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The NEW ZEALAND BeeKeeper

Celebrating SINCE 1913 100 Years

NATIONAL BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Hotel Ashburton

16—20 June 2013

- Magic at Eastwoodhill
- Asian honey bee a threat?
- Exotic disease surveillance

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Front cover: The NBA is celebrating its centenary: why not join us at Conference in Ashburton?

Magic at Eastwoodhill

By Barry Foster, NBA President

Sometimes in the President's role you get involved in a particular project that goes exceptionally well, leaving you with a feeling of significant achievement and the satisfaction of a job well done.

The organising committee had just this sort of warm feeling after the very successful two-day Trees for Bees conference concluded at Eastwoodhill Arboretum outside of Gisborne at the end of April.

One of the most appealing parts of this conference was the diverse range of people who attended and spoke from a wide range of backgrounds and occupations. The networking that developed as a result among people who would normally not meet over a topic involving bee health was quite unique. I saw many ideas shared, quite a few friendships made and a few barriers broken down at this conference that I think could be a forerunner for a way that our industry might learn better how to share, communicate, collaborate and work with other industries in the future.

The Federated Farmers Bee Industry Group (BIG, represented by John Hartnell) and the NBA (represented by me) combined in speaking about our industry and the 'Trees for Bees' project. It was an example of good collaboration and one that should be repeated more often. In my closing statements I remarked, "I have never seen in 40 years of beekeeping a beekeeping-related conference that brought such a diverse group of people together and inspired them in such a wonderful way as this Trees for Bees conference has done." The wonderful surroundings at Eastwoodhill provided their own blend of magic. Combined with the energy generated by the participants, it made for an event that was quite inspiring and unique.

The Hawke's Bay branch of the NBA, represented by Deanna Corbett, presented a cheque for $5,000 to the Trees for Bees research and another for $300 was received from the Auckland Beekeepers' Club. These donations were 'icing on the cake' and

Ruud Kleinpaste and Nick Pollock (at left), the landowner on whose property we were having the field day. Ruud is holding a bunch of flowers from the Dombeya species that bees work in the autumn for pollen and nectar.

added to the wonderful atmosphere of this conference. Thanks go out to Hawke's Bay branch and the Auckland Beekeepers' Club for your generous donations to this research.

The organisers are planning on another Trees for Bees conference to be held at Eastwoodhill next autumn. Dr Linda Newstrom-Lloyd will be able to present research gained from a full year's worth of work at Eastwoodhill Arboretum, taking into account seasonal demands for pollen, its quality and availability.

Left to right: NBA President Barry Foster, Dr Linda Newstrom-Lloyd of Landcare Research and NBA Hawke's Bay Branch secretary Deanna Corbett. Deanna handed over a $5,000 cheque from the Hawke's Bay Branch for Trees for Bees research. Photo provided by Barry Foster.

Our Science Challenge

The 10 National Science Challenges have been chosen, approved by Cabinet and announced along with a budget doubled from $60 million to $133.5 million of new money over four years.

The NBA could have some contribution into several of the topics but without more detail it is not possible to say just how and that is not available just yet. Probably the most likely area we could have some input into would be with challenge six, entitled 'enhancing primary sector production and productivity while maintaining and improving our land and water quality for future generations'. Our Research Committee will be keeping an eye on this one for any opportunities it might bring once more details are made available.

Neonicotinoid pesticides

The banning of several neonicotinoids for two years by the European Union (EU) has resulted in quite a bit of media interest here on this topic. I have been in contact with our Technical and Submissions Committee on this matter.

> "...we need to take a whole-of-health view of our honeybees..."

We have always replied to the media with the message that we need to take a whole-of-health view of our honeybees and not just focus on one particular group of pesticides as the problem. Pesticides externally and internally of the hive almost certainly play their part in bee losses here but we ignore other factors like varroa, other pathogens and nutritional decline to our peril. We just

Continued on page 6

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Continued from page 4
don't know the full reasons for winter losses in particular, and the proposed bee health survey may provide some of the answers and perhaps highlight trends for recent increased losses.

Former Green MP Sue Kedgley is speaking on neonicotinoids at our conference seminar. I hope that she is briefed to cover a much broader area than losses solely attributed to neonicotinoids. All systemic pesticides should come under scrutiny for their effects on all stages of a bee's life cycle. To focus just on neonicotinoids is potentially a dangerous distraction should we fail to address the multiple factors affecting bee health.

Update on Sulfoxaflor registration

Don McLeod and Dr John McLean of our Technical and Submissions Committee met with representatives from the EPA and Dow AgriScience in Wellington on 3 May, along with John Hartnell from the BIG. At issue is the registration of a new systemic pesticide called Sulfoxaflor. It is similar to neonicotinoids as it also acts on the nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (nAChR) in insects but is not a neonicotinoid. A key feature compared with neonicotinoids is that it degrades rapidly under aerobic conditions but far less so under anaerobic or aquatic conditions, and the degradates from it are of concern for the lack of trials on non-target species and for their persistence in the environment. There are no data on residues in beeswax or any information on its exposure and effects on bee eggs and larvae. It is proposed to be used in broad acre application and on tree crops and is currently registered in Canada and the USA, with New Zealand being pressured to follow suit.

The HSNO Act under which pesticides are registered only requires testing on adult bees in order for new registrations like Sulfoxaflor to proceed. The HSNO Act may be reviewed mid year and the NBA will certainly be putting in a submission to the review. But for now we are working with an Act that is failing to keep up with technological changes in systemic pesticides and by virtue of that is placing our bees and our environment at risk.

Pollination security at select committee hearing

Under my direction the NBA Secretariat has approached members of the Primary Production Select Committee to see if the topic of pollination security could be introduced to its agenda. This follows submissions from the NBA and others in 2011 to the Local Government and Environment Select Committee. This issue has never been concluded in a report as required under select committee rules. Pollination security covers all areas of bee health, including biosecurity, and is critical to our environment and economy. It's just that not enough politicians accept the fact, let alone take action on it.

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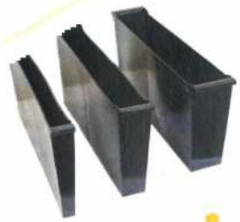

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Asian honey bee a threat?

By Tony Roper, Apicultural Officer, AsureQuality Limited, Tauranga. Email: tony.roper@asurequality.com

The Asian honey bee, or the Eastern honey bee, is another species of honey bee very similar to our European honey bee, *Apis mellifera*.

In general, Asian honey bees can be classified into three main species: *Apis cerana* (Eastern Honey Bee), *Apis florea* (Dwarf Honey Bee) and *Apis dorsata* (Giant Honey Bee). However, this article will concentrate only on the species *A. cerana* and will refer to it as the Asian honey bee.

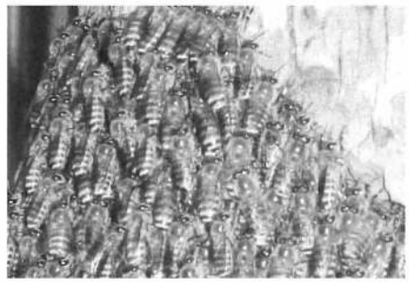
I have had firsthand experience working with Asian honey bees in South Korea and most recently in Vanuatu, gaining a valuable insight into this bee species. The Asian honey bee is the indigenous honey bee found in Asia and is used in traditional beekeeping going back thousands of years. *A. cerana* can be kept in hives with moveable frames, whereas the other two Asian honey bee species cannot because they only nest on a single comb. It is useful to look at some of the special characteristics of *A. cerana* so that beekeepers can get a better appreciation of the potential dangers it poses to the New Zealand beekeeping industry.

