work out another way of doing things. When we did not have many hives a man made me a bee trolley. On the lower tray I used to have the things I needed and on the upper deck I could sit boxes. I also used an empty box to lift the top brood box onto.

When I visited an apiary away from home, I would drive our ute as close as I could to where I was working. Then I would sit an empty bee box on a drip tray, on the deck of the ute. As a box of honey is too heavy for me to lift, I would put the sealed frames of honey into the box on the ute, careful to cover everything with a hive mat as I worked. The last thing I wanted was to start a robbing frenzy (bees robbing out harvested frames of honey and causing excitement amongst all the hives). As we send our honey away to get extracted we only send frames full of honey. When the honey box was light enough to remove, I would then check for disease in the brood boxes. If I found disease I knew where the honey was if I had needed to return it to the hive. It used to take me ages to harvest and after every few hives I would lie down on the grass for a few minutes to have a break. I love beekeeping on a sunny day, in a beautiful private location. I also would take a thermos and would leave a message where I was so that if I was stuck I could be found. Nowadays, you can use a cell phone in a lot of isolated places.

Reference

Whitcombe, H. J., & Douglas, J. S. (1955). *Bees are my business*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Postscript

For those who don't know Mary, she had a massive stroke in her twenties. She has to command her body to do anything, move a leg, breathe—nothing is automatic. Yet she has raised two sons, walked miles for charity, took Sunday school for the children and is a valued member of the SNI Branch.

[Editor's note: part 2 will appear in the August issue.]

HEALTH AND SAFETY

FF launches occupational H&S manual

Federated Farmers has launched an Occupational Health and Safety Manual to improve agricultural health and safety.

The manual was launched in Wellington on 16 June with Minister of Labour Kate Wilkinson in attendance. Federated Farmers considers that the initiative could help save agriculture and the wider agricultural community, millions of dollars each year in direct and indirect costs.

"This manual is the response to numerous requests by our members for a workable plain-english guide in what is a complex and serious area of business," says Donald Aubrey, Federated Farmers health and safety spokesperson.

"Federated Farmers recognises that good workplace health and safety is no accident.

"Keeping farms safe for employees and visitors is no accident and requires a clear strategy. That's why Federated Farmers plain-English Occupational Health and Safety Manual exists helping farm employers meet their obligations under the HSE Act.

"Backed by our 0800 FARMING legal line, this manual provides a means for farm employers to not just fulfill their obligations but to keep doing so on an on-going basis," Mr Aubrey concluded.

For further information, contact Donald Aubrey, Federated Farmers agricultural health and safety spokesperson, 03 696 3747.

Source

Federated Farmers, 'Agricultural Health and Safety could save millions'. Abridged and adapted from Federated Farmers' media release, June 15 2011.

Beekeepers can help contain Psa

By Victor Jones, Kiwifruit Vine Health technical assistant and Shane Max, Orchard Productivity Centre

What can beekeepers do to help kiwifruit orchardists contain the spread of Psa?

Attention to orchard hygiene and following the best practice recommendations on hive movement in and out of the Priority Zone (PZ) are the big ones. This is essential until a better understanding of the role bees and pollen play in Psa infection and movement is established.

Background

Psa (*Pseudomonas syringae actinidiae*) is a bacterial disease of kiwifruit that was first reported in a Te Puke Hort16A orchard in November 2010. This disease has devastated the Italian kiwifruit industry and has now been confirmed in a number of European kiwifruit growing regions; it is thought to have spread through the movement of kiwifruit nursery plants. Young vines and those of yellow-fleshed varieties appear particularly susceptible, although over the last couple of years older Italian Hayward orchards have become increasingly affected.

The disease is extremely difficult to control as it can establish inside the vine where chemical protectant sprays are unable to reach. Internal build-up of the bacteria then blocks the vascular tissue, killing the vine. To date, protectant copper sprays and removal of infected material are the recommended practices to contain the disease.

The virulent strain, Psa-V, presently is thought to be contained in New Zealand to the Te Puke area. While protectant spray programmes—which are subsidised by Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH)—have helped to limit the spread of Psa, wet summer conditions have allowed the infection to spread from the initial locations where it was first found across a wider area of Te Puke. Psa-V is not thought to be present currently in the wider Bay of Plenty or outlying districts, so orchardists in these areas are particularly concerned about the risk of using hives from within or near the Priority Zone.

Knowledge on the role, if any, that bees play in the spread of the disease is still very limited. This is because worldwide, very little is known about the disease. It struck New Zealand just prior to Hayward flowering last season, so there was very little time to undertake research and the testing methodologies to accurately test for Psa are limited. Some bee work has been undertaken but results are limited and inconclusive. So for now, industry best practice information in relation to bees (as with many other areas) is based on our knowledge of other bacteria diseases and what we have learnt to date—both here and overseas.

With the arrival of Psa, concerns were raised about the placement, feeding, sharing and removal of pollination hives. Members of KVH, ZESPRI, Plant & Food Research, and MAF (along with kiwifruit and beekeepers' representatives) quickly developed best practice protocols in November 2010. At this present time, no significant new information is at hand that would dictate changing these procedures, although discussions with beekeeping representatives as new findings come to hand might mean change. KVH will communicate this through the various pollination group networks. Fortunately last season ZESPRI, as part of the grower registration process, asked orchardists to provide contact details of beekeepers providing their hives. This has allowed a database of beekeepers who provide pollination hives to be created, which can also be used to communicate with them directly.

The protocols developed in 2010 can be viewed in full at the KVH website under: Grower Info, Orchard Management, 'Pollination Information 12 November 2010'. These protocols were designed to mitigate the potential for contamination of orchards via the use of pollination hives. Beekeepers should discuss their requirements when drawing up their pollination agreements with orchardists or management companies.

Having seen the dramatic impact of Psa, orchardists are now tightening up their hygiene procedures for people, vehicles and equipment entering their properties. The risk of introducing Psa this way is unknown but anything that might carry kiwifruit plant material is considered high risk. KVH has provided recommended protocols to follow. Most orchardists will expect vehicles entering the orchard to be clean of debris and to undertake some form of disinfestation. Beekeepers should understand these new requirements and discuss how best to meet them.

