

November 2013, Volume 21 No. 10

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Front cover: First extraction. This photo of Wellington Beekeepers' Club member Mason Branch won first-equal prize in the Portrait section of the fifth annual Ecroyd/NBA photo competition, held on 18 June at the 2013 NBA Conference, Ashburton. Photo: Frank Lindsay.

# Advisory council formed

By Ricki Leahy, NBA President

It's been a very busy month for the Executive as we keep up with all the work we have generated for ourselves.

Most of you would have become aware of the subscriptions survey kindly organised by Russell Berry, our Lower South Island Ward representative.

This survey was about gauging opinion on a membership subscription based on the number of full-time equivalents engaged in your beekeeping operations, as opposed to the number of beehives you run. Russell has an article elsewhere in this journal with news about that and the fact that we, the Executive, particularly our Treasurer, need to scrutinise the results of the survey very carefully to ensure we don't put the funding of the association at risk. Also, please read the interesting results from the Research Committee's survey asking us what research projects we thought were important.

### NBA agreement with BIG

Another item of interest is that the Executive has reached an agreement to work with the Federated Farmers Bee Industry Group (BIG) to move forward together to represent the beekeeping industry in exploring the value propositions of entering into a Government Industry Agreement (GIA). Just as a reminder, the GIA is what biosecurity is going to be in the future. It is an agreement between Government, and those primary industries that choose to sign the agreement, to work together on preparing for and responding to new biosecurity threats. It has been proposed that industries, such as beekeeping, have a partnership and equal say in how biosecurity is managed for their particular industry.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) have stated categorically that they were not prepared to talk to either beekeeping group separately and that they needed to talk to us as an industry.

With this in mind, and with consultation and agreement with the BIG Executive, both your NBA Executive and BIG decided to form the

Beekeeping Industry Advisory Council (BIAC) as the vehicle for us to communicate as an industry with MPI. This council will, in the first instance, comprise the President/Chairman and the Vice President of both the NBA and BIG.

The NBA's GIA Working Group will carry on exactly as they have been and they will bring their recommendations to the BIAC, which will relay them to the MPI.

It is also hoped that a national Bee Health Survey can be initiated by BIAC so data from the survey can be accumulated over time, giving us a health status of our livestock. At present, the NBA and the BIG have no information to compare; e.g., if we are starting to suffer from colony collapse disorder or how many hive losses, and for what reason, we suffer over winter etc. The BIAC will drive this survey and hopefully the work and accumulated data will help with formulating future decisions regarding any GIA.

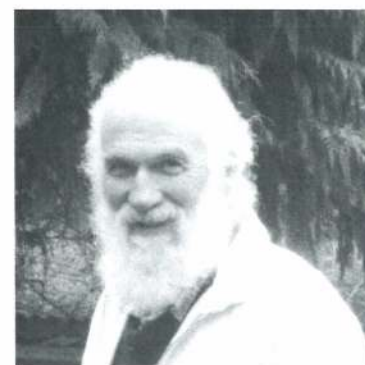
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**"... biosecurity ... involves all bees and all beekeepers in the country."**

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Some beekeepers may think this is nothing to do with them. Perhaps they have only a few beehives run as a hobby and quite rightly are more interested in the actual beekeeping. That's fine but it's still useful for them to be informed.

The thing about biosecurity is that it involves all bees and all beekeepers in the country. It could be that many beekeepers are simply disinterested because it all seems to be about industry. But there is no need for any beekeeper to be concerned. No matter what is decided, if it's good for any commercial



beekeeper's hives, it will surely be good for the hives down the bottom of the garden.

My gut feeling about biosecurity for our beekeeping is that the main emphasis should firstly be focused on maintaining robust border control and then secondly, although still importantly, on readiness and planning for any incursion response. Surely we must keep unwanted pathogens and pests out in the first instance. There will undoubtedly be the looming issue of funding and this will inevitably lead to discussions on some sort of biosecurity levy. It may be that most of us would be supportive of some degree of biosecurity, and it could be fair to say many would be wary of any cost involved. Perhaps any biosecurity cost could be considered as actually an insurance in our future. Maybe if we thought about it that way, it could make the cost more bearable.

It may in fact be suggested that a certain number of hives, or perhaps your first apiary or whatever, are free from any levy. So let's not get in a fluster about cost just yet, as those hives down the bottom of the garden may in fact not be included for any levy.

These are all the sorts of things we need to consider and nut out and that's exactly what the BIAC has been formed to do. The whole reason for going through the process of working out any value proposition is so we can bring all the information back to you, our members, and let you form your own conclusions.

Please rest assured that any decision on GIA will only be made when a mandate is sought by the Government. No GIA can be signed without a mandate from the beekeepers of this country.

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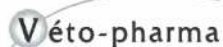
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# Pollen dispenser trial for kiwifruit pollination

By Dr Mark Goodwin and Heather McBrydie, New Zealand Institute for Plant and Food Research

A trial of pollen dispensers fitted to beehives was carried out last season to determine if they would be a useful addition to the tools available for growers to manage their pollination.

The dispensers were able to place enough pollen onto bees leaving their hives to achieve full fruit set, and set more than 600 seeds per fruit.

Despite these promising results, with just one trial we can only recommend that, if they are used in the coming season, they are seen as an addition to an orchardist's current pollination practices rather than a replacement.