Characteristics of the Asian honey bee

It is believed that the western honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) evolved from the eastern honey bee (*Apis cerana*) when it moved from western Asia to the Middle East. *A. cerana* is a smaller bee than the European subspecies we are used to in New Zealand.

The colour of Asian honey bee workers varies considerably but the drones I have observed in South Korea and Vanuatu were all very black. The workers look similar to European bees but the rings or stripes on the abdomen are more prominent and are evenly spaced over the whole abdomen.

Asian honey bees are considered a tropical bee but some hardier strains such as *A. cerana japonica* do exist and can winter very well in countries where the winters are very cold. When snowfalls half bury hives, the bees will make a tunnel up the side of the hives beneath the snow to get out (Lee, personal communication, 2007).



A. cerana *swarm showing the prominent stripes. Photo: Tony Roper.*

Asian honey bees are very quick moving, work longer and are considered a much more active bee (Lee, 2007 pers comm.). They can swarm several times in a season and in poor weather they work marginal flows better than European bees.

A. cerana can be hived in Langstroth hives but, if presented with standard foundation, will modify the cell size and make them smaller. The colony size is much smaller than Western bees and the crop is only five to 15 kilograms per hive. It is most noticeable that Asian honey bees gather large amounts of pollen. They do not collect propolis, or add propolis to wax, and because of this their wax is very brittle and is easily broken.

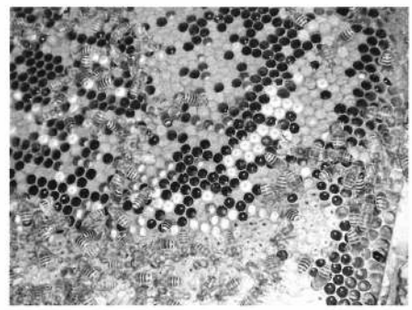
It is interesting that Asian honey bees suffer from few of the beekeeping pests or pathogens that affect our bees. They appear to have well-developed hygienic behaviour and the drone cappings are removed and dropped in front of the hive. In fact, the only real pest I observed in *A. cerana* hives was the common wax moth. Asian honey bees cannot cope with this particular pest. In some cases the wax moth will completely take over the hive and the bees will abscond.

The Asian honey bee is vastly superior at managing Varroa destructor than the Western honey bee. The Asian honey bee is the natural host of the varroa mite and over thousands of years it has evolved defences so varroa does not kill its host, which it needs for its long-term survival.

Varroa mites do not invade worker cells of the Asian honey bee. They only parasitise the drone brood, which has a distinctive hole in each sealed cap. The hole may enable nurse bees to check if varroa is present in the drone cell and to remove some varroa before they can reproduce.

The brood cycle of the Asian honey bee is shorter than in European *A. mellifera* colonies, being 18–19 days for workers and 22–23 days for drones (Connor et al., 1993). This shorter brood cycle limits the number of viable offspring that varroa can produce prior to the adult bee emerging from the cell.

As an additional defence against varroa, Asian honey bees have evolved excellent grooming behaviour for removing mites.



Drone cells with holes in the middle. Photo: Tony Roper.

Asian honey bees have also evolved superior defence mechanisms to ward off attacks from Giant Asian Hornets. They do not guard the outside of the hive entrances like European honey bees, which stand on the landing board and are 'sitting ducks' for hornets. If Asian honey bees are fanning near the entrance they have their heads forward and tails pointing into the hive. This ensures the Asian bee will have a better chance of seeing any hornets before they can attack them. If hornets enter their hive, the Asian honey bees attack the hornets en masse and ball them so that the heat (46°C) and high carbon dioxide inside the ball kills the hornet but not the bees. European bees have →

not evolved any defensive mechanisms to the same extent for protecting themselves from hornets: if Asian hornets arrived in New Zealand they could destroy thousands of hives.

What is happening on our doorstep?

A colony of *A. cerana* was discovered in Cairns, Queensland in May 2007 and was destroyed. Unfortunately this Java strain of *A. cerana* had already well established itself by repetitive swarming. A full biosecurity response was mounted immediately by the Queensland Government with national funding becoming available in July 2009. The eradication programme included detecting and destroying any *A. cerana* swarms and nests, movement restrictions on hives, and a notification system so that all *A. cerana* colonies reported could be destroyed. Unfortunately national funding for the eradication programme ceased in January 2011 and was replaced by a national containment programme which is due to end in June 2013 (Somerville, 2011).

The author has recently had firsthand experience working with *A. cerana* in Vanuatu. The Java strain is well established on the main island of around the port of Port Vila and also on islands close by. It is not known how this pest came into Vanuatu but it is assumed that a swarm travelled on a boat from Indonesia or the Solomon Islands. Vanuatu is a very popular destination with yacht owners and a number of *A. cerana* swarms have been found nesting in the top of the hollow masts on the yachts.

Possibility of reaching NZ?

The risk of *A. cerana* arriving in New Zealand has increased now as it is well established in Queensland and in some of the Pacific Islands. The most likely vector would be a container or log ship or a yacht. Even if the ship or yacht was not docked in a port, but merely moored a few kilometres offshore, an Asian honey bee swarm could easily fly this short distance across open water to the mainland and become established. It is also possible they could come in on an air container and show up at one of the international airports, although hopefully the bees would be discovered before they could swarm away.

Likely impacts in NZ

Major problems arise when Asian honey bees mix with European honey bees as both species are very similar. For instance, the chemical composition of their pheromones is so similar that they cannot tell one another apart. *A. cerana* drones will mate with *A. mellifera* queens and vice versa. Luckily the offspring are not viable but this interspecies mating could be a major problem in queen-producing areas. In any case, the arrival of the Asian bee in New Zealand would halt our lucrative exports of queen bees and package bees.

Having similar pheromones allows the two species to be mixed together in a colony. Young bees from *A. cerana* frames can be shaken into *A. mellifera* colonies and they will be readily accepted. Unfortunately the smaller Asian honey bee is a very aggressive robber and the similar pheromones allow it to sneak easily into *A. mellifera* hives to rob honey stores.

In South Korea, there are certain areas where only *A. cerana* can be kept because the two species will not co-exist as *A. cerana* will dominate. *A. cerana* has invaded the Solomon Islands and has displaced the Western honey bee in many areas. This new undesirable bee species in the Solomon Islands is far more defensive and does not produce as much honey. It is alarming that *A. cerana*, although much smaller in size, will replace its larger cousin, *A. mellifera*. This bee is much more aggressive and will readily rob European honey bees' hives. It swarms prolifically and it dominates the nectar sources by sheer weight of numbers. In Vanuatu, it is too early to see if the newly arrived Asian honey bee will displace existing *A. mellifera* colonies. This may occur when, or if, numbers of Asian honey bee colonies build up as they did in the Solomon Islands.

Does the Asian honey bee pose a biosecurity threat to NZ?

