November 2012, Volume 20 No. 10

The New Zealand BeeKeeper

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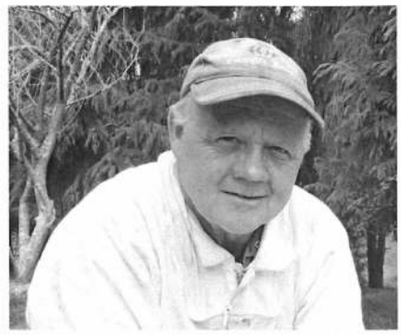
Front cover: A nectar collector had just lifted off from a lavender flower with its proboscis still extended. Frank Lindsay took this photo while passing time in Inverell, New South Wales.

Putting strategy into action



By Barry Foster, NBA President

The busy summer months are upon us. Kiwifruit pollination is full on for those beekeepers involved in this work.

Placing hives for the honey flow, as well as putting boxes on this month or in December (depending on where you live) means plenty of work. We beekeepers work hard for our living, and in many respects it is getting harder as factors outside of our control often impinge upon us.

I was reminded recently of the importance of a good work/life balance. With the summer months on our doorstep, it's worth remembering the need for balance.

Margaret Bonnano, a New York-based science fiction writer who wrote some of the Star Trek series, was once quoted as saying, "Being rich is having money, being wealthy is having time".

Don't forget the importance of having some time off when you should and not when you can, because quite often, you never can.

Executive Council meeting

Your Executive met in Wellington on 9 October. This will be the last face-to-face meeting until February, but teleconferences will be held in the interim. Russell Berry, our new ward member for the Lower South Island, joined us.

The agenda was packed with items for our consideration. Our association has had to spend a significant amount of money, including reserves, in running the VSH workshops in Hamilton and Christchurch in July. This has placed us in a tight financial position. The NBA Treasurer, Greg Byers, assures us that our situation is workable but will require prudence and sound budgeting over the next year.

The situation is the result of some unexpected, one-off expenses. We had to hold the two VSH workshops under the instruction of the Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF), which had largely funded the VSH queen research over the last eight years. The SFF demanded of us an adequate extension of the VSH project involving as many beekeepers as possible; hence these workshops were held. They proved to be very successful but costly.

The Executive Council is working through a range of options for subscriptions for the 2013–2014 year. Our aim is to build membership while keeping membership costs to a minimum, with a balanced spread across the various categories. It is always a balancing act but through it all, we must bear in mind how we can best serve our members. A strong and effective NBA can do just that. Our stated mission is "To help protect and promote beekeeping in NZ for the benefits of all members and those associated with the bee products industry".

> "The SFF demanded of us an adequate extension of the VSH project involving as many beekeepers as possible..."

We have been working through the strategic intent of our association and it's worth reminding ourselves what we do and stand for. Four strategic pillars underpin the Association's work plan:

1. **protect:** Co-ordinate and lead activities that protect the health of our bees
2. **represent and communicate:** Speak for the bee products industry on all matters affecting it and communicate effectively with stakeholders
3. **promote:** Promote Bees and Beekeeping in New Zealand
4. **build:** Build better systems, improved leadership, and a stronger NBA and bee products industry.

These feed into our work plan and that of the Secretariat.

At our October face-to-face meeting, the Executive Council decided to reinstate the National Office Update starting with the November issue, in order to keep members informed. The column will be brief and will appear in every issue, unless of course there is nothing to say.

Celebrating our 100th year

The organising committee from the Canterbury Branch is well under way in planning the NBA Conference for 2013. The committee is receiving assistance from other businesses such as Ecroyd Bee Supplies Ltd and Airborne Honey Ltd, which also are celebrating 100 years as companies.

This combined celebration and conference should not be missed, and will take place at the Hotel Ashburton, 16–20 June 2013.

The aim of the conference is to promote and celebrate 100 years of the National Beekeepers' Association in New Zealand, looking forward with pride in the past and integrity into the future.

Help for our Technical and Submissions Committee

The Technical and Submissions Committee comprises Don MacLeod, John McLean, Roger Bray and me. The committee deals with pesticide issues and makes submissions to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and its committees. The work is often detailed and technical.

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge a valuable donation by the Bay of Plenty Branch of $5,000 to the Technical and

Continued on page 6

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Continued from page 4

Submissions Committee. These funds will be held in a special account and used for the purposes of this committee, in consultation with the Bay of Plenty Branch.

This is a good example of the NBA's ability to assist its branches to achieve outcomes that can benefit branch members, as well as other members who may pollinate crops and indeed, the wider beekeeping industry. So, as you are placing hives in kiwifruit or other crops this summer, remember that a small group of people is working to lobby on and make submissions on new and existing pesticides that may affect our bees. No one else in the beekeeping industry is doing this, and it is a tangible reminder of our mission statement in action.

I wish you a prosperous season.

American Fowlbrood?

A recent issue of *Honeybee R&D News* published an excellent article entitled 'Elroy the super bee dog'.

As part of a RIRDC Honeybee Program project, Elroy, a young beagle, is being trained to detect the odour emitted by AFB in beehives.

Elroy is being fitted with a 'bee proof suit' to protect him without impairing his sense of smell. The article stated, "Once the suit is ready and Elroy has completed his training he will be taken to an aviary".

Our guess is that Elroy will be able to sniff out 'fowl brood' at the aviary, and as a multitasking dog he will also pick up foul brood in apiaries.

No doubt in New Zealand, the dog would have to attend a disease recognition course and pass a competency test so that he could be used to find AFB.

[Editor's note: Once again, the auto-correct function in word processing programs thinks it knows more than the writer. We wish the RIRDC well for this project, which is running for 12 months starting from early 2012, and look forward to seeing the results.]

Reference

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC). (2012). Elroy the super bee dog. *Honeybee R&D News*, No. 12, January 2012, page 2.

NATIONAL OFFICE UPDATE

By the NBA Secretariat

Your Executive has been very busy since the Napier conference in June.

There have been two further face-to-face meetings in Wellington and a teleconference call with an agenda that required several hours to complete.

With major projects to deal with such as GIA, a rules review and an evaluation of the membership categories for 2014, the frequency of meetings has been a priority to ensure progress is made before the busy season.

On top of meetings, the Executive has also welcomed four new Executive Council members: Dennis Crowley (Bay of Plenty Ward), Roger Bray (Central South Island Ward), Ricki Leahy (Upper South Island Ward) and, most recently, Russell Berry (Lower South Island Ward).

The Executive Council and the Secretariat have been busy providing the new Executive members with all the resources they require, as well as running an induction session to assist the new members. After a meeting in November, the Executive will put meetings on hold until February 2013 unless something of importance arises.

Workplan

The draft 2013 Workplan presented at conference this year has now evolved through three drafts and is about to be finalised by the Executive. The Workplan is a document designed to provide direction, focus and priorities for the NBA, and the wider industry, in coming years.

The document was prepared because the NBA recognises that neither the Association nor the wider beekeeping and honey products supply industry is well prepared to address a number of the major issues and risks that are looming for industry participants. A copy of the Workplan will be circulated to Branches and published in the journal and on the NBA website before Christmas.

GIA (Government Industry Agreement)

The NBA signed the GIA MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with MPI (Ministry for Primary Industries) on 21 September. This now paves the way for the NBA to form a working group. Once formed, the members of this group will be brought up to speed with the GIA process and prioritising of the industry's pests and diseases.

Leading up to the signing of the MoU, the Executive instructed the Secretariat to meet with as many stakeholder industry leaders as possible to gauge where their industries were with signing the MoU, and to discuss their interest in working together under the GIA, bearing in mind the impact of bees on their industries. The Secretariat met with 16 stakeholder industries over August and September and found most do not consider the beekeeping industry in their incursion response planning. With most groups signing the MoU, they have indicated they are willing to talk and the NBA signing the MoU has put us on their radar.