Vehicle cleaning station. Photo supplied by KVH.

Key practices that are presently recommended specifically for beekeepers include:

Hive management

- Where possible, avoid using hives more than once for pollination to reduce the movement of bees between orchards; or
- Ensure that hives are 'spelled' for 3–5 days before being moved into a second orchard. This will reduce the potential for hives to carry bacteria from one orchard to another. This is particularly important for hives used within the Priority Zone: bee dumps where hives are spelled should be at least five kilometres from a kiwifruit orchard.

Hive placement

- Avoid physical contact with kiwifruit vines and shelter when moving within orchard blocks.
- Avoid early delivery of hives to orchards to reduce bee foraging between orchards whilst kiwifruit flower numbers are low. It is suggested that at least 10% of flowers should be open.
- Avoid placing hives directly next to vines and consider using fewer, but larger groupings of hives.
- Avoid any unnecessary vehicle movement around orchards.

Continued on page 15

Continued from page 13

Feeding

- Where possible, use a dedicated orchard vehicle to feed hives. If using another vehicle, avoid contact with vines and shelterbelts.

Hive removal

- In order that bees can be spelled between orchards, avoid leaving hives in an orchard longer than necessary.

Questions and concerns

Some key concerns and answers are presented below.

1. *Regarding the movement of hives into and out of the Priority Zone (PZ): can hives that have been brought into the PZ be used again outside of the PZ?*

Restriction of hive movement outside the PZ is going to be the best form of risk mitigation. However, observing stand-down periods alongside hygiene practices (cleaning trucks) should allow for hive movement within the PZ.

2. *What is the minimum stand-down period for hives between orchards, and should this apply to all orchards or just orchards within the PZ?*

Last year this was five days; however, beekeepers are suggesting three days unless science can prove otherwise.

3. *With regard to the concerns about heavy vehicle traffic on orchards, how do we carry out feeding and try to reduce the number of vehicles entering an orchard?*

The use of dedicated vehicles would be one solution to reduce the number of vehicles going in and out of orchards; or the orchard manager carries out feeding under guidance from the beekeepers.

An up-to-date map of the Te Puke Priority Zone is available at http://www.kvh.org.nz/images/custom/te_puke_-_zones_and_roads_-_3_6_11.pdf

BUSINESS

Mandatory agreements

From the Department of Labour

From 1 July 2011, all employers must keep a copy of every employee's signed employment agreement or current terms and conditions of employment.

This requirement also extends to employers who have hired employees on a verbal agreement.

Employment relationships

Good employment relationships begin with a strong recruitment process and clear expectations about the role, working conditions and employment rights. A clearly written employment agreement can help reduce the risk of misunderstanding and is the foundation for a good employment relationship.

Employment agreements

When hiring a new employee, employers must retain a copy of the "intended agreement" even if the employee has not signed it or agreed to the terms and conditions specified.

The intended agreement cannot be treated as the final employment agreement if the employee has not signed it or has not agreed to the terms and conditions specified in it. Often the terms and conditions of these agreements change over time.

There are some provisions that must be included in employment agreements by law, and there are also a number of minimum conditions that must be met regardless of whether they are included in agreements. A full list of these provisions can be found on the Department of Labour's website.

It is the employer's responsibility to maintain and keep an up to date copy of each employee's employment agreement that reflects the current terms and conditions of the employment relationship. Employers must provide a copy of the agreement if an employee requests it. It is also the first port of call to clarifying any misunderstanding or problems.

> "... a number of minimum conditions ... must be met regardless of whether they are included in agreements."

Compliance

Recent changes to the Employment Relations Act 2000 give labour inspectors the ability to seek a penalty against an employer who is in breach of provisions of the Act relating to employment agreements. This includes the requirement for all employers to retain a copy of the intended and current employment agreement or terms and conditions of employment, whether signed or unsigned and to provide a copy to employees on request. Employers will be given seven working days notice to fix the breach. Where the breach is not remedied the inspector can take a penalty action against the employer in the Employment Relations Authority.

Labour Inspectors can also look at individual employment agreements to see if they meet the minimum legal requirements.

The Department of Labour has developed an Employment Agreement Builder, (www.dol.govt.nz/er/starting/relationships/agreements/builder.asp) to help you create your own employment agreement. Please note it is best practice to ensure that an employee indicates their agreement by signing their employment agreement before they start work. For further information visit the Department of Labour's website www.dol.govt.nz or phone the Contact Centre on 0800 20 90 20.

Source

Employment agreements—a must for everyone. Information emailed by the Department of Labour, 10 Jun 2011.

Food Safety and RMP Awareness courses

Information provided by AsureQuality Limited

During 2010 AsureQuality ran several successful 'Honey Food Safety & RMP Awareness' training courses throughout New Zealand.

It is planned to run further courses this year, three courses in the North Island and two in the South Island.

These courses are specifically developed for beekeepers, to help them meet their health and food hygiene competencies under the Code of Practice (COP) for Risk Management Programmes (RMP). The courses are aimed at up-skilling RMP operators and their staff who are presently processing bee products.

Beekeepers will be given a better understanding of food safety and legislation relating to bee products. These courses will meet the training requirements in the COP and enable beekeeping operations to be far more effective in meeting their legal obligations under their RMP.

In response to trainees' feedback, the courses this year will not be based on NZQA Unit Standards as in previous years. This means that a lot of the previous written assessment work will now be unnecessary and the full course material can be covered in one day. An AsureQuality 'Certificate of Food Safety and RMP Awareness in the Honey Industry' will be issued to course attendees at the completion of this course.

Who can attend this course?

The course is designed specifically for beekeepers and honey processing staff.

The course is, however, open to anyone associated with the beekeeping industry and will also be useful for beekeepers who may wish to set up their own processing plant at some future date.