Most definitely, it does! The negative effects of *A. cerana* well outweigh any positives. The only potential positive is its natural resistance to the varroa mite. Negative traits include its aggressiveness, its robbing behaviour and its ability to possibly out-compete *A. mellifera* colonies for nectar sources. The national honey yield could be reduced as a result. Asian honey bees are prolific swarmers and nest in smaller cavities than the European honey bee. They will dominate urban areas and will quickly become a nuisance bee for the general public.

An introduction of *A. cerana* bees could introduce new beekeeping pests and diseases into this country especially the parasitic Asian mite, *Tropilaelaps clareae*. This is an external mite similar to varroa, which has successfully parasitised *A. mellifera*. This mite kills European honey bees faster than varroa, and would cause major damage to the New Zealand beekeeping industry. Hives would require more regular miticide treatments than the typical "once in spring and again in autumn" varroa treatment regime. In South Korea where they have both varroa and the Asian mite coexisting in the same hive, they need to treat with a miticide at least four times a year.

> "Major problems arise when Asian honey bees mix with European honey bees ..."

What can beekeepers do?

As a beekeeper you will be used to recognising bees and are more likely than the general public to notice any strange-looking bees. The general public often has difficulty in telling the difference between a bee and a wasp, but hopefully they might report any new nuisance bee. Beekeepers need to be on the lookout for any signs of small aggressive bees around their hives, especially in an urban environment. Look out for anything unusual, such as smaller size, aggressive robbing behaviour, erratic flight, prominent stripes around the abdomen and cappings at the hive entrance with holes in the middle.

If you see anything that looks suspicious, please immediately call the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) hotline 0800 809 966. If possible please also try to collect a sample of the unusual bees, say in a jar that can be sent to the lab for positive identification. A sample of at least 10 bees is required to be tested in the lab to confirm a diagnosis of Asian bees. You will be contacted immediately after your call to the hotline by a veterinarian or official from MPI or an Apiculture Officer from AsureQuality

Ltd. The caller will ask for more details and make arrangements for a sample of bees and or comb to be sent to an MPI laboratory for diagnosis.

Acknowledgement

This article was funded by the Ministry for Primary Industries through the Apiculture Surveillance Programme.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Keep pesticides out of hives

By Theo Jordens

I had bees when I lived in Holland and not that long ago I started here in New Zealand again. I love reading *The Beekeeper* magazine.

In the April 2013 edition there was an article about the increasing threats to our bees. Under the heading pesticides in 2010 it was mentioned that there was no testing done on systemic insecticides. Any pesticide in the hive is bad, systemic or not.

I take the conclusion from that article that people are spraying willy-nilly and don't know what they are doing. I am not talking about a small flower garden but the bigger commercial business.

In the Netherlands it is a punishable offence to spray in open flowers, especially in orchards and field crops like rape etc. If you have to spray you do it at night when the bees are not flying with an insecticide that doesn't do any harm to the bee.

People are not aware of all the damage they do to our bees in the short term and also in the long term. It is a horrible sight to see a pile of bees lying in front of the hive and for the next few days no bees are flying in or out. The long-term damage will show up over the next couple of weeks but the hive is useless to collect honey and/or pollen from.

I have only a few hives but the big commercial beekeepers can lose a lot of money.

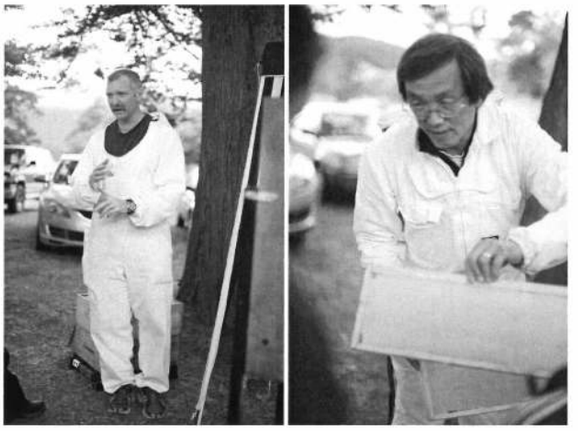
HOBBYISTS' CORNER

Farm day near Pauatahanui

On Sunday 17 March, Federated Farmers sponsored a Farm Day at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park near Pauatahanui.

This was one of three Federated Farmers Farm Days in 2013, aimed at giving townies "a chance to see what goes on behind the farm gate and get a taste of the rural lifestyle" at no charge.

The Wellington Beekeepers' Club had a stand and talked about bees and beekeeping at the Pauatahanui event, including honey tastings and an observation hive. Pictured are club members Pat Phipps and P K Tan in action. There were some very cute photos of children enjoying the honey stand and marvelling at the observation hive, but we can't show their faces as the children weren't known to the club members and permission is required from parents before they can be published. Photos are by club member Anne Noble.



Pat Phipps and P K Tan.

Exotic disease surveillance: autumn 2013

By Byron Taylor, Apicultural Officer, AsureQuality Limited

An exotic disease surveillance programme has operated in New Zealand in various forms for several decades, originally being an activity carried out in conjunction with inspections for American foulbrood under the old Apiaries Act.

With the introduction of the Biosecurity Act in 1993, a standalone surveillance programme was developed which, after several changes, arrived at its current form which has remained relatively unchanged for the last 13 years. As a result, this article is very similar to previous years, which reflects a now-mature surveillance programme. The programme is funded by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and managed by AsureQuality Ltd.

The annual honey bee exotic disease and pest surveillance programme has two primary goals:

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

The sampling specifications for the programme require apiaries to be sampled for a range of pests and diseases of importance to the beekeeping industry. Every hive in each of the apiaries is required to be inspected and tested in order to maintain the sensitivity of the surveillance programme.

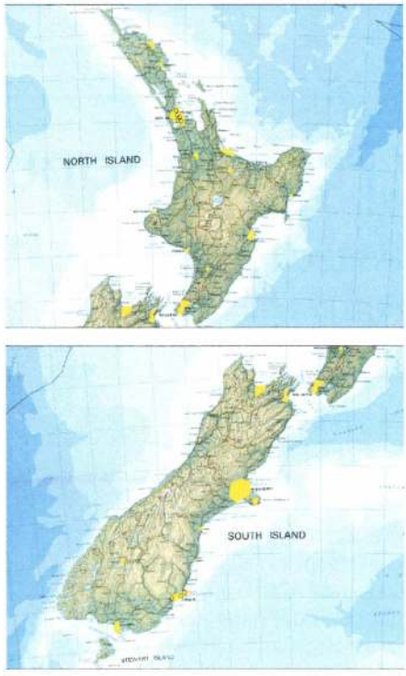
Exotic pests and diseases of interest are the same as previous years and include:

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

Inspection programme outline

The programme is split into two components:

1. the inspection and sampling of a number of apiaries in high-risk areas, as shown in the following maps.
2. the testing of bee samples provided from apiaries for which clearance is required to supply bees for export.



Photos supplied courtesy of AsureQuality Limited.

High-risk areas

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

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

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

Last year a new method of collecting external mite samples was trialled in two high-risk locations. In these areas, rather than the inspectors placing the miticide and sticky boards in the hives and collecting them the following day as per usual, the hive owners themselves carried out the test. The aim was to increase the sensitivity of the sampling by ensuring that the miticide treatment coincided with the beekeeper's varroa management.

Nominated beekeepers were provided with sticky boards and new miticide strips and asked to place the miticide strips in their hives when they would normally do their varroa treatment, but also to place the sticky board to collect the dead mites in the hive at the same time. The next day the sticky boards were removed and stored for collection by the inspector at a later date when he or she inspected the same hives for other potential exotic diseases.