NBA website

The Executive has discussed their wish to make better use of the NBA website. They would like to list more up-to-date information from Branches such as field days, diseaseathons, meetings and events. We could also look at loading your newsletters and other resources you may have. The swarm collection list also needs updating, so if you know of any members in your area willing to be listed as a contact for swarm collections, please let us know.

An email will now be circulated to Branches once a month seeking content. Feel free to contact Alex Hema at secretary@nba.org.nz with any other ideas for content. All ideas welcome!

Membership categories and rates

The Executive Council is working on a review of the NBA's membership categories and rates for 2014. The rates for 2013 were agreed at the 2012 AGM in June.

The work being undertaken covers categories and rates primarily for commercials, beekeeping clubs and journal subscription options. After some market

testing, the draft options will be circulated to Branches for feedback with a view to ratification at the 2013 AGM in Ashburton.

A recent mailout to prospective benefit partners has received some favourable responses that are being developed for the 2013 membership year. Information on new benefit discounts will be in your 2013 membership pack, in the February journal and on the NBA website.

Colony Collapse Disorder

A recent claim that Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) may have come to New Zealand earned a lot of coverage for the NBA. Daniel Paul made numerous comments in the media and was quoted on Newstalk ZB, The New Zealand Herald, 3 News, and a range of other Internet sites, newspapers, and radio stations. The concerns that CCD may be in New Zealand have since been confirmed as unfounded.

Linda Newstrom-Lloyd

Research Associate at Landcare Research, Linda Newstrom-Lloyd, was in Wellington on Monday 15 October. The Secretariat organised a range of meetings for Linda with potential co-funders for her current project, 'Flowers for healthy bees in times of pollen dearth'. Linda is looking to extend her research for another three years.

Oops!

In the club contacts page of the October journal (page 53) we gave the name of the President of the Auckland Beekeepers' Club Inc as Alan Tinker, rather than Alan Harwood. We apologise to Alan Harwood for the error.

Dates for 2013 Annual State Conferences in Australia

New South Wales Apiarists' Association: 22–24 May 2013
Tasmanian Beekeepers' Association: 31 May –1 June 2013
Victorian Apiarists' Association: 5–6 June 2013
Queensland Beekeepers' Association: TBA
South Australian Apiarists' Association: 19–20 June 2013
Western Australia Farmers Federation Beekeeping Section: 4 July 2013
Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) Annual General Meeting: 5 July 2013

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How beekeepers spread AFB disease

By Dr Mark Goodwin, Team Leader Pollination and Agriculture, Plant and Food Research, Ruakura Research Centre
Email: mark.goodwin@plantandfood.co.nz

Without the intervention of beekeepers, American foulbrood disease (AFB) probably spreads quite slowly.

However, modern beekeeping practices have increased the number of opportunities for AFB to spread. This article describes the way beekeepers contribute to the spread of AFB.

Swapping brood

The most significant way beekeepers spread AFB is moving frames of brood between colonies. Although you need to feed about five million spores to a colony to infect it with AFB, a single diseased larva may contain 2,500 million spores. If you wanted to infect a colony, the most certain way of doing so would be to place a frame of brood from a diseased colony into it. There are many examples where beekeepers have created significant disease problems by swapping brood. Many of these have occurred while preparing hives for kiwifruit pollination.

Feeding pollen

This is another high-risk activity. The design of most pollen traps ensures that many of the AFB scales that bees remove from a hive end up in the pollen trap with the pollen. For this reason, feeding pollen can be another very good way of spreading AFB.

Feeding honey

Feeding extracted honey contaminated with AFB spores is also a high-risk activity. There are many horror stories where beekeepers have had to burn large numbers of hives after feeding extracted honey.

Extracted honey supers

Even though extracted honey supers usually contain less infected material than brood or pollen, they are a major source of cross infection. This is because of the frequency with which they are swapped between hives. In most commercial outfits they are taken off one hive and placed on another hive at least once each year.

Some large reductions in disease levels have been achieved by making sure extracted honey supers are returned to the hives they were removed from. The best indicator that extracted supers are spreading AFB is through a scattered occurrence of the disease with no pattern to it.

Other hive parts

Swapping other hive parts can also spread AFB. This can be a problem when a dead hive is broken up for parts. The floorboard is usually the biggest problem because bees often drop infected material on it.

Robbing

Bees robbing honey from an infected colony is another major way AFB spreads (Figure 1). In most cases beekeepers have contributed to the problem, either by allowing an infection to get to the stage that the colony is weakened enough to be robbed, allowing a diseased colony to die of other causes, or by not protecting it from stock so that it gets knocked over and robbed. Unfortunately, robbing also occasionally happens when an AFB hive is killed and stored in an inappropriate manner.

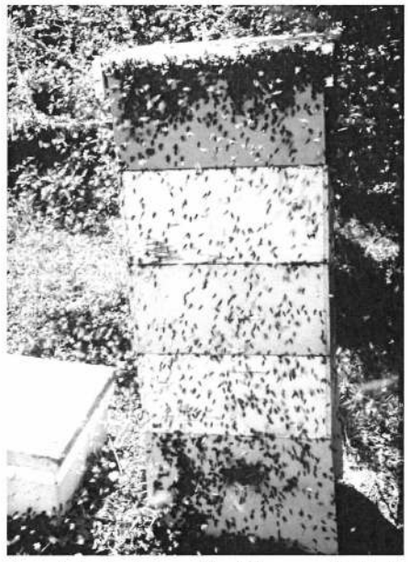


Figure 1. A colony being robbed.. Photo provided by Dr Mark Goodwin, Plant and Food Research.

Drift

Bees drifting between hives is a lesser source of cross infection but still significant. The likelihood of drift increasing spread increases with the degree of infection and the amount of drift that occurs. Anything that can be done to reduce drift is usually worthwhile doing.

The remaining pathways with which AFB spreads are less important.

Beekeeping equipment

Bee suits, gloves, and hive tools have at times been implicated in the spread of AFB. Bee suits probably never spread AFB, although gloves and hive tools may do very occasionally. It is therefore good practice to have a clean pair of gloves that can be worn after an AFB colony has been found so the infected gloves can be taken home and cleaned thoroughly. Hive tools can be cleaned on site using a flame.

Other mechanisms for spread

A large number of other mechanisms have been suggested to be important for the spread of AFB, including truck decks, steering wheels, hive straps, queens, queen cells, foundation, flowers and the soil outside a hive. Although some of these may occasionally pose a small risk, they are so insignificant compared to the other ways the disease spreads that they can usually be safely ignored.

[Editor's note: This is the ninth article of a series that has been written for the Management Agency for the American Foulbrood National Pest Management Strategy. These articles were first published beginning in 2003, and have been reviewed and updated where necessary. The original title was How beekeepers spread American foulbrood disease'.

We will run these articles on a regular basis until the series is complete. The articles cover a range of aspects of American foulbrood control, including how to inspect for and identify diseased colonies, the management of colonies to prevent American foulbrood and a beekeeper's legal obligation with regard to American foulbrood.]

Chux® multi cloths for SHB monitoring

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

I was recently in Australia to attend the New South Wales Apiarists' Association (NSWAA) conference.

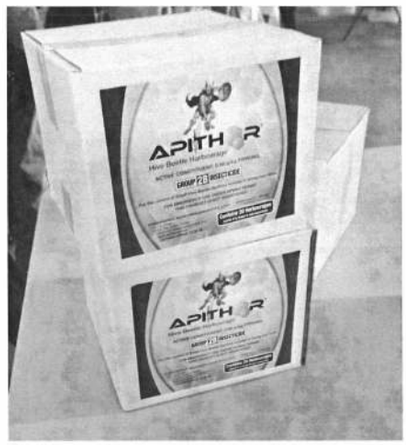
While I was there, I visited a number of beekeepers who allowed me to see their beekeeping, as well as visiting honey houses and seeing a little of the country away from the main highways.