What will be the cost?

As the courses this year will not include NZQA Unit Standards they will not be subsidised by the food processing industry ITO, Competenz. However, because the course has been reduced to one day, the course is reasonably priced at $285 plus GST. This cost will cover morning and afternoon tea together with lunch. All other meals, transport and accommodation are the attendee's responsibility.

What will the 1-day course cover?

- Food poisoning and food safety
- Food safety in the COP
- Background to Risk Management Programmes (RMP)
- What is HACCP?
- Becoming familiar with the COP
- Understanding OAP & EU OMAR
- Tutin in Honey Standard
- Transport of bee products

Who will run the courses?

Apicultural Officers and RMP verifiers from AsureQuality Limited, Tony Roper and Marco Gonzalez, will deliver the courses that were developed with assistance from Food Safety and RMP expert staff within AsureQuality Limited.

Where and when will the courses be held?

It is planned to run courses in Auckland (Tuesday 23 August), Hamilton (Wednesday 24 August), Tauranga (Thursday 25 August), Christchurch (Tuesday 30 August) and Timaru (Wednesday 31 August).

Places are limited and will be allocated on a first-in, first-served basis. Please ensure you return your registration form as soon as possible to secure your place. A copy of the registration form is available on the NBA web site.

How to register

All attendees must complete the registration form as soon as possible and send it to AsureQuality in Christchurch. **Download the form from the NBA website and send it to:**

Rachael Thacker
AsureQuality Limited
Private Bag 4718, Christchurch
Ph: (03) 358 1725
Fax: (03) 358 6222
Email: rachael.thacker@asurequality.com

Once your registration form is received you will be issued with a course confirmation letter and an invoice. A signed course confirmation letter and payment must be received prior to the course.

For further information on the course, please see the advertisement on page 19 or phone:

Tony Roper 021 283 1829 or
Marco Gonzalez 021 951 625

Auckland Branch

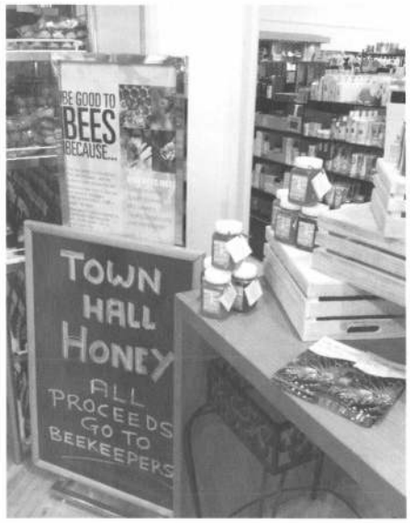
On 27 May, the Branch presented some of the 150 jars of honey harvested from the Auckland Town Hall sentinel hives to Mayor Len Brown. Northern Ward representative Maureen Maxwell, Auckland Branch President Ian Browning and Auckland Beekeepers' Club President Kim Kneijber made the presentation.

The Mayor loves the honey and the Town Hall hives. He is very enthusiastic about bringing hives back to the Auckland region and helping New Zealand bees, and applauds the sentinel hive scheme.

Maureen Maxwell, Mayor Len Brown and Kim Kneijber. Photo: Rochelle Cunningham.

Mayor Brown thinks this is a great way of engaging both rural and urban land users. As the Council is the largest landowner in the region, he has welcomed our strategic partnership, and has promised us good access and more bee friendly planting.

This initiative has given us a direct and very positive link to the policymakers and people of the Auckland Super City. The Town Hall honey was made available for purchase at Smith & Caugheys, and the *Manukau Courier* and the Auckland Council's website reported on the event: see http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/OurAuckland/News/Pages/townhallbuzzing.aspx?sms_ss=email&at_xt=4de6ee60c6937f91%2C0



Auckland Town Hall honey at Smith & Caugheys, with the Urban Trees for Bees brochure at right. Photo: Maureen Maxwell

I have produced a couple of resources for Bee Week and beyond. There is now a lot of public concern for New Zealand bees, their keepers and our ecosystem. In response to the question "What can we do to help?" we have produced and launched an "Urban Trees for Bees" brochure. This brochure was produced in collaboration with Dr Linda Newstrom-Lloyd, Landcare Research and the Auckland Council.

This information is to go out to all Auckland ratepayers and will be distributed through council offices, libraries, garden centres, etc. as well as online. I dispatched 14,000 guides in one week. Go to http://www.treesforbeesnz.org to download or ask the NBA head office for copies.

- Maureen Maxwell,
Outgoing Northern Ward representative

Bay of Plenty Branch

Autumn was warm and wet in the Bay of Plenty. This weather trend has continued so far into mid June. This has affected the kiwifruit harvest, which has been very protracted with some local Western Bay orchards still to be picked. A season that produced a poor honey crop appears to have also affected kiwifruit maturation. Speaking of kiwifruit, Psa disease continues to spread: 241 (7.2%) orchards have now tested positive for Psa; 127 (3.8%) orchards have tested positive for the Psa-V isolate. Over 80% of these orchards are in the greater Te Puke region. Orchard monitoring and development hygiene management is ongoing and will have an impact on pollination service providers this year. More to come on this, I expect.

With warm days, there has been quite a lot of bee activity in the apiary, but not much to reward the bees for their efforts. Having to watch winter stores.

Ross Carroll reports: "Not a lot of varroa around although I haven't done any serious monitoring. Very little PMS in hives in autumn prior to treatment. Honey crop generally poor. Also seemed to be less pollen around in late summer/autumn, hopefully this won't cause problems in the spring. Thankfully bulk honey prices are up a bit so that will help.

The [AFB Recognition and Competency] course is still on track for 27 August. The number of participants for this course is limited, so register early. By my calculations, 63 people have attended [AFB Recognition and Competency courses] in the BOP in the last 12 months.