The results of this trial were assessed and whilst a higher number of mites were collected from the sticky boards, it was determined that it was not cost-effective on a wider scale and as such, inspections will continue in their current form for this season. Many thanks to the beekeepers who participated in the trial.

Beekeepers carrying out the inspections, in addition to being highly experienced, are recognised as Authorised Persons (Level 2)

under section 103 of the Biosecurity Act. This means that they have legal authority to enter the property for the purpose of inspection and sampling hives under the direction of an AsureQuality Apicultural Officer. However, the inspector will endeavour to contact the owner prior to any hives being inspected to arrange a suitable inspection time.

All hives in each of the selected apiaries are tested. Hives receive a 24-hour miticide and sticky board test to detect presence of exotic external mites and have adult bee samples taken to be tested for tracheal mites (*Acarapis woodi*).

KeyStrepto sampling in Te Puke, 9 September 2011. Photo courtesy of AsureQuality Limited.

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

If your apiary is selected to be inspected you will not be advised of the results of the tests unless they are positive. If a test does come back positive, an exotic disease or pest investigation will be launched. An article will be placed in the *The New Zealand BeeKeeper* journal later in the year summarising the results for the 2013 programme.

Bee samples from export supply apiaries

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

In previous years considerably more than 300 apiaries have been sampled and when this occurs, testing has occurred beyond the 300 apiaries required. This increases the sensitivity of the programme.

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

Apiary database

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

What you can do

While it is important for the surveillance programme to inspect and sample hives, it is even more important for all beekeepers to be always on the lookout for any exotic pests and diseases. This will help to detect any pests and diseases early enough for eradication options to be feasible. Read the pamphlet on exotic bee pests and diseases of honey bees and when you are inspecting your hives always look for signs of an exotic pest or disease. If you suspect an exotic pest or disease ring the MPI Exotic Disease Hotline 0800 809 966.

Lastly, thanks to all those beekeepers who are taking part in the 2013 programme. Both MPI and AsureQuality appreciate your continued support.

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Note: *Tony Roper is now based in the North Island but is still responsible for delivering the South Island component of the Apiculture Surveillance Programme in conjunction with Marco Gonzalez.*

Who do you call?

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http://www.asurequality.com
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- AFB Destruction
- AFB Finds

REGISTRARS OF BEEHIVES
North Island – Bob Derry, Registrar
Ph: (07) 850 2837
Email: derryb@asurequality.com

South Island – Margaret Roper, Registrar
Ph: (07) 574 2596
Email: roperm@asurequality.com

AFB RECOGNITION COURSES

Rex Baynes (contact details on page 3)

Why have an AFB NPMP?

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

American foulbrood (AFB) disease of honey bees can be found in almost every country and is considered to be the worst disease of bees.

Once the disease reaches a certain level it will always kill the colony. Any colony then introduced to the used equipment will also die. Unchecked incidences of the disease can reach 100%. In the 1900s, AFB nearly destroyed the infant beekeeping industry in New Zealand.

Because of the severity of the disease, every country uses one of two strategies for control.

1. Antibiotics

Most countries (e.g., the USA and Canada) feed antibiotics to control AFB. This usually consists of feeding all colonies once or twice a year to prevent the disease, or just treating infected colonies. In the short term, feeding antibiotics to honey bees is a cost-effective solution which allows management of the disease in a way that is compatible with normal beekeeping activities. However, in the long term there are problems associated with the use of antibiotics, such as residues in bee products and treatment failure due to AFB developing resistance. Canada, the USA and Argentina are currently struggling with the resistance problem at the moment.

2. Search-and-destroy

Some other countries (e.g., Australia and England) have had a search-and-destroy strategy to manage AFB. This usually consists of some sort of government programme where officials inspect colonies and beekeepers have to destroy any hives with AFB. The use of antibiotics is usually forbidden. This system has the advantage that it is sustainable and there are no resistance or residue problems. However, this strategy can be more expensive than the use of antibiotics due to the need for inspections and destruction of diseased colonies. In addition, the bigger, and often unrecognised costs associated with this strategy are those resulting from hive management restrictions needed to prevent the spread of AFB between hives.

New Zealand beekeepers have traditionally chosen the search-and-destroy approach to AFB control. Whereas most beekeepers will successfully control AFB without the need for legislation, some will not, and their hives will be a source of infection for their neighbouring beekeepers' hives. Without legislation there is nothing to stop beekeepers exposing AFB-infected equipment to robbing bees, keeping hives with AFB, extracting honey from infected hives, etc.

> "...beekeepers probably had few other options but to have a PMS for AFB."

Historically, the legislation needed to control AFB in New Zealand was in the 1967 Apiaries Act and the AFB control programme was paid for by government. However, about 20 years ago the government told the beekeeping industry that it was no longer going to pay for AFB control and that the legislation controlling AFB was going to be removed. The industry was then given two choices:

1. to have no legislative control over AFB. The end result of this approach would have been New Zealand beekeepers having to resort to feeding antibiotics to control AFB.

2. for New Zealand beekeepers to write their own legislation to control AFB. This legislation had to be written in the form of a pest management strategy (PMS) under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

As most New Zealand beekeepers do not wish to feed antibiotics to control AFB, the only option was to write a PMS *[Editor's note: now referred to as a pest management plan, or PMP]*. However it quickly became apparent that the legislation controlling pest management strategies (the Biosecurity Act) was complex and clearly not designed to make it easy for an industry as small as the beekeeping industry to write one. To make matters more complicated, the Biosecurity Act was new and nobody had written a PMS before. So not only was it a steep learning curve for beekeepers, but also for the then-Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (now the Ministry for Primary Industries) that controlled the legislation.

The first requirement of the AFB strategy was to have a goal. A committee of beekeepers was formed who asked the industry for submissions. From these it was decided that the primary goal was to eradicate AFB from New Zealand.

The next step was to write how this would be achieved and explain why the approach taken was the best. After a year, seven drafts, 100 pages and 55,000 words, weeks of committee meetings and public meetings all over New Zealand, it was completed. The beekeeping industry had done which many thought was impossible for them—they had written a PMS.

The Biosecurity (National American Foulbrood Pest Management Strategy) is almost identical to the previous Apiaries Act. There were only two major changes:

1. before the PMS, each year every registered beekeeper was sent a statement of inspection form under the Apiaries Act. This required beekeepers to provide a signed statement confirming that they had checked their hives for AFB. Unfortunately, many forms were signed without the inspections being carried out, and many people signing forms were not competent at inspecting hives for AFB. The PMS changed this by requiring the inspections (certificate of inspections) to be carried out by people (approved beekeepers) who could

prove they could recognise AFB. By being 'approved', beekeepers could also avoid having to provide a certificate of inspection for their own hives.

2. the PMS recognised that no outside agency could eradicate AFB. All it could do was help beekeepers to eradicate it by providing a free AFB testing service, counselling and an education programme.

So in conclusion, beekeepers probably had few other options but to have a NPMP for AFB. AFB control has now been shifted from being a government responsibility to being a beekeeper responsibility. This is probably a good thing, although I am sure few beekeepers enjoy having to pay for the NPMP. It is now left to beekeepers to make sure that the NPMP works and eradication is achieved.