I go to Australia each year to pick up on their current research and look at how this could be used in my beekeeping. Being the 'lucky country', they have experienced more biosecurity problems than us in recent years and it's valuable to learn from their experience. Maybe that's a bit harsh. We have had some serious biosecurity breaches in the last couple of years that directly impact on our industry and have proven equally devastating.

At one of the NSWAA Conference presentations I attended, Nick Annand presented his latest research findings on the small hive beetle (SHB). He discussed the temperatures they fly at and the numbers and dates when they move in and out of the hives. Most beetles will fly to a hive during the day and wait under the bottom board until sunset before entering the hive. Their flight activity is related to temperatures above 15°C. Temperatures below 15°C mean no activity or breeding, although the beetles will still be in the hives.

Beekeepers along the northern NSW coast have reported small hive beetle numbers have dropped in the last year, perhaps because they have killed nearly all the feral hives and/or because of all the rain and flooding they have experienced during the last 12 months.

There are a number of traps on the market, the best and most expensive being the Apithor at $5.00 (AUD), designed by the research team at the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) headed by Dr Garry Levot. These traps are the size of a DVD disk case with an inner core laced with a small quantity of fipronil. Apithor traps are placed on the bottom board and slid to the back so the entrance is away from the light. They work well and the only maintenance is to tap them on their end occasionally to remove any lodged beetles, so that more beetles can have access to the active ingredient. The traps have a registered life of six months.



Apithor traps being exhibited at a field day at Coffs Harbour, NSW.

For more information, see the report 'Insecticidal Control of Small Hive Beetle' (RIRDC Pub No: 07/146), available as a free download from https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/07-146. RIRDC is developing a ready-to-use-product.

> "I believe these cloths should be used in all our surveillance hives around the country."

Organic beekeepers don't have this luxury of using this trap so have to rely on traps which contain mineral oil or diatomaceous earth, or use Chux® multi cloths. Yes, these cloths seem to work to control hive beetle. The least expensive option is to purchase these through Uncle Bills Wholesale Club (370-mm-wide cloths sell for about $8.00).

A fresh cloth is placed across the frames of the top honey super roughly every couple of weeks, when new supers are put on to replace the ones taken away for extraction. The bees don't like these cloths and try to take them apart and out of the hive. In the process they make them fluffy. The beetles move up to the top of the hive to get away from the light and bees, and get trapped in the cloth, where they either die from starvation or the bees get hold of them and dispatch them. Wayne (the organic beekeeper we visited) said he can get up to 50 beetles trapped in each cloth and this is helping to control them.

I believe these cloths should be used in all our surveillance hives around the country. Beekeepers close to ports and airports should be asked to place these cloths in their hives and monitor them for hive beetle as an ongoing exercise, instead of relying on a once-a-year visual inspection carried out by contractors.

I don't think we or our Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) will be able to do any sort of eradication exercise when the small hive beetle is found in New Zealand as they can fly up to 15 kilometres a day. But at least with an ongoing method of surveillance we will be given early warning and will be able to make preparations for their control.

Typical number of small hive beetles corralled along the top bars of an end-of-row hive during winter in coastal NSW. Photos: Frank Lindsay.

An interview with Mary-Ann Lindsay

Mary-Ann Lindsay is the Southern North Island Ward representative on the Executive Council.

The Secretariat interviewed her about her role and experience in the industry.

What made you decide to become a beekeeper?

Before we started beekeeping my husband Frank worked for Telecom, servicing telephones. One of his regular clients was an orphanage in Wellington, where they kept two hives. One day a child stepped on a bee, the orphanage decided it was too much of a risk having the bees on site, and offered them to Frank. He accepted them gratefully—while he was at the orphanage, he spent more time talking to the gardener about bees than he did servicing the telephones!

Like many wives, I have taken over doing the business books, mending suits and selling the honey along with all the other family issues.

Tell me about your current business.

Forty-two years on, we still love keeping bees. Our two hives have grown to just under 300, although we will be dropping down soon so we can spend more time with our grandchildren. We are bulk honey-producers, trading as Lindsay's Apiaries.

What do you enjoy most about beekeeping?

I love the flexible lifestyle, especially having time for my family. We have one grandson and two granddaughters, and our grandson loves going out to the bees with Frank in his bee suit. He is learning about beekeeping by osmosis. We took him to a farm day in February, and, age five, he took all the other children and taught them about queens and worker bees—Frank hopes we have another beekeeper in the family as both our boys are allergic to bees.

Why did you decide to become an Executive Council member?

I've been on the Executive Council for three and a half years. Frank and I have kept bees for a long time, so we know the industry well. I still constantly consult with members of the Southern North Island Branch, and I'm committed to being truly representative of my ward. I had the time to give something back to the beekeeping industry, and after being around for so long I wanted to ensure mistakes made in the past aren't repeated.

Tell me a bit about your role on the Executive Council, including your priorities as an Executive Council member.

I think communication and transparency are crucial for the NBA. My main priorities are ensuring communication with members and stakeholders is open and honest, and that we actively engage with them. I also think transparency in what the NBA subscription is spent on is key for the Association. It's tough out there at the moment—money is tight, with compliance costs skyrocketing. And when you're relying on honey sales, it's important for beekeepers to keep an eye on every cent.

What key issues and challenges do you see the beekeeping industry facing?

The key challenge I see facing the beekeeping industry is our lack of unity, and that has to change. We're individuals who should be working together, instead of against one another.

What will you do about those issues and challenges, during your time on the Executive Council?

I'd like people to realise that all beekeepers face the same problems. Whether you have one hive or 1000 hives, whether you're in the North or the South Island, the issues and challenges are still the same. The NBA is for all beekeepers, both hobbyists and

commercials, because at the end of the day we all want the same thing: healthy bees. If we can all recognise that, then we may be able to progress into a more unified industry.

When you're not at work or attending a Council meeting, where will we find you?

I belong to a local craft co-operative that I knit for, and I do some voluntary sewing for Wellington Hospital, making IV gowns for the sick babies. I read a lot. I am the AFB test administrator and things can get busy with 12 courses being run from September to late November this year.

Every year Frank and I travel to New South Wales for their beekeeping conference, and we are both on the publications committee, which takes up quite a bit of our free time. Any other time we have is spent with my family and friends.

Gary Sinkinson showing AFB to a group at the Southern North Island Branch field day, 23 September 2012. Photo: Fiona O'Brien.

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Annual summer school in Ireland

By Carol Downer

During the school summer holidays in Ireland, the students at Franciscan College Gormanston leave and the Federation of Irish Beekeepers' Associations moves in.

July 2012 marked the 52nd consecutive Annual Summer Course that has been held here. From 1946–1960 the courses were held in various educational establishments. Now, most of the attendees stay in the boarding school dormitories and many of the classrooms have been turned into offices, shops and special workshop areas. Everyone eats in the large school dining room and there is a special tea and coffee area. This year over 400 people attended and 225 stayed at the school. Most are Irish, with other attendees from Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand.

The Federation of Irish Beekeepers' Associations was formed on 17 March 1943. There are 56 associations within Ireland with over 2,700 members. The federation was reconstituted four years after the breakdown of the IBA (Irish Beekeepers' Association), originally formed in 1881.

Lectures

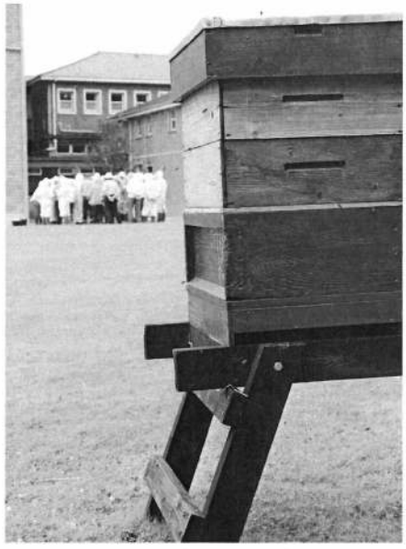
There are two Memorial Lectures: this year they were 'Bees and Beekeeping in Ancient Ireland' and 'The Conservation and Improvement of the Dark Irish Bee'.