Gerrit Hyink will be tutoring two beekeeping courses starting August and September:

- Beekeeping Beginners: 13–27 Aug
- Beekeeping Extension Course: Saturday 17 Sept–1 October

For details, go to: http://www.katikatiresource.co.nz/education/special-interest

- Greg Wagstaff

Hawke's Bay Branch

Apart from the shorter daylight hours it has been more like summer than winter. Huey (tramper's god of weather) is probably saving it up for spring! At least 60 hives have been lost due to flooding last month. The flooding was remarkable both for its severity and the very limited area that it affected.

I have had one report of someone's hives nearly all dying but the cause remains unclear. Possibly it was treating varroa too late in the autumn, but apparently the hives have never had an alternative treatment so resistance could also be the answer. If you do not regularly alternate your treatments, you risk not only your own but everyone's bees. Only 'zombees' will be left.

The Branch held its AGM in May, with no changes to officers.

- John Berry, Branch President

Southern North Island Branch

Most of us have recovered from a pretty poor honey season. Now it's a matter of feeding and looking after the hives over the winter, to get ready for a better season next honey flow. →

We have had our AGM. Peter Ferris has been re-elected as President, with Frank and Mary-Ann Lindsay supporting as Secretary and Treasurer. The Branch is starting to plan for another educational weekend in August 2012: "Camp Rangi" for those that remember previous training sessions. It will be a chance for small-scale beekeepers and commercial operators to meet and learn over a weekend. Further information will be supplied at a later date.

AFB Disease Recognition and Competency courses are continuing to be held, so far in Taranaki and Manawatu and later in other areas. Enquiries to the Branch Secretary will ensure that people are contacted as courses are set down.

- Neil Farrer, Life Member

Nelson Branch

The weather has been wet and mild, with feeding rounds still going on. Many hives still have brood, so varroa treatments may have to go in earlier than usual come springtime.

For Bee Week there was an evening spent in Nelson talking about bees, present and future issues and what individuals can do to help bees. This was organised by the Green Party. Green MP Sue Kedgley and Nelson Branch President Frazer Wilson addressed the meeting. Many intelligent and thought-provoking questions came from the floor.

Frazer Wilson and Branch secretary Kerry Gentleman talked to the Year 8 classes at Golden Bay High School. The kids were totally absorbed by the bees and it was a very enjoyable experience. Frazer and Kerry brought an observation hive (heated at this time of year!), which was a real hit with the kids. There was a display of tools, products and photos. The teachers had given the kids time to research bees in the library, which also helped get them interested. One primary school was also visited with a lower level presentation.

- Gareth Ayers

[Editor's Note: We send our best wishes to Canterbury and Christchurch beekeepers after the mid-June earthquakes. We hope everyone is well and that your businesses haven't sustained further damage.]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Statistics sought

By Gerrit Hyink, Katikati

Quoting from the draft Strategic Framework 2011-2014: Hobbyists pose great risk to biosecurity (AFBPMS Issues).

It never occurred to me that this was a grave issue; also not after reading the April magazine. Maybe I have missed something, but I would really appreciate to see the statistical data supporting this issue in the draft Strategic Framework; not just for me, but for all beekeepers.

Response from the NBA Secretariat

The views expressed in the strategy document are not necessarily those of the NBA. Rather they reflect comments made by a group of beekeepers from around the country, including NBA and BIG members and beekeepers who are not members of either body, but who contributed to the development of the strategy document.

Aussies praise Bee Week

By Karla Hudson, General Manager, Superbee Honey Factory, Forbes, NSW

Jessica Williams received this letter from an Australian honey manufacturer:

Dear Secretariat

I am writing from Superbee Honey Factory in Australia in regards to your Bee Week promotions.

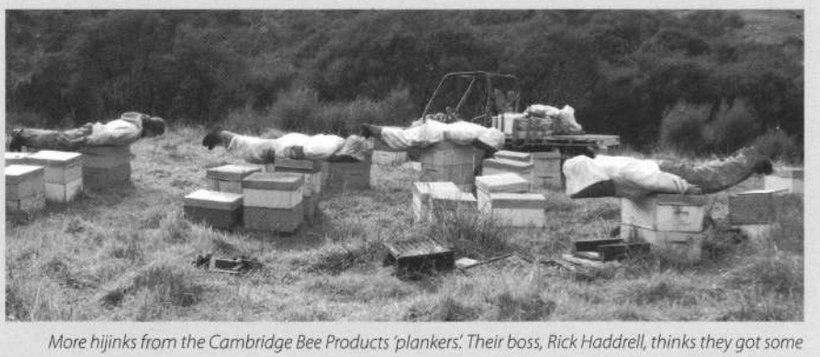
I believe you have done a wonderful job in promoting this well deserved and often forgotten industry.

We would like to take a leaf out of your book and also introduce a Bee Week here in Australia, after our Annual Honey Packers and Marketers Meeting early this month and our NSW Beekeepers conference last month our idea has been very well received and Superbee has been appointed to research and develop putting together a bee week promotion for the entire industry here in Australia.

I was hoping that you could provide me with some information as to the type of activities and things that you run to promote this event. And also any tips you may have.

Your feedback is very much appreciated.

Best regards
Karla Hudson
General Manager, Superbee Honey Factory
Forbes, NSW



More hijinks from the Cambridge Bee Products 'plankers'. Their boss, Rick Haddrell, thinks they got some work done that day! Photo: Richard Haddrell.

HONEY INDUSTRY TRAINING

Developed specifically for beekeepers, AsureQuality's Honey Food Safety and RMP Awareness training course is aimed at up-skilling RMP operators and staff processing bee products. It is open to anyone working with the Beekeeping Industry or planning to set up a processing plant.