[Editor's note: This is the twelfth and last article of a series that has been written for the Management Agency for the American Foulbrood National Pest Management Strategy, now referred to as the American Foulbrood National Pest Management Plan. These articles were first published beginning in 2003, and have been reviewed and updated where necessary. The original title was 'Why have a pest management strategy for American foulbrood disease'.

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.]

HOBBYISTS' CORNER

News from Wanganui Beekeepers' Club

By Anne Hulme

We might be a small club in Wanganui, but we are very active.

One of our aims is to encourage new beekeepers' to enjoy the hobby, and to help them get their own honey in their first year.

This season we have trained a big group of novice beekeepers, all keen to learn the

Margaret is keeping tabs on Frank Lindsay while he judges the novice classes.

skills on the club's beehives, with the result that we have extracted almost double the

Leroy had canvassed the beekeeping fraternity to get some very good prizes.

amount of honey taken off our 10 hives the previous year.

A large number of budding beekeepers attended the monthly evening sessions, right throughout the year, which has whetted their appetites for the practical classes at the club's apiary in the weekends. All the novices now have one or two hives each on their own properties. Those who are able to work confidently on their own are swotting up the yellow AFB book, preparing to sit for their DECA certificate next month.

Recently we held our honey competition and had to have a last-minute change of venue to the local school hall, owing to the large number of members attending. Maybe it was because they had heard that Frank Lindsay was going to be the judge.

Frank was a fount of knowledge, and everyone was happy to learn from the remarks he made about their honey.

Linda, who regularly travels all the way from Marton, chooses her booty. She was the winner of the points prize in the novice classes. Photos: Graham Pearson.

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Update on Apimondia Congress

By Maureen Maxwell, President, Apimondia Oceania Commission

I am just back from the Ukraine, where 400,000 beekeepers are tending over 3.5 million colonies.

Their beekeepers are all buzzing about preparing to host the next international Apimondia Congress in Kviv (Kiev) from 29 September–4 October 2013.

The Ukrainian bee industry is the largest in Europe and among the top five worldwide, with an extensive and fascinating history.

The Ukrainians are fabulous hosts and have a great exhibition facility. The organisers are compiling a scientific programme that will be simultaneously translated into six languages. If you have never attended an Apimondia Congress, do it now! This promises to be a jaw-dropping experience, the biggest beekeeping event in history.

Farm-to-Farm Tours (www.farmtofarm.co.nz or freephone 0800 383 8747) has put together an interesting itinerary to make it easy and Kiev is surprisingly affordable.

I look forward to seeing a good contingent from Down Under. Take this wonderful opportunity now.

[Editor's note: for Apimondia Congress registration information, go to http://nba.org.nz/news-events/events/international-apicultural-congress.]

Outside the largest research laboratory in Ukraine. Left to right: Dr Sergiy Melnychuk from the University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine (also a Cabinet Minister), Tetyana Vasylkivska, president of the Brotherhood of Ukrainian BeeKeepers and head of the local organising committee, Gilles Ratia, president of Apimondia and Maureen Maxwell.

Interview with Cameron Martin

Cameron Martin is the president of the Waikato Branch of the NBA.

The Secretariat interviewed him about his role and experience in the industry.

How long have you been a beekeeper?

Twenty years: 16 years full time.

How did you get into beekeeping?

Family business. My father and great grandfather were beekeepers.

What do you enjoy about beekeeping?

The variety of activities during the year, being outside and the physical nature of the job.

Tell me about your current business.

Mainly honey production and pollination.

What made you decide to be Branch president?

Wanting to contribute back to the Branch and industry, but also some Waikato members thought it was time for someone younger to take on the role.

Tell me about your priorities as branch president.

To try and convince the rest of New Zealand that the Waikato Branch is always right! Seriously, the top priority is to keep imported honey and new bee diseases out of New Zealand.

What events do you have coming up?

Only a Branch meeting coming up at this stage. We are all still a bit busy to think and plan anything else.

What do you think your Branch does well?

Generate discussion amongst other Branches and the Executive!

What do you think the Waikato Branch could improve on?

Getting new members and younger beekeepers interested in attending meetings, even if it is just for the social aspect of it. It is amazing what you can learn by talking to others and meeting new people with other ideas.

What important issues are you informing your Branch members about currently?

There will be Notices of Motions sent out soon. There will also be the Psa pest management plan that some members are likely to be interested in if they are doing pollination. No doubt something else will come up.

What do you believe to be positive about the beekeeping industry in New Zealand?

That we still have an NBA. That there are still many knowledgeable people in the industry willing to put in their volunteer time and effort to teach new beekeepers and run the many activities and courses that make the industry tick over.

What do you believe to be negative?

The dog-eat-dog mentality amongst some over manuka sites, the hive thefts, lack of ethics, increasing compliance costs, and the industry being split into three groups.

What would you like to see improved in the beekeeping industry?

A larger supply of decent, reliable labour, school leavers that are willing to learn beekeeping and encouraged to see it as a valid career choice. That we have one unified industry organisation.

What do you do in your spare time/ what are your hobbies?

Ha ha, have children. What spare time? I try to fit in time for squash, some golf, mainly family activities.

What is your number one tip for beginner beekeepers?

Get involved with a beekeeping club and/ or organisation and learn from experienced beekeepers.

And for the more experienced?

Stay positive and share your experience/ knowledge.

The National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand

Notice of 2013 Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the NBA will be held at the

Hotel Ashburton
Racecourse Road
Ashburton

Thursday 20 June 2013
commencing at 9.00 am

Chief Executive Officer

FROM THE COLONIES

Auckland Branch

I think it is fair to say that the drought in the region has well and truly broken, and a few days of fine weather would be welcome to allow everything to dry out again.

The Auckland Branch held its AGM on 18 April and it was attended by about 30 people, most of whom were NBA members. The evening began with a pizza meal, and then Dr Karyne Rogers gave a very interesting talk about her work with C4 sugars, and the importance of storage and treatment of honey to avoid the occurrence of false positive readings, especially in very active honeys such as manuka. A great deal of interest was generated and there were many interesting questions from the audience. This was followed by the AGM, with the current office holders being re-elected unopposed. While the AGM was in progress, some of those present continued their discussions with Karyne. The meeting finished at 10 pm.

- Helen Sinnock

Waikato Branch

Waikato has had a fantastic season. A bumper crop with the older established beekeepers saying it's the best crop they have ever had—just brilliant!

Where I live we hadn't had any rain since 10 January until the third week in May, so my bees have had three solid months of very, very, hot temps (in the high 20s and early 30s). Honey oozed out of the boxes and they were seriously heavy. Honey harvesting was super hard work and majorly sweaty! OMG! The plus side, though, is we are now all a tad skinnier! Also the buyers have offered good prices, so Waikato beekeepers are looking pretty happy.

The packaged bee business looks to be having a record season also. While we were sweltering here, Canada was experiencing an exceptionally cold winter and a lot of their bees died so more bees than usual have winged their way over there. Packaged bees should be wrapping up by mid-May.

Most of us are now on the home straight, taking off the last of the honey and thinking a holiday is getting closer on the agenda. Can't wait!

- Barb Cahalane

Poverty Bay Branch

Hives have generally come through the drought in good condition with plenty of stores. Some beekeepers are reporting the need for autumn feeding in some areas.