The 'Bees and Beekeeping in Ancient Ireland' presentation was given by Valerie Hall, professor of palaeoecology at Queen's University Belfast. Valerie, with her expertise in flora, collaborated with a colleague, whose expertise is insects, to bring the information together. There is evidence of beekeeping around the B.C./A.D. split (i.e., around the time Christ was born) and in the Brehon Laws, written in 800 A.D., there is a section related to bees and beekeeping.

'The Conservation and Improvement of the Dark Irish Bee' was talked about in several presentations. This bee is suited to the ever-changing Irish weather conditions. The bee is very gentle on the comb, has winter hardiness, is thrifty, has good longevity and tends to supersede—not swarm. Many beekeepers are involved in breeding to improve other aspects such as hygienic and grooming behaviour. Beekeepers from different parts of the country swap queens and the wing morphology is studied by a number of Irish bee enthusiasts in the pursuit of breed purity.

Workshops and guest speakers

This year the workshops offered were Microscopy Basics and Disease Diagnosis, Bees Bumblebees and Wasps, Queen Rearing, Beeswax for Cosmetics and Flowers, Demonstration of Furniture Polishing, Colony Evaluation and Recording, Section Honey Production, Queen Rearing with Mini-nucs, Woodwork in Beekeeping with Basic Tools, Nature Walk, Morphometry, Encaustic Art (i.e., hot wax), Mead Making, Practical Colony Assessment, Wax Products (hand cream and soap), Candle Making, Heather Honey Production and Presenting a Display Class at the Honey Show. Last year a Pollen Identification Workshop was held.



Beginner beekeepers taking instruction.

There are three different lecture areas where two morning and two afternoon lectures of an hour's duration are delivered. Beginners and intermediate courses are held in one classroom area. The guest speaker gives a daily presentation in the main hall along with presentations from other senior lecturers.

Then comes decision time: which presentations to attend. I went to some of the workshops last year and so decided to listen to all of the guest speaker's lectures. Last year Professor Robert Pickard, an international authority on the biology of honey bees, was the guest lecturer. He was one of those speakers who embodied the subject with knowledge and passion. Professor Pickard was head of the Bee Research Unit at Cardiff University for 25 years. Besides being extremely knowledgeable, he had wonderful stories to tell.

This year, Jennifer Berry from the University of Georgia gave some great presentations. Two of note: 'Sub-Lethal Effects of Chemicals in Honey Bee Colonies' and 'Colony Density and its Effects on Honeybees'. The latter subject is Jennifer's current research project, so she gave an overview and a few preliminary findings. 'Beeswax Contamination by Chemical Residue' was the small part covered in the 'Sub-Lethal Effects of Chemicals in Honeybee Colonies'. The wax was analysed before and after its placement in the hive. Two samples of the wax tested after being in the hive were found to have four times above and 160 times above the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) recommendation for its chemical type. One of these treatments has been taken off the market. Jennifer's team assessed the effects of chemicals on brood survivorship and adult longevity, also on worker learning and retention and responsiveness to queen pheromone. This work has been reviewed and will be published by the International Bee Research Association (IBRA) in the near future. One lecturer referred to wax as being the "liver of the colony". It should be as clean as possible to maintain good health in the colony.

I really enjoyed the candle-making workshop as the candle dipping was demonstrated really well and all of the little tips to achieve good results were passed on.

Continued on page 15

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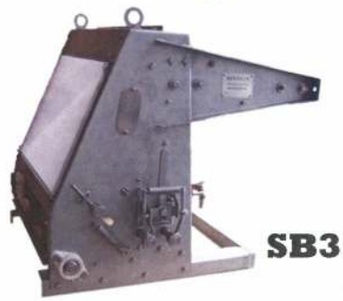

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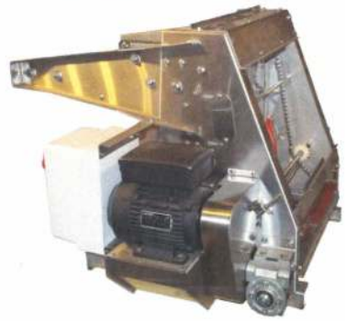

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Continued from page 13

Other events

Evening activities include a wine-and-cheese reception, table quiz, exam techniques, honey show presentation of prizes and a 'monster social evening'. At the end of the week the Annual Congress is held.

Dennis Ryan won the Display Class of the Irish National Honey Show for this entry.

The Irish Honey Show, selection of a Honey Queen, the Annual Mass for Living and Deceased Members, Education Board Meeting and a meeting of the Summer Course programme committee are also on the annual calendar. Of course, there is the traditional photo taken of the year's attendees. At the conclusion of the week, 61 beekeepers were presented with certificates at the prizegiving for having passed the beginners course.

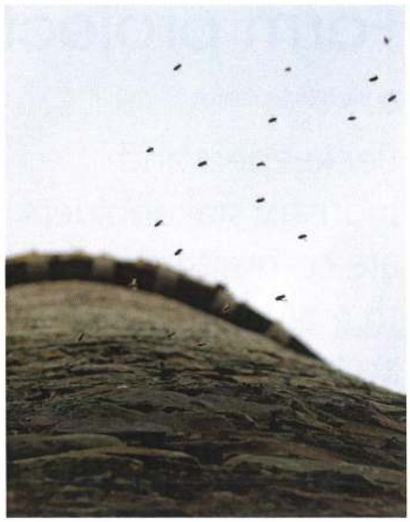
This year, Dodi Dineen was recognised for 40 consecutive years of course attendance. In years past she attended with her husband, who was a beekeeper until his death. Dodi's health has deteriorated so she no longer keeps her late husband's bees. This year she was in the Honey Show room and happily shared her late husband's winning wax techniques.

The Honey Show is well attended: €1 is paid per entry. There are 44 classes and five main winning categories. I was delighted to be judged the winner of the illustrated poster section and to be highly commended for the photograph section. I received a €7 prize. The guest lecturer for the following year's course is announced to plant the seed for attendance. Flemming Vejsnæs from Denmark has been accorded this honour for 2013. And, not to be missed, according to Jennifer Berry, is Tom Seeley from the USA in 2014.

Carol Downer's winning entry in the poster section of the Irish National Honey Show competition. Carol notes that it was the only entry ☺

Renewing friendships, and greetings from Ireland

It was great to catch up with people I had met last year, and a few I had met at Apimondia. Bob Spencer from the Bees for Development Trust, a charitable trust that funds beekeeping education and equipment to developing countries, took me on a mini-tour of the college. This included two bees' nests, one of which appears (according to the groundsman) to have been in situ for years. The other nest was inside the stone wall of Gormanston Castle (an early Victorian castle). This nest had been vacant last year but was busy again this year.



A cloud of bees entering their turret nest.

Also on the grounds is Ireland's largest tree, a sycamore, although I'm not sure if this information was accurate or hearsay. The castle is part of the living and administration area for the monks. The school buildings were attached to the castle in the 1950s.

The Irish–New Zealand relationships are remembered with hellos to Gary Jeffery and Jeff Robinson from Sam Miller, to Maureen Maxwell from Tom Brown and Norman Walsh and to Barry Foster from Tom Brown. Vanessa Drew (this year's honey queen) sends regards to John and Peter Berry.

The official photo of summer school participants.

BUSINESS

Farm project seeks additional funding

By the NBA Secretariat

Beekeepers and industry stakeholders are committed to maintaining an industry-wide farm project that investigates and promotes which bee forage plants have the highest protein content for bees.

Those working on the Trees for Bees 'Flowers for healthy bees in times of pollen dearth' Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF) project are applying for further funding from SFF.

"The goal of this project is to find out which plants have the highest protein content, and promote these to farmers to plant on their farms," says Dr. Linda Newstrom-Lloyd, who is heading the project.