LEARN ABOUT:	• Food poisoning and food safety • Food safety under the Code of Practice for Risk Management Programmes (RMPs) • Background to RMPs • HACCP • Becoming familiar with the COP • Understanding OAP & EU OMAR • Tutin in Honey Standard • Transport of bee products
COST:	$285 plus GST (including morning and afternoon tea and lunch)
UPCOMING COURSES:	Auckland: Tuesday, 23 August Hamilton: Wednesday, 24 August Tauranga: Thursday, 25 August Christchurch: Tuesday, 30 August Timaru: Wednesday, 31 August

Register today and make sure you meet your food safety and RMP legal obligations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER CONTACT:

Rachael Thacker **T.** (03) 358 1725 **E.** rachael.thacker@asurequality.com

All courses are delivered by Apicultural Officers and RMP Verifiers from AsureQuality. This year the training has been redeveloped as a one-day course, with NZQA Unit Standards no longer being included. You can download a copy of the registration form from the NBA website, but hurry, places are limited.

AsureQuality®

www.asurequality.com
Freephone 0508 00 11 22

NSWAA 2011 Conference report

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

In May I and several other Kiwis attended the New South Wales Apiarists' Association conference in Dubbo.

Our first impressions on arrival: it was great to have warm sunny days after working in the rain and mud for the last couple of weeks.

The beekeepers are very welcoming and freely share their ideas and knowledge. This year's seminars focused on a little bit of everything: small hive beetle (SHB) with the release of the new Apithor harbourage traps, the Asian honey bee incursion and a background to the Asian honey bee and varroa, amongst other topics.

The Myrtle Rust (*Uredo rangelii*) incursion was described as having "possible serious consequences for Australian native plants and possible major impact on honey and pollen flora". The genus *Leptospermum* is included in the Myrtle family Myrtaceae (together with *Eucalyptus, Melaleuca* and others). Therefore, don't be complacent: if Myrtle Rust spreads to *Leptospermum* it could have consequences here.

Other presentations covered almond pollination (a growing industry that needs a lot of hives to pollinate), national parks forests and maintenance of fire trails (continued access to national parks have been a problem).

Regarding varroa, it appears that you have to go to NSW to find out what's going on in New Zealand. Michelle Taylor gave a very good presentation on HortResearch's queen breeding programme, followed by Tiffane Bates of CIBER, University of Western Australia (an expatriate Kiwi whose grandfather manufactured the Bates packer). Tiffany spoke about her Churchill Scholarship to USA and Europe in 2009, in which she researched each country's different approach in dealing with varroa mites. Australians are preparing for the day mites arrive on their shores.

Michelle Taylor (left) and Tiffane Bates.

Getting my bee fix

A day before the NSWAA conference, the Pollination Association had their one-day conference with seminar speakers. I hadn't realised it would be an all-day affair, so had organised to get a bee fix in the afternoon visiting an apiary of 120 hives not far from Dubbo. These had been moved north for an expected flow but it was only just dribbling in. Pollen substitute was being fed to the hives in patties in the hives and straight substitute was available in a covered 44-gallon drum in the apiary. We can't feed it outside like this, as it apparently goes into a solid lump because our humidity is a lot higher.

Open pollen substitute feeder.

Sheoaks (*Casuarina*) were flowering; they are a four- to five-metre-high tree with drooping pine needle leaves with small flowers on the ends of the needles, giving the trees a rust-like appearance. The bees bringing back the pollen then shell it, casting the outer part of the flower husk in front of the hives. The bees were working ironbark: a species of *Eucalyptus* with white bunches of flowers set high up amongst the leaves that were hard to see from the ground. In removing honey, we would select only capped frames to extract but they remove the supers when they are full but not necessarily capped. Fermentation isn't a problem in their dry climate

If you don't know Australia, the first major difference is their dirt. In most places, it's a reddish-brown mix of sand and fine stone, nothing like the soils we have over here. We find it difficult to accept that anything will grow in it but in fact it's an excellent medium when you add fertiliser, seed and water.

Sheoaks flowering.

Their problem is water: either too much, like this last year's floods, or too little, as had been the case for the last 10 years. You see evidence of the drought through most of the inland areas, with dead stands of trees or trees just sprouting new leaves from the trunks.

With the recent rain, there was new growth everywhere. The *Eucalyptus* trees were either putting on new leaf or were budding up if they had access to water, especially those on the coast. We would think that this is a sign of a good honey flow ahead, but some of their trees can hang on to the buds for 12 months and if there isn't sufficient rain in the year following, the buds will drop off!

Hence all their beekeepers are migratory. Each area is different and within those areas there could be microclimates. The area the bees are presently in might not flower but

a few hundred kilometres away in the same district, the trees could be flowering. Imagine travelling 400 kilometres to do a two-hour check of the hives, then going home again. That's what this beekeeper does; however, their roads are far better than ours so most Australian beekeepers just get used to travelling.

After eight years of visiting Australia I'm just beginning to recognise the different tree species. These were being pointed out to me while travelling through a forest on our way to visit an apiary on the northern coast that was having trouble with hive beetles. There's such a great diversity in their forests. A small yellow flower on the growing tip of each branch of a shrub is capable of producing one or two supers of honey. I could hardly see the flower at first glance, so asked how that could be. The beekeeper said even though there was only one flower at a time on the end of each branch, there were enough bushes spread through the immediate area (there's a square mile between apiary sites in the forest) to produce that much. Looking around I saw that a *Leptospermum* (manuka) had flowered recently. My host said a beekeeper had left hives there during its flowering and was surprised to find extra money in his bank account. Apparently the honey he had produced was active.

This is the shrub that the bees can collect a couple of boxes of honey from.

Hive beetles

Every time the hives are disturbed, the small hive beetles (SHB) get away from the corrals the bees confine them in and start laying. This beekeeper was losing four or five hives every time he opened the hives to remove honey. We were told by another beekeeper he had lost a quarter of the hives during the hot, humid summer season. He's organic so couldn't use the newly developed harbourage traps which have proved very successful in keeping SHB numbers low. The bees have to be strong enough to cover the entire frame surface; otherwise the beetles will lay in them.

To my way of thinking, having the bees on the coast just wasn't sustainable with these losses and AFB. Other beekeepers had suggested he move the hives inland to get away from the SHB but the beetles are now establishing further inland, in areas where they weren't expected to survive. His solution was to put on WSP supers (about the size of our three-quarter-depth super), so the bees could cover the frames while working a winter flow. While looking at beetles, I observed that some hives had already started capping frames of honey, just six days after he had removed the previous supers.