Queens seem to be laying later into May this year, probably due to the drier warm conditions. Last year by mid-May many hives had no brood at all.

There have been no reports of varroa resistance to control chemicals in this area so far; long may this continue.

Trees for Bees project

The drought this season has had a severe effect on our plantings. On the long steep dry bank our losses have been 90 percent. The smaller flatter area had fared better but losses are still around 60 percent.

April brought sufficient rainfall to replenish soil moisture levels. In early May we started replanting the dry bank with tree lucerne.

- Paul Badger, Branch President

Nelson Branch

After one of the driest summers in memory, the region was suddenly hit with 100 millimetres in roughly an hour. That is some serious rain. There haven't been any reports of hives being affected, so hopefully they were all high and dry.

In other news, the branch had an enjoyable meeting at Motueka's Sprig & Fern in mid-April. Most in attendance arrived a bit before the start of the meeting, giving us a nice chance to catch up over a bite to eat and a cheeky beer.

The proceedings went well, and we managed to not get too bogged down on any one area. There was some constructive discussion around the awareness that the wider beekeeping community and the general public have about comb honey and the need for tutin testing. The branch put together a Notice of Motion (NoM) that will hopefully help prevent another case of tutin poisoning.

With our local AGM on 15 May, I'm sure there will be plenty of other noble NoMs to wade through. Then our thoughts will turn to conference.

- Nahum Kelly

Canterbury Branch

The autumn has continued to be dry and warm, unusually so. Hive condition for this time is very varied depending on who you talk to. I think a lack of pollen due to the dry conditions has a role to play: hives that have plenty of stores seem to be doing better than hives that require a lot of wintering down. The upside is that hives are responding well to autumn treatments.

Another factor is the lack of late-flowering clover. It just wasn't in the pastures, thanks to the recent invader, the clover root weevil. The honey crop sounds like it is in the poor to average range, with beekeepers nearer the coast seeming to be at the average end.

It was good to see the European Union take action on behalf of beekeepers in relation to neonicotinoids: just shows what consistent lobbying can achieve. While the jury still seems to be out as to whether this is the major cause of CCD, it will be a very interesting case study to see if things improve. Pity that New Zealand beekeeper spokesperson(s) were not that supportive and defended the usage of this chemical group.

Anyway, the calendar is marching on and conference is just around the corner. We have a great line up so please send your registration in and get your accommodation sorted—the Hotel Ashburton is full but there are lots of options nearby.

While doing this, consider what you could enter for the Roy Paterson Trophy. While there can only be one winner, all ideas shared in this manner can make life easier for everyone. Someone's idea can always get one thinking about doing things differently and/or easier.

Continued on page 21

It's not too late to enter!

If you are still thinking about submitting entry/ies for the NBA/Ecroyd Photography Competition, the National Honey Show and the Roy Paterson Trophy, go to www.nba.org.nz for entry forms. These can be found under News & Events section of the website. See also the Conference ad on page 7 and the Canterbury Branch report on pages 19 and 21.

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Continued from page 19

The annual National Honey Show is also taking place and is growing every year. Show how proud you are of your own product by entering. The NBA/Ecroyd Photography Competition has lots of classes for your memoirs.

Go to the NBA website www.nba.org.nz for information about Conference accommodation, as well as entry forms for the Roy Paterson Trophy, National Honey Show and the NBA/Ecroyd Photography Competition. And check out the Conference advertisement on page 7.

- Brian Lancaster, Branch President

Due to the timing of Conference, reports and other coverage will appear in the August journal.

HOBBYISTS' CORNER

Buzzy Bee lands at club's apiary

By Carol Downer

Buzzy Bee visits the Auckland Beekeepers' Club apiary. Photo: Carol Downer.

Buzzy Bee made a special guest appearance at the Auckland Beekeepers' Club Annual Honey Show and Field Day on 9 March.

Club members were invited to bring their children to have a ride, which went in a loop around the clubrooms and apiary.

Property development company Mansons TCLM purchased Buzzy Bee last year. The company wanted to use her as a fundraiser and to take part in the annual Farmers Santa Parade.

Buzzy Bee was built by a boat builder using medium-density fibreboard (MDF) laminated wood fibres and sits on a 20-millimetre box section steel frame. The body sits on top of a Nissan Atlas truck. When travelling from storage to an event the antenna, eyes, wheels and wings are removed, put in a trailer and towed behind. When fully set up, the bee takes up one and a half road widths and with the eyes attached, there is a very narrow field of vision for the driver.

At the Farmers Santa Parade, a rope is attached as if she is being pulled along. There are two guide walkers to give the driver direction, which is especially important when going around corners. There is seating for 10 on top; the access is gained by ladder. The children who went for a ride were enthralled and delighted.

Ted Manson kindly let the club use Buzzy Bee with the understanding that the club raised funds for an organisation of its choice.

On behalf of the club, NBA President Barry Foster presented a cheque for $300 to Linda Newstrom-Lloyd at the recent Trees for Bees Conference in Gisborne. The intention is for the money to go towards research work.

Buzzy Bee with passengers. Photos: Carol Downer.

The decade 1953–1963

By Apiarius Antiquary

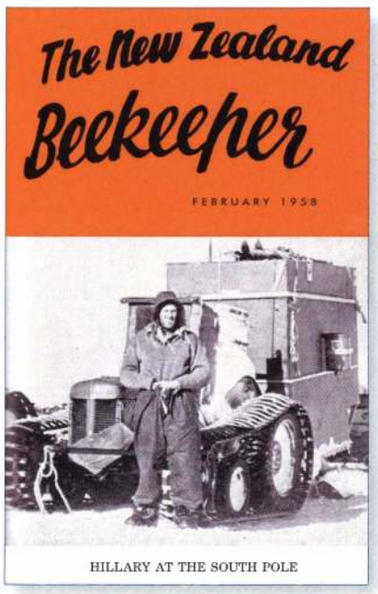
What a magnificent start to the decade: a new Queen for the colonies (Elizabeth II) and a beekeeper at the top of the world.

The industry was moving in a new direction and there appeared to be a positive outlook. However, beekeepers of the time faced some issues that have persisted to this day and continue to give beekeepers cause for concern.

Hillary the beekeeper

History has well recorded the conquest of Mount Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. The benefit to the beekeeping industry was not lost in the address to the 1953 NBA conference by the Minister of Agriculture, Hon K J Holyoake:

> *Your industry as a whole – beekeeping and particularly New Zealand beekeeping, has achieved a good deal of publicity and fame of recent months, not only in New Zealand, but throughout the world. I refer you to the fact that one of your members – Sir Edmund Hillary – was one of the first to climb Mt Everest and put his foot on top of the world. This has given great fame to beekeeping generally but New Zealand beekeeping in particular. Another thing, which has already received some publicity, but to which I want to give some added publicity, is this: I want to pay a tribute to the Departmental Officers who suggested that we might, on the occasion of the Coronation, make a special gift of some Pohutukawa honey to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. This was done on behalf of the people of New Zealand and was suitably acknowledged, and, I am sure from the correspondence we have had, much appreciated by Her Majesty. You have had a lot of publicity and achieved a lot of fame of recent months.*



Front cover of The New Zealand Beekeeper, February 1958. Sir Edmund Hillary led a team to the South Pole. The team drove overland on Ferguson tractors.