"The project has morphed into a large umbrella programme that includes everyone involved in the bee industry, benefitting farmers, beekeepers, and other associated industries.

"Bee survival and sustainable pollination services are not guaranteed in New Zealand. As farmers install more plentiful bee forage of high-protein pollen-bearing plants, pollinator services will improve, resulting in stronger, healthier bees."

Linda says the three-year project is in its second year, and it needs further funding to continue the work.

"During our first two years, we conducted research in Canterbury and Gisborne, but we need to continue searching for high-protein pollen-bearing plants in other regions too.

"After only one month of research at Eastwoodhill Arboretum in Gisborne, we found three new species that are not included in the primary bee plant lists for New Zealand. The research is certainly worthwhile.

"We are also building a database of the uses of plants, so farmers can select good bee forage plants when they are planting for other reasons.

"If we can obtain funding, we would like to create an online information dissemination tool, for beekeepers and farmers to design their own plantings to feed bees nutritious pollen."

Linda believes this kind of work is of great benefit to the beekeeping industry.

"More high quality bee forage means a greater population of healthy bees that can resist pests, diseases and pesticides, and reproduce at higher rates," she says.

"We are inviting anyone who would like to support the continuation of this work to help us with co-funding or in-kind support. Please contact Linda at newstroml@landcareresearch.co.nz."

For further information on the project, please contact Linda Newstrom-Lloyd.

WEATHER

Borderline/weak El Niño forecast

The NIWA National Climate Centre says that the Pacific Ocean is close to El Niño thresholds, but the atmosphere has yet to show patterns typical of El Niño.

The seasonal forecast models indicate that the conditions are likely to remain close to these thresholds, or transition towards a weak and short-lived El Niño event over the next three months. For New Zealand, it is not expected to result in the enhanced southwesterly and westerly airflow that is usually associated with El Niño events. Over the coming season (October-December), higher than normal pressures are expected south of Australia and New Zealand, and lower pressures are forecast to the north of the North Island, resulting in a weaker than normal westerly flow over the country.

Air temperatures are likely to be near average or above average in all regions. However as is typically the case in spring, cold snaps may still occur from time to time. Sea surface temperatures are expected to be warmer than normal around the South Island, and cooler than normal to the east and north of the North Island.

Rainfall is likely to be above normal or near normal in the north and west of the North Island, as well as in Nelson-Marlborough, and near normal in the rest of the country. Soil moisture and river flows are forecast to be above normal in the southwest of the North Island, near normal or above normal in the north of the North Island and in Nelson-Marlborough, and near normal elsewhere.

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Buzzy Bee supports Bee Week. The NBA logo has been placed onto Buzzy Bee and a percentage of the profit on the products sold is contributed to the NBA.

Pesticides, surfactants and QuickBayt

By Don MacLeod

The October issue had an excellent letter to the editor from Mr Ian Berry, a former NBA representative on the Agricultural Chemicals Board and Pesticides Board.

The letter was excellent because it reminded us how beekeepers were represented on these important organisations and took part in decision making in the past.

Beekeepers have had this representation and participation taken from them in the pesticide approval process used today.

As noted above, Mr Berry represented the NBA on the Pesticides Board, and prior to that the Agricultural Chemicals Board. The Pesticides Board was swept away in a series of government-led legislative changes that started in the 1990s.

The first change introduced was the new Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO Act). Due to the changes in that Act, the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997 (ACVM Act) replaced the Pesticides Act 1979.

The legislative climate at the time of the introduction of these two Acts was to reduce the number of organisations involved in hazardous substances management.

By definition all pesticides are defined as hazardous substances because they are considered ecotoxic; i.e., they kill/control living things.

With the introduction of these two Acts, New Zealand adopted the key parts of the OECD guidelines for managing hazardous substances and pesticides as part of a globally harmonised system.

Today we have a two-step process in approving new pesticides:

1. approval to manufacture/import and release to the environment a new pesticide has to be sought from the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), under the HSNO Act;
2. to apply a pesticide on food or animal food crops, the product has to be registered by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) under the ACVM Act. This Act also regulates veterinary medicines.

The NZFSA, now a part of the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), has no board of appointed members. Input by the public or interested parties on the introduction of new pesticides is now restricted only to the EPA process. The Government appoints the EPA Board but unlike in Mr Berry's day, I cannot find any professional beekeepers appointed to the Board or the HSNO Committee.

> "After 12 years, the chemical companies…have done nothing about managing the ecotoxic properties of their products."

The current EPA Board membership comprises a former mayor of Wellington (the Chairperson), seven persons with management backgrounds, and only one person with commercial interests in sheep and beef farming: an engineer who was formerly on the Pesticides Board.

This EPA Board appoints a HSNO Committee that makes the decisions on applications made under the HSNO Act 1996. The HSNO Committee comprises the Chairman (an engineer and former general manager), two lawyers and five persons best described as experienced environmental researchers of various kinds.

Fortunately, the EPA calls for public submissions on notified applications (note: not all applications) such as new pesticides in the hazardous substance approvals. This is where the NBA Technical and Submissions Committee operates. At three recent hearings this year, your NBA has been the only party to make a public submission.

Mr Ian Berry's comments are very interesting as they relate to a time when government boards were appointed personnel, with an interest in how their day-to-day work influenced how our society worked with new ideas and products that were approved.

Today the NBA has only the rights of any citizen to question the science and regulatory control of a pesticide through EPA hearings. And it is through this submission process the NBA is making a case to protect bees from the hazards caused by what is put in the spray tank.

Surfactants

The NBA is concerned that many surfactants are toxic and or harmful to invertebrates. New Zealand researchers found that surfactants are toxic to honey bees in 2000 (Goodwin and McBrydie, 2000) . They identified that surfactants were toxic to honey bees when tested topically and orally.

Goodwin and McBrydie identified that where surfactants were being used, products could not be declared 'bee safe' due to the toxic effects of the surfactant added to the spray tank.

Of the surfactants identified in 2000 as being toxic to bees, none of these products being marketed today have any warnings that they are harmful to bees on their labels.

After 12 years, the chemical companies and their agents have done nothing about managing the ecotoxic properties of their products.

This year a study by Ciarlo, Mullin et al. (2012) identified that honey bee learning can be deleteriously impaired when in contact with surfactants used in spray mixtures.

A key conclusion from this study is that the organosilicone spray adjuvants, now widely used, may contribute to declining honey bee health.

The present regulatory situation for surfactants is that they are not regulated:

i. surfactants are not registered as plant compounds or agricultural chemicals under the ACVM Act 1996. Adjuvants, which are products such as surfactants added to the spray tank with the pesticide, are considered 'safe' to food
ii. surfactants are not individually approved under the HSNO Act 1996. The majority of surfactants are normally imported/ manufactured and used/released under the EPA Group Standard HSR002503.

It should be noted that the Group Standard HSR002503 is titled Additives, Process Chemicals and Raw Materials (Subsidiary Hazard) Group Standard 2006, and is specifically for hazardous substances used in the chemical formulation industry, where surfactants are widely used.

Surfactants are used in many common products such as shampoos, cleaning products, lubricants, paints, etc. Group Standards are a 'shortcut' HSNO approval for a group of hazardous substances of a similar nature, type or use and define the controls required to be in place to ensure safe use.

Since the introduction of the HSNO Act 1996, the EPA has never explained why surfactants that are imported and used under Group Standard HSR002503 can also be used in a wide and dispersive manner, such as pesticide spraying in the environment. This is of major concern, especially when Group Standard HSR002503 does not identify this intended use for the chemical or provide any controls for this use.

This failure by the EPA to apply appropriate controls to a hazardous substance used in a wide and dispersive manner in agriculture and horticulture is a non-compliance of the HSNO Act 1996, which requires a precautionary approach as detailed in Section 7 of that Act.