> "I was told by one beekeeper that since honey imports have been allowed into Australia, beekeepers are seeing new diseases."

As the temperature was only 20°C the beetles were not breeding, so it was safe to open a few hives. Beetles mainly concentrate in hives on the end of rows so these were the ones we opened. Immediately upon lifting the inner cover, we could see 15 to 30 beetles scurry off the top bars where they were being held and go into the frames. As quickly as you could lift off the top super, you could see them moving down the frames of the bottom super.

Other beekeepers I talked to suggested that the SHB must also be breeding outside the hives. Some are not seeing that many slimed-out hives, but they see hundreds of SHB coming into hives in the late afternoon during their breeding season. They didn't know where the SHB were coming from. It was suggested that apart from ripe fruit, SHB perhaps could breed on the small amount of protein in silage. How will our farmers cope with this when SHB arrives here? The beekeepers had also noticed that most of the feral bees had gone. SHB is worse than varroa as the beetles breed so quickly.

Hive beetles taking off after the cover board was lifted.

The beekeeper I worked with bred bantam hens as one means of controlling SHB around the honey house. This worked well until a family of kites made a nest nearby. They took over 100 bantams while raising four youngsters. He's now built up the numbers to 12 again but has lost another four roosters in the past week to a lone kite. Some of their birds like bees too. We watched swifts, honey eaters and several black and white birds take just about every bee that flew up a row of trees from the hives towards the honey house. When these beekeepers are raising queens, the shotgun comes out.

Other diseases

AFB is on the increase. NSW Primary Industries (formally the Department of Primary Industries) has been running disease courses to train beekeepers, and Col Wilson is selling AFB diagnostic kits at cost "because he has a passion for the industry to get rid of AFB as it's such a problem". (Apart from selling equipment, Col normally exports live bees to the USA but exports from the east coast have been prohibited because of the *Apis cerana* incursion, despite it being a thousand kilometres further north. He managed to export some from Western Australia.)

I was told by one beekeeper that since honey imports have been allowed into Australia, beekeepers are seeing new diseases. It's been a bit of a disaster. People over there feed the parrots with honey and the bees →

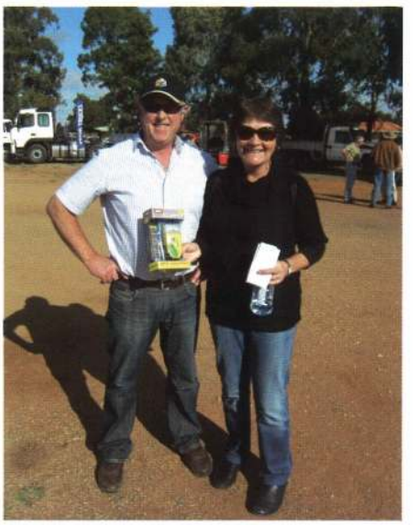
take advantage of this practice, so it doesn't take much to spread diseases from blends of local and imported honeys. One beekeeper told me that Australia now has two of the four different types of AFB and three of the fourteen types of chalkbrood. They now see different coloured mummies. (The only way to tell the difference is DNA testing for the different bacteria and fungi.)

We finished our visit to 'the lucky country' with a quick drive down the coast to Sydney, and then it was back to looking at bees for five days before the rain started again.

Why do we travel to Australia each year? They spend about $600,000 on bee research each year. Half comes from a levy on honey production, queens etc., which is matched dollar for dollar by the Government. Quite a bit of this research is applicable to our beekeeping, or could be in the future. It doesn't hurt to be informed; plus it's good to swap ideas and catch up with other members of the worldwide beekeeping family.

We need to put our research funding on a firm foundation rather than rely on volunteer contributions or the government funding, which is a bit of a lottery as to whether you get it or not. Perhaps it's time we re-established a commodity levy on hive numbers to support research before we fall too far behind the rest of the world. The only thing holding up our industry at present is manuka honey, and this knowledge was mostly obtained through research funding from 'all' beekeepers over 20 years ago.

Photos by Frank Lindsay.



The Lyttles won a prize in the Conference raffle: a personal locator beacon.

Office of Hon Dr Nick Smith

MP for Nelson
Minister for the Environment
Minister for Climate Change Issues
Minister for ACC

ENV 7053

Daniel Paul
Joint-Chief Executive Officer
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WELLINGTON 6143

Dear Mr Paul

Thank you for your letter of 13 May 2011 regarding neonicotinoids and their impact on bee populations.

I have received a number of letters from members of the public who are concerned over the impact of neonicotinoids on bees. The issue has also been raised by members of the Government caucus who have written to ERMA seeking are-assessment. I am encouraged to hear that, in your view, New Zealand is not in imminent danger of colony collapse disorder. I also appreciated your up to date brief on where the science is up to on this issue.

I also support your efforts to engage constructively with ERMA and relevant chemical industry stakeholders. The decision-making processes established under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 rely upon input of sound scientific information. These processes will benefit from your efforts to undertake the analysis necessary to inform your approach to this issue, should you decide to progress with an application for reassessment.

I appreciate your effort to keep me up to date with the beekeeping industry's position on neonicotinoids. It is important we take a science based approach to these sort of risks and I have confidence in ERMA's (soon to be the Environmental Protection Authority's) decision making on when a re-assessment is required.

Yours sincerely

Hon Dr Nick Smith
Minister for the Environment

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Keep an eye on those apiaries!

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

This month Frank discusses his experience during Bee Week, how to manage queen cells and control varroa and PMS, comments on wasps and tutu and recommends a book about hive increase.

Bee Week

Bee Week was an interesting experience. On a warmish afternoon, a very young reporter and a photographer turned up from *The Dominion Post* and we proceeded to my nearest apiary. Only a few bees were flying, bringing in pollen from gorse bushes a kilometre away. They jumped at the offer of bee suits, as they weren't suitably dressed for the outdoors or the country.