The journals published throughout this decade devoted a lot of space to the Hillary expeditions, including the trans-Antarctic expedition in 1957, but we should acknowledge the beekeeping connections that existed with Sir Ed and his team, as written in the May 1953 *Beekeeper:*

> *The achievement of Sir Edmund Hillary and the prominent part played by Mr George Lowe, the other New Zealand member of the party, have brought honour to this country and a flood of publicity to the beekeeping industry. A noteworthy comment came from Mr. A Lowe, father of George Lowe, and himself an orchardist-beekeeper of Hawkes Bay, "I believe," he said, "that these boys' toughness can be attributed to the fact they both eat honey".*

Note that Mr Arch Lowe was Hawke's Bay Branch president at one stage. The article went on to say:

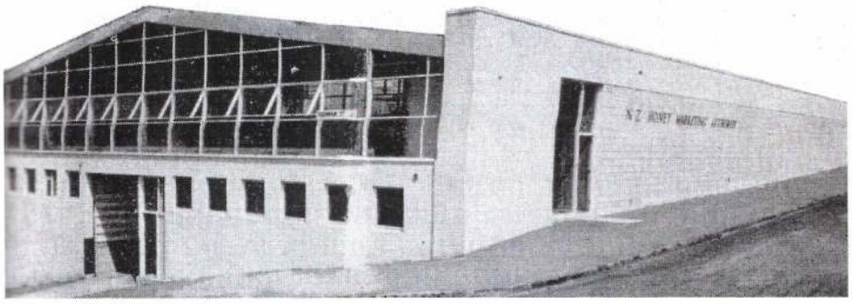
> *Sir Edmund is the son of Mr. P A Hillary, a prominent commercial beekeeper of Auckland and known both as a honey producer and queen breeder. After leaving school he joined his father's apiary business but his career in beekeeping, as in climbing was interrupted by the war. Serving with the Royal NZ Air Force took him to the Pacific Islands and it was here he almost lost his life in a petrol explosion. So deep were his burns that doctors offered faint hope of his recovery, but after several long weeks in hospital his tenacity pulled him through.*
>
> *Today Sir Edmund operates his own commercial apiary business at Papakura, near Auckland, alongside those of his father and his brother. He is a beekeeper in a family of beekeepers and in him the honey industry in New Zealand has a member of whom it may well be proud.*

The Honey Marketing Authority

The price of honey during much of the 1950s was under price control by government regulations, largely as a result of a carryover from the war years. This caused some concern from beekeepers but it may have also helped stabilise prices from wild fluctuations in price as a result of seasonal fluctuations in honey production.

The marketing of honey came under scrutiny again during the 1950s. There were calls for more beekeeper input into the marketing of honey. The 'New Marketing Plan', which had been talked about for some years appeared to be progressing as written in the November 1953 journal:

> *As a result of the recent passing of the Primary Products Marketing Act and the announcement that the Government intends to cease the handling of honey on behalf of suppliers before the end of this year, a series of district meetings was held at convenient centres throughout the Dominion during the early part of September to consider the future of honey marketing. At these meetings, which were open to all beekeepers with 30 registered hives or over, a new marketing plan was prepared by the National Executive in co-operation with the Honey Marketing Committee and designed to operate under the provisions of the Act.*



The new premises of the NZ Honey Marketing Authority, Parnell, Auckland. NBA Conference delegates were invited to visit the building by HMA Chairman Mr W. W. Nelson. This photo appeared in the August 1960 journal.

The new plan proposed, among other aspects, for a board of six members (four producers, one government member and one NBA member), elected on the basis of equal voting rights for suppliers as well as those who paid a seals levy. Previously, those who paid a seals levy did not receive any voting or representation.

The voting on the plan showed that 245 producers representing 79,559 hives supported the scheme and 15 producers representing 5,411 hives opposed the scheme.

The election of producer representatives resulted in R Davidson, E A Field, W T Herron, and W W Nelson being elected from seven candidates nominated. The government representative was K B Longmore and the NBA representative was E A Field.

The new body became known as the NZ Honey Marketing Authority (HMA) and took over from the former Internal Marketing Division (IMD). A tender for a new building for the HMA in Auckland was accepted in January 1957. Total costs to set up the factory were estimated to be £90,000.

Chemical issues

Bee deaths caused by agricultural chemicals once again hit the news, with 100 colonies belonging to T E Pearson (Canterbury) being almost wiped out by an aerial application of Lindane. Other hives in the area were also affected. A report in the journal states, "It appears that Lindane was recommended by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research as it is the most effective method of controlling aphids which ruined last year's crop".

It does appear there was an immediate response from the government departments to control the use of the 'new' product to the market: Lindane. There were many 'meetings' held with beekeepers wanting controls to be placed on products likely to be detrimental to bees.

These discussions can be summed up in a sentence in a letter sent to the Minister of Agriculture by the NBA President:

> *At this juncture it may be well to point out that beekeepers' interests at present lie in the protection by prevention rather than cure by compensation.*

The regulations concerning chemicals were again modified and the Agricultural Chemicals Board was established, which included a beekeeper representative. Mr T E Pearson of Darfield became the first beekeeper to be in a position to affect the way in which chemicals were approved and used.

Manuka blight

A lot of land development happened in the 1950s and 1960s because of the postwar repatriation of soldiers to the land, as well as the boom in wool prices to the farmers.

In order to clear land of the manuka 'weed' farmers introduced and spread manuka blight. Reports on the biocontrol of manuka in one of the 1953 journals stated that blighted manuka plants were planted amongst 'healthy' manuka in the Taranaki district (around Eltham and Uruti). Mr W Hardwick-Smith remarked, "I think it will be two or three years before the manuka begins to die".

An article in one of the journals published later in the decade stated:

> *Manuka blight, hailed by farmers 10 years ago as the answer to the worst weed on hill country, is losing its effectiveness in the North Island ... Since 1956 there has been a definite resurgence to the resistance to manuka blight throughout the North Island.*

Nowadays, blocks are now being planted with the weed in the hope that the farming of marginal grazing land for (active) manuka honey production may produce a greater return than traditional sheep farming.

Office bearers

This decade ended a very productive time for the NBA. The association enjoyed increased publicity for honey and beekeeping (perhaps as a result of Sir Ed), as well as the formation of the HMA. Also, the acceptance (by regulation) of control measures for agricultural chemicals, together with a beekeeper 'watchdog' on the Agricultural Chemicals Board, put the industry on a sound footing.

In 1963, the office bearers were:

President: J R Barber (Pio Pio); Vice President: T.S. Wheeler (Otorohunga); Executive: D A Barrow (Tauranga), D L Ward (Dannevirke), J K Bray (Canterbury), H Cloake (Timaru), Secretary: R A Fraser (Foxton); Editor: J McFadzien (Havelock North).

It is noted that Roy Paterson 'retired' from active participation in beekeeping affairs in 1963. Roy was a beekeeper in North Otago (he formed the North Otago branch) and went on to become an Apiary Officer with the Department of Agriculture. Roy developed some of the beekeeping methods and equipment that may be still in use today, he was awarded Life Membership in 1961 for his contribution to the NBA.

Milk and honey

An interesting article appeared in the May 1963 journal:

> *New Zealand should sell itself abroad as "the land flowing with milk and honey," an Australian temperance leader, Mr E. Steed, said in Auckland recently.*
>
> *He suggested every visitor be met by "attractive lasses with buckets" and handed a container of milk and a small pot of honey.* ➔

"You have this magnificent milk and honey, so why not exploit it?" said Mr Steed.