Surfactants are widely used in agriculture and horticulture; either mixed in spray tanks or incorporated with herbicides, fungicides, insecticides and foliar nutrient formulations. The NBA Technical and Submissions Committee has made its first submission to the EPA with respect to application APP201365 with respect to the use of surfactants in herbicides. A public hearing on this submission took place in Hamilton on 31 October.

QuickBayt decision

The EPA has issued its decision on QuickBayt, a spray-on or paint-on fly bait product containing the insecticide imidacloprid (a neonicotinoid chemical) and sugar with a short-acting pheromone[1] , (Z)-9-tricosene.

We are concerned that the EPA has not shown great expertise in determining this decision. To change this decision the NBA will need to appeal to the High Court, but an appeal will be permitted only on a question of law. Although the EPA makes the rules, it is not subject to any criticism except in *The New Zealand BeeKeeper.*

The Technical Committee has made the EPA aware of these key issues with its decision:

1. the active ingredient (imidacloprid) has residual activity. Imidacloprid can remain toxic to invertebrates such as flies and honey bees for some weeks after application. The Bayer Australia label for QuickBayt Spray clearly states, "Will visibly kill flies for 4 weeks" and that reapplication would usually occur four to six weeks after application. The application to the EPA from Bayer Crop Science Australia for use in New Zealand (a publicly available document) never mentioned this property of residual insecticidal activity in the environment. The draft New Zealand label for QuickBayt is not publicly available

2. the HSNO Committee, in Section 3.2.1 of their decision discussion, showed it did not understand the long-term activity of the insecticide imidacloprid when stating, *"However, as the risks of killing bees are only significant when the substance is being used, the approved handler requirement need only apply during the application stage of the substance's lifecycle (including mixing and dilution of the bait)."* The concern here is that HSNO Committee had not identified the risk of imidacloprid killing honey bees for many days after the application of QuickBayt

3. the HSNO Committee has introduced the term 'close proximity' to define how close beehives should be to the site of application, but has not defined the term itself. The definition of 'control' is given in Section 4.13.1: *"A person must avoid as far as reasonably practicable applying QuickBayt Spray Fly Bait if there are beehives in close proximity. If the premises to be treated are in close proximity to beehives then the substance should be applied during times when bees are less active, such as in the evenings."* Again, the term 'close proximity' is not defined.

   The EPA discussion in Section 3.2 states, *"A person must not apply QuickBayt Spray Fly Bait if bees are foraging or are likely to forage in the area."* And in Section 3.2.3, the EPA discusses this situation: *"If the premises to be treated are in close proximity to beehives then the substance should be applied during times when bees are less active, such as in the evenings."*

   You do not have to be a beekeeper to be aware that the HSNO Committee's decision does not make sense when a residual insecticide such as imidacloprid is applied. Once applied, the insecticide is active for at least four weeks, especially when bees are actively foraging during the heat of the day. And the HSNO Committee has failed to recognise that bees can forage over a five-kilometre radius from a hive

On the positive side, the HSNO Committee has decided that applying QuickBayt must be under the control of an Approved Handler of Agrichemicals. Sales and use are restricted to sites where an Approved Handler of Agrichemicals is on the site, and that handler must accept responsibility for the use of the product (Sections 4.8 and 4.10).

So what does this mean?

The Australian-based applicant Bayer Crop Science Pty Limited has to ensure that it has trained applicators marketing and applying this product, which is a good thing. But if one of our members loses hives near a ➔

[1]EPA APP201268: available on the Hazardous Substance Register at www.epa.govt.nz

provincial meatworks, will they be able to make a claim against an Australian company?

For approved applicators wanting to make some income applying QuickBayt, how thorough will they be in checking on the 'close proximity' of beehives? The NBA Technical Committee believes that it will not be possible to identify all hives within a five-kilometre radius of a spray site.

The Approved Handler control is only effective if policed, and the EPA has no environmental policeman. The EPA's most effective control mechanism is to ban products from importation, but it has been very ineffective in doing that to date.

What can our beekeepers do?

Be proactive. Write to the management of meat processing facilities, poultry farms and rubbish dumps that are within a five-kilometre radius of your hives and tell them of the risk to your bees of using the sugar-based insecticide QuickBayt to control flies.

Be reactive. If you discover weakened hives and lots of dead bees in your apiary, ask the management of nearby meat processing facilities, poultry farms and rubbish dumps whether they have used the sugar-based insecticide QuickBayt to control flies. Do you think they will say YES?

References

Goodwin, R. M., & McBrydie, H. M. (2000). Effect of surfactants on honey bee survival. New Zealand Plant Protection, 53, 230–234. www.nzpps.org

Ciarlo, T. J., Mullin, C. A., Frazier, J. L., & Schmehl, D. R. (2012). Learning impairment in honey bees caused by agricultural spray adjuvants. PLoS ONE 7(7): e40848. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0040848.

Correction

In the October issue of the journal, I stated that Movento is permitted prior to and during the flowering. This is incorrect. The systemic insecticide Movento has the following instructions on the label: 'Make two applications, the first at greentip and the second pre-flowering'. And the withholding period for kiwifruit is 'apply only preflowering'.

I apologise to Bayer New Zealand Limited for that error. However, the Technical Committee still wants to see this systemic and persistent insecticide restricted in its use until after the crop has flowered, as is done overseas.

- Don MacLeod

RESEARCH

Removing bee stings

By Dr P Kirk Visscher PhD[a], Richard S Vetter MS[a], Scott Camazine MD[b]
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The results of this study, published in 1996, are worth keeping in mind the next time you get stung.

Summary

Background

Conventional advice on immediate treatment of honey-bee stings has emphasised that the sting should be scraped off, never pinched. The morphology of the sting suggested little basis for this advice, which is likely to slow down removal of the sting.

Methods

The response to honey-bee stings was assayed with a measurement of the size of the resulting weal. Injection of known quantities of venom showed that this measurement is a good indicator of envenomisation.

Findings

Weal size, and thus envenomisation, increased as the time from stinging to removal of the sting increased, even within a few seconds. There was no difference in response between stings scraped or pinched off after 2 s *[seconds]*.

Interpretation

These data suggest that advice to patients on the immediate treatment of bee stings should emphasise quick removal, without concern for the method of removal.

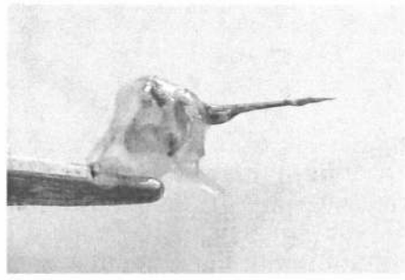

Photo supplied by Mary-Ann Lindsay.

Source

The Lancet, Volume 348, Issue 9023, Pages 301–302, 3 August 1996. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(96)01367-0.

[Editor's note: thanks to Gary Ilmanen for posting this on the BEE-L listserv discussion site. Gary's reaction to the study was, "Huh! How about that?! It turns out that the injection system is based upon valve action, not venom sack pumping—there are no muscles around the sack".]

FROM THE COLONIES

Auckland Branch

The cold winds are still with us and those of us who are raising queens are hoping for a respite from the wind so that they can mate successfully. At the moment our bees, although working very hard despite the wind, seem to be eating all the nectar that they are bringing in.

Auckland Branch recently held a meeting to discuss the results of the remits from the national AGM. The meeting was held in the Old Flat Bush School House, a beautifully restored kauri building with sash windows and a lovely rimu floor. The hall was used as a hay barn for about 40 years after it was no longer needed as a school room, and was rescued and restored by a group of enthusiasts and is now used as a community hall. It is a really good size for our meetings, easily accessible for our South Auckland members and a short side trip from the motorway for those who live further afield. We expect to alternate our meetings between the northern side of the Harbour Bridge and the southern reaches of our area so that the distance is shared.