I told them a few things about the bees and myself. The photographer wanted to take a photo of bees flying everywhere, but that wasn't going to happen as most of the bees were already in a cluster, so he settled for bees on a frame up close to my face were already in a cluster, so he settled for a photo of me smoking a frame of bees held close to my face.

The interview went well I thought but when it appeared in print, it implied that all of my 400 hives (the reporter called them swarms) are situated in a 10-kilometre strip of coastline and they produce between 90 and 180 litres of honey each year. Wouldn't that be something! Hives 14 supers high: on a par with Australian honey production figures. Something to dream about, but how would I work those top supers? I would have to put a stepladder on the deck of the truck. I would also have to adopt the Australian system of taking the honey supers off every two weeks, but then again we don't have nectar flows like they do.

Queen cells and mite control

I have a nuc on the front lawn that has been steadily building up, courtesy of the honey syrup in the tui (bird) feeder and the odd super of wet frames with broken lugs from the honey house. Recently I put this nuc into a full-depth super and I was adding four frames of sealed honey to fill the super before moving it away. Feeding honey to bees is a no-no, unless you are absolutely certain you know where the honey came from and that it has been disease free for years. Even with these precautions it's still a risk, so I checked the brood as well. This little nuc now had four full frames of brood, along with two queen cell buds with just-hatched larvae and royal jelly in the base of the cells. It's rather unusual for hives to be producing queen cells at this time of the year (a result of the feeder perhaps), so I took them out and readied the hive for removal.

A week later (6 June) in an apiary on the coast, I was clearing away the grass from around the hives. As I was cleaning the slides under the mesh bottom boards, I found one of the bottom board slides was completely covered with varroa. I decided to check all the hives.

These hives had been working tree lucerne and black wattle; most had four frames with brood and were filling the cells where the bees were emerging with nectar. Two of these hives (three full-depth supers high) had bees in the top feeder with big patches of drone brood about to emerge, and one had newly produced queen cells. I rubbed these cells out, as I didn't feel they could mate successfully if it turned cold (after all, it's meant to be winter).

The hive with all the varroa on the slide was the size of a five-frame nuc and had full-blown parasitic mite syndrome (PMS). There were mites on the bees, lots of bees with shrunken wings, spotty brood, etc. I added strips but it wouldn't have survived without support, so I swapped its position with the hive with the queen cells. That got rid of two problems: it reduced the population in the strong hive, and boosted the population of the weak hive with the strong hive's field bees. On second thought, I should have also given the hive a couple of frames of emerging brood but didn't think of it at the time. I figured that the extra bees would be able to convert to feeding bees and kick-start the hive again.

A couple of the other hives had the odd bee with shrunken wings and although nothing else seemed amiss, I put mite strips into all the hives in the apiary. Perhaps I hadn't treated the hive properly, or perhaps they had robbed a feral hive and brought back mites that were now starting to spread to other hives. Without the mesh bottom board inspection, I might have left this apiary alone, and by spring there would have been quite a few hives dead.

After this surprise I started checking other apiaries; ones that had strips put in late. A couple of apiaries had four dead hives each, but that's what you get when you are late getting strips in. Those bees that were left were nowhere near the strips, having filled the centre frames that previously had brood and honey (robbed from the others). Mites were taking over again so they got a fresh lot of strips. Very disappointing but there is always a plus side—these hives won't be swarming in the spring. The downside is that they might not be strong enough to pull a nuc off in the spring either.

> "It only takes one swarm to cause reinvasion of the mites to all hives in an apiary when it breaks down."

This sort of thing happened when I first got mites. Feral hives were breaking down as bees brought mites home with them, and soon that colony was on the way out. By July half the hives in four apiaries were dead. Generally the first sign of this phenomenon happening is a 'winter honey flow': bees are flying and bringing in nectar but nothing is flowering.

When I initially got mites via a log moved from up north and was put under movement restrictions, I sealed in a lot of feral hives into the cavities using foam to try and eliminate varroa from the area. Unfortunately I couldn't find them all so left one feral close to one of my apiaries. During the third year with varroa, this hive broke down and was being robbed by my bees. All the hives in that apiary starting getting mites again and would have died without strips being put back into the hives. I was amazed that so many mites could come from just one feral hive.

Now I take note of hives that swarm and keep an eye on these apiaries. Two of these apiaries had a hive with PMS by the end of March. It only takes one swarm to cause reinvasion of the mites to all hives in an apiary when it breaks down.

In 2001 during my acute varroa phase, I also looked after a single hive for another beekeeper that was about 500 metres from one of my apiaries. It wasn't until this hive swarmed in the third year that it got varroa. Small individual hives don't put out much of a plume to attract drones but once swarmed, they seem to come in from all over the place until the queen has mated. Then they are gone, leaving behind the odd varroa mite, and so they spread.

The moral of the story: if you are new to mites (first, second or third year) and have hives in coastal regions where it is still warm, get out now and look in the grass in front of each hives for 'crawlers'. Bees that are crawling away from the hive on a warm day when the rest of the bees are flying provide a signal that something is wrong inside the hive. If one hive has mites, treat the whole apiary again.

Wasps: friend or foe?

While checking one apiary, I was coming across the odd queen wasp hibernating between the split board (I use them as a crown board) and the roof. You sometimes see the odd one but the number of wasps under each roof kept increasing: one hive even had four queens under the roof. I don't mind finding skinks hibernating under the roof—in fact, I leave some roofs propped up slightly with a stick for them—but tend to squash wasps when I come across them.

In times past, beekeepers used grain sacks for smoker fuel. These were left on a fence for a season to weather and to wash the poison out of the sacks. During the middle of winter, if you opened the sacks carefully you would find queen wasps hibernating in the middle. A queen killed early is one more wasp nest that's not going to get established.