"Just as many of the Pacific Islands are known for their leis and kisses on the cheek."

Perhaps this has merit today?

Sources

The New Zealand Beekeeper 1953–1963.

A Group at the Southland Field Day. *From left: Messrs. J. McFadzien, G. L. Jeffery, J. K. Bray, J. W. Fraser, J. R. Barber, the Hon. B. E. Talboys (Minister of Agriculture), D. F. Penrose, Mrs. A. W. Cranstoun, and C. Cunningham. Photo by Chris Dawson.*

IT HAPPENED TO ME

Wax works

By the Beekeeper's Wife

The Beekeeper's Wife was busy in the kitchen. The Beekeeper was in the workshop making queen cell cups ready for a requeening exercise.

The Little One was pottering around in the workshop satisfying his curiosity on all manner of fascinating objects, such as bits of wood, old tins, boxes of nails, discarded gadgets, etc.

The Beekeeper hunched over his bench, intent on carefully dipping his mould-stick into the little pot of molten wax to just the correct depth, withdrawing it and rotating it as it cooled and repeating the process until he had a cell cup that any beekeeper would be proud of. Gradually the row of beautiful creamy-gold cell cups was growing on the wooden bar. The job would soon be complete.

Suddenly, he noticed out of the corner of his eye a little hand dart up and tilt the pot of molten wax. Before he could grab it, there was a river of wax streaming down over the forehead of the Little One, over his delicate little eyelids and onto his cheeks. When the Beekeeper's Wife arrived in response to an anguished cry from the Beekeeper, there he was, busy picking congealed wax off the forehead of the Little One, who was sitting on Dad's knee, whimpering only slightly, and turning his head blindly from side to side, no doubt wondering why he suddenly could not see.

"Oh! The eyes! The eyes!" thought the Beekeeper's Wife. "What has happened to those precious orbs?" The Little One would not let the Beekeeper take the wax off his eyelids.

"We'll have to take him to the doctor," said the Beekeeper's Wife. So they piled into the car and drove to the nearest Medical Centre.

"Oh," said the doctor. "I've never had to deal with a situation like this before." The wax was stuck to eyelashes and eyelids, and they were stuck fast. "I'll try some anaesthetic drops," said the doctor. What a mercy! The drops dissolved the wax—an unexpected result—and the eyelids opened. And the eyes were undamaged. The Little One smiled a great smile of relief—and tipped over the doctor's container of paper clips.

"All's well that ends well," smiled the Beekeepers' Wife.

Now it's your turn!

All beekeepers have a wealth of tales to tell about their own sticky situations, mishaps or other near-disasters that are good for a laugh, even though it might take a while to see the funny side! Usually some good lessons are learnt that are well worth imparting to others.

We're putting out a challenge to you all to share your beekeeping adventures and misadventures with your colleagues. Feel free to use a pseudonym if you wish.

If you're shy about writing a story or think you're not a writer, banish those thoughts: we are happy to help shape your story.

Still feeling bashful? Photos are fine too, either to illustrate your story or simply on its own with a caption to help tell the tale. We look forward to hearing from you! Email editor@nba.org.nz

Ensuring hive survival

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

Winter is finally here with the first real cold spell of weather.

Bumble bee numbers have dropped dramatically over the last month and now I'm only seeing the odd queen flying during the middle of the day. Up until last month, they were working dahlias for pollen (they prefer the single-headed variety), but my bees are still continuing to fly on fine days bringing in quite a lot of nectar from banksia, rosemary and other ornamentals in nearby gardens.

The bees are also bringing in a lot of different-coloured pollens from good old gorse in scrub areas and ornamentals like *Fatsia japonica*, which is flowering just over the fence from the hives. If you stand beside a hive long enough, you will also see the odd bee coming in with propolis packed into the pollen baskets on their hind legs to block up cracks between the supers. Those hives still collecting nectar will also have flying drones.

> "If you see mites on the bees, the hive is in real trouble..."

The warm autumn weather has fooled some of the shrubs on the bush fringe. Kohekohe and tree lucerne have begun flowering but so have the occasional bush lawyer and eucalyptus trees. These are budding up out of season.

Varroa treatments

With brood rearing reducing, varroa mite numbers are climbing again in some hives to such an extent that the bees are tossing out some shrivelled-up bee bodies; I even saw a mite on the abdomen of a bee fanning at the entrance. If you see mites on the bees, the hive is in real trouble and is in need of immediate treatment. Once a hive has signs of PMS, sacbrood, chalkbrood and shrivelled larvae and bees, it's hard for it to climb back into good health again. Although the adult bees in the hive may look OK, they have also been affected by varroa and may not be able to produce royal jelly.

The way to recovery is to add a frame or two of emerging brood with bees from a healthy hive. Left on its own, the hive will struggle to get ahead unless it's in a warm area with winter flowering trees and shrubs that produce good pollen and nectar.

The temperatures are now falling, making acid treatments that rely on vaporisation (such as thymol-based products and formic acid) less effective unless they are placed directly over the brood nest. Dribbling oxalic acid is relatively effective but it must be delivered warm. Unfortunately, with brood in the hives, it's going to kill only 50 percent of the mites and the treatment can only be repeated monthly as it is rather acidic on the bees' stomachs. This type of treatment is best delivered on a fine day when bees are able to fly and defecate away from the hive.

Treating with acids is not as effective as strips so if you don't think your alternatives are working, resort to strips as the aim is to protect the bees and bring the hive alive and healthy through to spring.

Keep bees warm and dry

Apparently it's going to be a rather wet spring in some areas according to forecaster Ken Ring, so plan now for this eventuality. Wet weather puts stress on hives if they can't get fresh pollen and nectar, which causes nosema to build up in the bees, shortening their lives. Weak colonies (those not filling the box they are in, whether it's a four-frame nuc or single super) will have a hard time maintaining a compact cluster covering both brood and honey frames.

It's best to unite any weak hive now unless you can provide a warm environment through the winter, such as a shelter shed with one open side facing the morning sun with early pollen sources nearby. Pack all the nucs together so they share their individual warmth or place the nucs on top of a full-

strength hive separated by a split board so the warmth from the bees below passes up into the nuc. You may even consider putting some insulation under the roof of the hive to prevent some of the cluster heat being lost through the roof.

Cold, damp conditions within the hive are more damaging than straight cold. Check that the hive is not building up moisture over the cluster on a cold morning. A little moisture around the edges of the inner cover or split board is OK but the space immediately above the cluster should be dry. If it's damp, add a little more top ventilation by placing a matchstick on the back of the hive.

Those with top-bar hives should be inspecting them every couple of weeks during the winter on a fine day to see that the cluster is just touching honey frames. If we have a long cold spell, the bees might not break cluster and move back on to the honey frames. You may have to assist them by moving the odd frame forward so that it touches the outside of the cluster. Try not to disturb the bees too much as any bees falling off the combs will be lost to the cold.

Things to do this month

Make up and prepare gear for replacement or increase. Check hives after storms. Check to see that your mite treatments have worked. Those beekeepers in the first three years of acute phase of varroa mites can expect your bees to collect honey during the winter from dying feral hives. But there is a downside if this happens as without additional treatments, your hives could also be lost to mite reinvasion.

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