The latter part of the meeting was taken up with expressions of concern about AFB rearing its ugly head rather too often. It is vitally important that everyone who has bees, whether it be one hive or hundreds of hives, inspects regularly for disease and, if found, reports it and deals to the affected hives promptly. It is bad enough when a hobbyist loses their one precious hive, but it is disastrous when one careless beekeeper allows the spread of disease to a commercial operation where many people's livelihood may be at stake.

Concern was also expressed about resistance to varroa chemical treatments, and it is proposed that a future meeting will revisit the integrated pest management strategies talked about at the Hamilton seminar. This will be an opportunity for beekeepers who were not able to go to Hamilton to get the latest information on how to control the little blighters.

Let's hope that the weather soon settles down into a superb honey season with bumper crops all round.

- Helen Sinnock

Waikato Branch

The quince tree is blossoming, the first lot of silage next door has been done and the ground is being ploughed for maize up the road. It is a beautiful sunny day (apparently 21 degrees) but much of October has been around the 17-degree mark and there's been a fair bit of rain.

The hives south of Hamilton are hungry and have needed to be fed, although Jane Lorimer noticed that the pussy willow is now in flower and the bees are bringing in good loads of its pollen.

Barberry is also budding up, so we will need to check for swarming if the weather settles down, especially those of us with carniolans!

Our Branch has put in a submission to the proposed Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH) Pest Management Plan, which resulted in a Branch meeting on 5 October in Cambridge.

Apart from that, all is well. Roll on summer!

- Barb Cahalane

Poverty Bay Branch

After a wet winter and early spring September brought warm weather and a good willow flow. Hives that were in reasonable condition have boomed. Spring splits have mated well and prospects for the honey flow are looking hopeful.

Trees for Bees project

This project is aimed at improving the bee forage for bees on a demonstration farm. Plantings are off to a good start although a few have been lost to late frosts.

Our annual AFB diseaseathon was held on 22 September. We had six teams out and inspected 18 apiaries, 246 hives and found 3 cases of AFB. To date this spring I am only aware of a total of four cases of AFB being found in the Gisborne–East Coast area. This is a big improvement on the last few years. There was definitely a surge in AFB cases in the few years following varroa arriving in the district.

An AFB training day and test was held on 29 September. Seventeen candidates sat the test.

- Paul Badger, Branch President

Hawke's Bay Branch

Frosts, rain, wind, cold and sunshine—spring must be here. Apple pollination has been earlier than normal while hives in general have been behind schedule. Many beekeepers have reported higher than normal losses but these have generally been put down to an extremely bad autumn followed by a very cold, wet spring.

Over the past few days, bees have picked up a bit of honey from late willows and things are generally improving. So far I have seen no evidence of varroa resistance to Bayvarol. We did have some very high varroa numbers in early spring, but they must have been caused by invasion over the winter as testing has shown it to be still effective.

- John Berry, Branch President

Southern North Island

We held our field day on 23 September. The attendance was the largest I can remember—good weather helped. We had a mix of information on varroa control, queen raising and AFB, and Dr Karyne Rogers spoke on C4 sugars in honey. Some branches have already benefited from her talks, and we were very interested in her presentation.

After lunch we worked on hives and Karyne was pleased to don a bee suit and see inside some hives. We learnt from her and we hope that she learnt from us in working bees. Those that attended had ample opportunity to see hives being prepared for raising queen cells, with discussion on grafting methods. Alternative methods were discussed, as many hobbyist beekeepers want to raise only a couple of queens each year. Other topics covered included making up nuc hives, spring maintenance, general hive work and a demonstration of varroa control methods.

We also had several recently discovered hives with AFB to show attendees an AFB hive in real time; something that many there had never seen before. Interestingly, a couple of hives had cleaned out the bad cells, so nothing could be found. This was a lesson in itself. However, another hive had ample AFB cells to demonstrate to all what it looks like. This was followed by a practical lesson in killing the hive and blocking it up. Later the hives were burnt. ➔

Team Wairarapa, winners of the Merv Farrington Memorial Trophy at the Southern North Island Branch field day, 23 September 2012. Left to right: Garry Lewis, Marco Blanco, Sid Tatana, Kevin Gibbs, and Stuart Ferguson. Photo: Frank Lindsay.

It brought home to many what the AFB 'yellow book' is about and we were able to stress the importance of looking carefully for something different and then checking.

I commented previously that we had an AFB outbreak in our area. We were provided with over 50 apiaries to check which were within the danger area. In the first weekend of October six teams covered all sites. Three hives were identified with AFB so it was a very worthwhile exercise. All three hives belonged to hobbyist beekeepers and were in the early stages of AFB. Members from Wanganui and Manawatu bee clubs joined the teams to assist the AP2s: thanks to all who lent a hand.

- Neil Farrer, NBA Life Member

A new club is born

The Buzz Club Otaki, covering the Horowhenua and Kapiti Coast, will meet on the third Wednesday of the month beginning 16 January 2013, at Waitohu School, Otaki.

This is a group of about 30 people who have chosen to form a club as a continuation of the monthly lectures on beekeeping given by Frances Beech and Andrew Beach.

We wish to thank the Wellington Beekeepers' Association and the Manawatu Beekeepers Club for their help and support this past year.

- Frances Beech

Club busier than its bees!

By the NBA Secretariat

"To Learn and Educate" is the motto of the Auckland Beekeepers' Club.

The club has worked extremely hard this year to provide the best support possible for their members through a wide range of projects.

Vice President of the Auckland Beekeepers' Club, Kim Kneijber, says they are focused on providing 'hands-on' experience to new members.

"The Auckland Beekeepers' Club has always had working beehives at our apiary, where different apiary managers can introduce new ways of beekeeping," she says.

"Currently, we have six beehives managed in a variety of different ways, including a long hive and a top-bar hive with frames.

"This gives new beekeepers an opportunity to look at different options before they start beekeeping."

Kim says the club's field days and annual extraction days continue to be an attraction for members.

"The club has a field day each month, where the beehives are opened and members are invited to 'have a go' at practical beekeeping, while guided by the hive's managing beekeeper.

"Field days are also for presenting topics relevant to the coming month, and they are a chance to remind members of diseases, varroa and the legal requirements associated with beekeeping.

"We also have an annual extraction day of the club's hives. This is an opportunity for members to see honey harvested safely."

Kim says the club communicates with its members through a range of mediums.

"The club believes communication is extremely important, particularly as we have a lot of hobbyist members who require support," she says.

"The club has a quarterly journal, offers the option of email correspondence, and a newly introduced monthly e-zine.

"Recently, we have introduced a 'Buddy' system, where beekeepers give support to other beekeepers in their area."

Kim believes the success of the Auckland Beekeepers' Club can be attributed to the enthusiasm of its members.

"In a lot of ways, we are very lucky. Our club has a very diverse and dedicated group of members, who are committed to helping new members and ensuring good beekeeping practice in our region.

"We believe it is incredibly important to support beekeepers in keeping their bees."

For more information on Auckland Beekeepers' Club endeavours, please visit www.auckbeeclub.org

[Editor's note: there's a wealth of good things happening in bee clubs throughout New Zealand. Contact secretary@nba.org.nz if you're keen to promote your club's activities in the journal.]

Auckland Beekeepers' Club hives. Photo: Gilles Ratia.

Feed 'em and keep 'em

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

November is one of the critical months in beekeeping.

Every bee produced this month will bring in your honey crop. It's important to watch two things—food stores and swarming.

In some districts there is a dearth of nectar and pollen plants for part of the month as the early bush shrubs and trees have finished flowering and main honey sources are about to take over. Provided the weather was warm, those who have their hives close to rivers will have a full super of willow honey stored that will take the colony through; those who haven't will have to feed. Beekeepers with hives in urban areas won't notice any change, as this problem is mainly associated with rural hives.

One of the most important things to consider is that I write about things that I see in my area. I was told recently by a beekeeper in Palmerston North that if he let his hives go down to only three frames of honey before starting to feed, the bees would already have been under stress by the time he got around to feeding them.