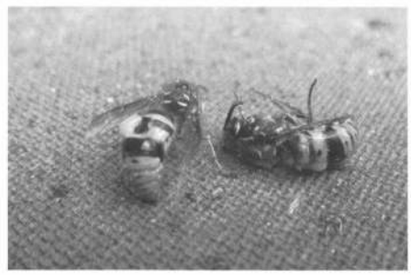
Wasps have been a real nuisance in some areas this year, but perhaps they have a beneficial side we didn't know about.

We have been through a couple of good droughts in areas where there are numerous tutu bushes, yet the beekeepers are not seeing tutin in the honey they sent off for testing. One observant beekeeper has noticed wasps working the honeydew right up until the passion vine hoppers die off, and it wasn't until then that the wasps started worrying the beehives. I monitor a few bushes in my suspect area and observed the odd wasps hanging around just as the hopper nymphs started appearing in December but they were gone the next week, never to appear again. Was it ants or was it the wasps that did the job?

On the West Coast, the beekeepers get honeydew from the beech forests but the bees don't start collecting the droplets of dew until it's very concentrated. They have observed that wasps will collect it first, and as it becomes more concentrated (through evaporation) the birds will collect it. But bees won't collect dew until it's got a higher sugar concentration, usually after the wasps have died off.

Perhaps we shouldn't be looking upon wasps as our enemy. Let them breed up but keep an eye on things and only clobber them after they have done their job cleaning the tutu bushes.

Queen wasp.



Two squashed wasps that won't be breeding in the spring. These look like a hybrid wasp; i.e., it has a thick bar but the rest of the dots don't join up. Common wasps have the dots joined to the black bars, which are thicker than the German wasp. Also, in German wasps, the dots don't join to the bars. Photos: Frank Lindsay.

Tutin toxin in honey

With all the tutu testing and observations going on, it now appears that we have to have three things happen to cause tutu poison to get into the honey:

1. a high concentration of passion vine hoppers on numerous tutu bushes. Remember, it is believed that the tutu poison is in the sap that comes on to the leaf as a result of a puncture wound, not the stuff that passes through the hopper
2. very low wasp numbers
3. a drought where bees have nothing to forage on apart from tutu honeydew.

This makes sense when you find trace amounts of tutin in the honey produced around big towns and cities. Beekeepers have reported tonnes of hoppers on ornamentals in the towns and cities, and there's quite an industry killing wasp nests. People don't like being stung, so wasp numbers are generally low from February onwards.

NZFSA has a monitoring system for the mussel industry. Perhaps they should set the same thing to monitor the known tutu hotspot areas (Bay of Plenty, Coromandel, the East Coast and Marlborough). Put some science behind the regulations, instead of insisting upon everybody blanket testing and finding nil or just a trace during drought years.

What are you reading?

I have been reading *Increase Essentials* by Lawrence John Conner. I brought the book off the Internet without considering that our bee stockists would have it on the shelf. →

This small paperback book (128 pages) covers the four basic ways to increase: nucs, swarms, packages and splits, as well as covering aspects of queen care and introduction. Graphs demonstrate the effectiveness of each method. This is an ideal book for a new commercial beekeeper expanding their hive numbers, or anybody just wanting to bone up on making nucs.

I'll perhaps change my method of requeening with virgins. Instead of just dropping a spare virgin into a hive without removing the old queen first, I'll now try putting her in a cage first and allow her to release slowly. I'm advised that this method provides better results than just dropping or smoking her into a hive. Then again, rolling her in honey or washing her with water generally removes her pheromones, giving her a better chance at being accepted and taking over the hive. It will depend on the situation and the number of queen cages I have on hand. Generally I cage queens that have emerged from queen cells I have produced but don't tend to do this for queens emerging from cells in the field.

The only thing the book didn't cover is splitting a full-size hive into, say, five nucs and forming a circle with each nuc facing into the centre on the old hive stand, so that the field bees distribute themselves equally amongst the nucs. But then again, you can only put so much in a book and you shouldn't go wrong following the advice in this book.

Things to do this month

Make up and prepare equipment for replacement or increase of hives. Don't put wax foundation in the frames until just before you are going to use it. Many beekeepers are using plastic frames these days as it's much less work. Check hives after storms and keep an eye out for 'crawlers'.

Apiweb being expanded

Apiweb, the computer-based program that allows individual beekeepers to change their apiary information, make applications to register or delete apiaries (and which allows beekeepers to go online to view AFB hives within 5 km of them), has been working reasonably well for beekeepers with over 500 hives. Byron Taylor (AsureQuality Limited, Hamilton) is opening it up to beekeepers with hive numbers from 50 to 500 to give the system a bit more of a test. Beekeepers in that category will shortly receive a letter giving them instructions about how to get on to and use the website.

Honey: it's deadly stuff

By Andrew Matheson

Honey may look innocent enough, and no doubt most of us have enjoyed the occasional taste of its sweetness, but beware: honey is a deadly killer.

Honey has been directly associated with many major diseases of the body, and last but not least—there exists a positive relationship between crime waves and honey consumption.

For years beekeepers have hidden the deadly facts from the public. Of course it is hard to believe that this innocent, natural food is responsible for anything bad; especially when honey is recognised as one of the oldest foods in the world. However, facts cannot lie and next time you are about to enjoy that succulent bite of comb, just remember:

1. research proves that nearly all sick people (from the common cold to the hospitalised cases) have at some time eaten honey.
2. 93.48% of criminals admitted eating honey within one month of committing the crime.
3. of the people born prior to 1860 and who ate honey, there has been a 100% mortality rate.
4. all honey eaters born between 1890–1900 have been found to have failing eyesight, wrinkled skin, poor hearing and, significantly, most cases have lost their teeth.
5. Research has proved that candidates for examinations are especially nervous prior to their tests. Researchers found that nearly all candidates ate honey within one week prior to their examination and further to this, many failed.
6. 97.4% of juvenile delinquents come from homes where honey is frequently served.

Source

Matheson, A. (1986). Honey. *Beelines*, 29, December 1986, (Produced by Andrew Matheson, then an Apicultural Advisory Officer, MAF Nelson.)

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 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*.

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