Another instance where my area differs from others is that coming out of winter, quite a few of my hives still had a full super of honey going into the spring build-up. Although I do leave hives with more than a super of honey, I have some winter flowering sources (e.g., kohekohe, Spanish heath, tree lucerne) that provide a dribble of nectar and pollen where other districts are completely barren. Consequently some of my other sites were getting short of supplies, so it was only a matter of moving full frames of honey to those that needed the feed (after checking the hives for AFB).

It's also interesting going around the hives in early October. Lemonwood was in full flower in the bush but some hives in the same apiaries hadn't found it, while those that had were storing nectar and capping it in the top super.

A bad year for swarming?

Swarming might be a big problem this year. During a recent diseaseathon in the Feilding–Palmerston North area, all teams reported that hives had queen cells developing. Allowing a hive to swarm and not catching it is a real downer. Somebody else gets a very big swarm and your hive has to start again, and will only probably provide enough for the bees to winter over on.

Once queen cell development has started (i.e., an egg in a queen cell bud), the hive is going to swarm unless you do something. Killing queen cells is not the way to go about it. The bees sometimes can tuck queen cells in awkward places to spot, and one missed cell means you have wasted your effort.

It's best to artificially swarm the hive by removing all the frames of capped brood and bees, plus a couple of honey and pollen frames along with the old queen, and placing them above the hive on a split board. Rub out all the queen cells in this new hive and give this split more frames to build out. Leave a couple of queen cells in the original hive but if they are along the bottom of the frames, choose the longest two and cut around them, and place them in the top centre of the frames so they are in the cluster. This instantly reduces the population of the original hive, reducing the swarming instinct. Add another super at the same time with some frames of foundation to give those bees left in the hive something to do. A virgin queen will emerge, mate and start laying in under 20 days. In the split above, the original queen will continue to expand the hive so that both hives can be recombined when the flow starts in December.

For those who start with nuc hives, continue to feed them until they have drawn out and covered 10 frames with bees and have brood in at least six frames. That way, the hive will continue to expand. New beekeepers often make the mistake of stopping the feeding of sugar syrup when they see lots of bees flying and when shrubs and trees around them are flowering. Beehives only really start to expand when they have a full super of bees and ample stores.

The only good thing about swarming is that the original hive has a brood break that reduces mite reproduction, making the mite more vulnerable to a quick varroa treatment. Treat any hive that has swarmed with something that will take the phoretic mites off the bees.

Controlling mites

Speaking of varroa mites, I have been checking the efficacy of the strip treatment I'm using by applying formic acid mite wipes to each hive as the strips come out. Mostly I see only one or two mites on the slide in the mesh bottom board after 24 hours but in one or two hives in each apiary, I'm seeing a 200–300 mite drop. The worst hive I came across had two or three mites in every drone cell on the top bars when the hive was split apart. The odd mite could be seen on the surface of the frames where the bees were emerging. The only saving grace for this hive was the fact that it had two queens (three supers with brood) and was keeping ahead of the mites; otherwise, it would have been on the verge of collapse.

> "...mite wipes are a simple test and are easy to make."

We are now hearing of large winter losses from the mid-North Island upwards and if you are below this line, don't think you are immune. Mites travel at 100 kilometres per hour on a truck, which means resistant mites could be in your area already. These resistant varroa mites may not be killing hives at present, but their numbers will build if you allow it to happen.

For me, mite wipes are a simple test and are easy to make. I'm using Dri-Loc® pads but a folded sheet of paper towel is just as effective. *Be mindful to take safety precautions when working with any acid:* I place the pads in a snap-lock container. Work out how much formic acid is required at 35 millilitres per treatment and pour it into another container up to that mark, then gently pour

Continued on page 25

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Continued from page 23
the measured amount into the corner of the snap-lock container. Leave for a few hours so that each pad has soaked up the desired amount.

Use stainless steel tongs to handle the pads or towel and place at the back of the hive on the super above the brood nest. You have got the right amount when after half an hour there are about 100 bees around the entrance of the hive. Your varroa manual (*Control of Varroa: A guide for New Zealand beekeepers*) explains all of the alternative treatments. Revised in 2007, it's still up to date in all but two things: the amount of oxalic acid in the dribble formulation and the contact addresses. If you want more information, Google 'Scientific Beekeeping', Randy Oliver's website.

Not everything has gone to plan. The weather hasn't been that good during October: there have been a lot of cool, cloudy days with showers so far that have delayed some work. I know which apiary is the first to produce queen cells, but I was about a week late as three hives had swarmed before I got there. My queen rearing and nuc making was interrupted also, so I checked the queen cells in the nuc hive to see if they were beginning to emerge. There wasn't a sign of the bees clearing away the tip of the cappings on the queen cells, so I left them for another day. The next morning, 17 queens had emerged and I could only find one large virgin running around. There are times when I should write things on the calendar instead of guessing.

Things to do this month

Check feed and pollen: there should be a good amount of pollen in the outside brood nest frames and a thin band of pollen around the top of the frames. Check for AFB cells in frames of emerging brood. Raise queen cells. Super hives ahead of their needs. Requeen any failing hives that have spotty/patchy brood.

Check every 10–15 days for queen cell development. Cull out old frames and any with broken lugs. Fit foundation into comb honey frames.

For those that have to live with a beekeeper, perhaps a subscription to an overseas magazine (or an electronic version) might be a nice Christmas present.

IT HAPPENED TO ME

A cuppa at Kai Iwi

By Anne Hulme, Wanganui Beekeepers' Club

It was a beautiful hot sunny day in Kai Iwi, just perfect for taking off the full honey supers, and extracting them while they were still warm.

The bee escapes had been under six honey supers for 48 hours and I had spent part of the morning getting the honey room at the back of the shed spick-and-span, ready for the extraction.

After a late lunch we drove out into the paddock to get the honey off. The four-wheeler pulling a miniature trailer was driven behind the hives and we chatted happily as we worked. The dogs eyed us from a safe distance and everything went smoothly. The bees were very docile, there were no bees left in the capped honey and no one, not even the dogs, got stung. The six supers were lifted on to the trailer and covered with crown boards for the return journey.

Just as we were trundling through the back gate to the shed, a car pulled into our drive. It was our city-slicker daughter and family coming out into the country for a Sunday drive. Why do townies think that farmers have time to sit and chat over a cuppa in the weekend?

I jumped off the bike and went to greet them, while Hubby drove the bike and trailer into the tractor shed. He quickly pulled the shed door down and came to join us on the front veranda, where we dutifully entertained the family with freshly made biscuits and coffee, all the time anxious to get on with extracting our honey. Then the family noticed that there were a few more bees than usual flying around and decided to cut short their visit and go down to the beach. We didn't mind that. We had a job to do.

We both walked around the back of the house together and were astounded to see that the back yard was full of bees, coming and going, and the shed door had been laboriously pushed up just enough for a nosey huntaway to slide underneath. I was still wearing my bee suit but our veils and gloves were on the bike in the shed. I quickly covered my hair with a jacket hanging in the back porch and pushed up the door to investigate. What a sight! Two of the crown boards had been nosed off the honey, and the whole trailer was black with bees. One dog dashed out flicking her head and the other dog was nowhere to be seen.

What on earth was I going to do? We couldn't extract our honey now so I put the crown boards back on top, grabbed my veil and gloves and tightly closed down the shed door. That stopped the bees getting in, although they still tried, and the bees inside flew to the sunny window, wanting to get out.

It was two hours later as the sun was going down before I had got most of the bees in the shed back to the hives. Opening the window and brushing them out took ages, and then we had to put the supers back on the hives for another week or more until everything had settled down.

We learnt a lot from that episode, and I think the dogs did too. For future excursions they were quite happy to be locked in their pens when they saw us put on our bee suits, and didn't make the slightest whimper as we drove away each time on the four-wheeler.

Have an anecdote?

If you have a good story or photo to share, please email editor@nba.org.nz. You can use a pseudonym if you prefer. If sending a photo, please provide a caption.

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