Pollen dispensers (sometimes called pollen inserts) are devices that dust honey bees with pollen as they leave their hives (see photo). They have been used on several crops overseas since the 1930s with varied

success. The problem with most is largely that it is difficult to collect enough pollen, or the pollen does not remain viable for long enough. With our advanced pollen harvesting techniques, pollen availability is usually not a problem, nor is the longevity of kiwifruit pollen at the temperatures experienced in kiwifruit orchards. Kiwifruit is therefore a prime candidate for pollen dispensers.

The dispenser sits on the flight board of a beehive. The flight board is the platform at the base of the hive that bees land on before entering their hive. The dispenser has a small piece of glass that reflects light into the hive. Because bees find their way out of the hive by heading towards the light, most bees leaving the hive exit through the dispenser. The dispenser covers only about 60 percent of the width of the flight board so that returning bees can enter their hive either side of it. For a simple device it is surprisingly effective at separating ingoing and outgoing bees, and pollen is not wasted because of bees entering the hive through the dispenser and carrying pollen into the hive. As the bees leave their hive through the dispenser, they walk through a trough containing pollen, which they become covered with, and then carry to the crop.

We conducted a trial with pollen dispensers last season in a small female-only Hayward orchard. The trial was a very tough test for dispensers because the only male pollen

that could reach the flowers was what the bees were taking to the flowers from the dispensers. Because it was an isolated orchard surrounded by other attractive flowers, we had problems in both getting enough bees from hives with dispensers to visit kiwifruit flowers and enough bees to visit flowers in general. Many of the bees that were visiting the flowers were coming from other hives in the area.

We initially fitted four hives with dispensers. Halfway through the trial we had to move the dispensers onto new hives that were brought into the orchard when the bees from the first hives deserted the kiwifruit for more attractive flowers.

We timed the use of the dispensers for when there were the most bees foraging for kiwifruit pollen. We started when we saw significant numbers of bees visiting kiwifruit flowers. The bees finished the pollen within about 4.5 hours after the start, by which time there were few bees visiting kiwifruit flowers (see Figure 1).

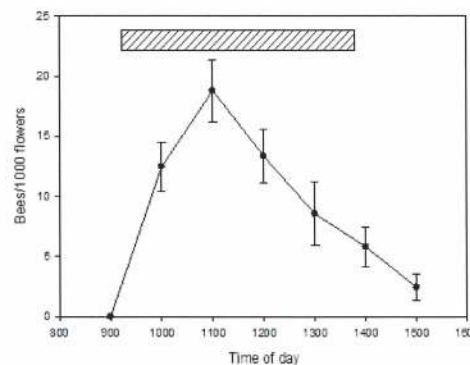


Figure 1. The timing of honey bee visits to kiwifruit flowers. The vertical lines are standard error bars. The shaded bar is the time when the pollen dispensers were operated.



A pollen dispenser sitting on the floorboard of a hive being filled with pollen.

We tried two rates of pollen in the dispensers, a high rate of 4 g pollen per hive per hour for four hours each day for four days and a low rate of 1 g of pollen per hour for four hours each day for five days. The high rate was possibly too high for the current dispensers; although it was effective at putting pollen on bees, the bees showed initial reluctance to walk through the deep layer of pollen. It usually took them a few →

minutes to get used to the high rate. Some of the pollen also appeared to be wasted as the bees would sometimes fan their wings and blow some of the pollen away. The dispensers would have been more effective with the high rates of pollen if they had been fitted with a device that would feed pollen into them over an hour rather than putting the full 4 g in the dispenser at the same time each hour as we did for the trial.

We caught bees from female flowers in the orchard and bees returning with kiwifruit pollen to their hives, measuring the amount of male kiwifruit pollen they were carrying. From this, we were able to establish the proportion of bees that were visiting the female flowers that were coming from the hives with the dispensers. From this it was estimated that about 35 percent of the bees foraging on flowers were not coming from the hives with the dispensers but other

hives within flying distance of the orchard. We also counted bees on flowers, which demonstrated that the total number of bees visiting flowers in the orchard was usually lower than the number that we would normally expect to see visiting flowers in a commercial orchard (> 20 bees/1000 flowers).

The fruitset of the flowers exposed to bees from the dispensers at the high rate was the same as the hand-pollinated flowers (89 percent) despite the problems with not enough bees from the hives with dispensers visiting kiwifruit flowers. When we took into account the number of bees not from the hives with the dispensers, the high rate produced about 616 seeds per fruit (about 50 percent of the full complement of a kiwifruit) and the low rate 250 seeds per fruit. If we could have achieved better flower visitation, we would probably have improved on these results.

This is a promising first step. We hope to be able to modify the dispensers and get a better understanding of how they can best be used to improve their effectiveness in the future. The model of dispenser we tested cannot be purchased commercially at this stage but a plan for making them is available on the Canopy website.

The full report of this study can be found on the Canopy website. [New Zealand BeeKeeper editor's note: registration is required to visit the Canopy website <http://www.zespri.com/about-zespri/zespri-growers/link-to-canopy.html>]

#### Source

Goodwin, M., & McBrydie, H. (2013, September/October). Trialing the use of pollen dispensers. *Kiwifruit* (New Zealand Kiwifruit Journal), 221, 21–23. Reprinted with the kind permission of Zespri and the authors.



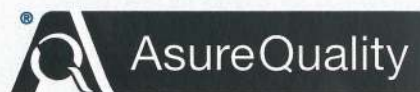
## Who do you call?

Recently the Secretariat has been receiving a lot of calls regarding hive registration and pest management issues, most of which we are unable to answer as those issues are dealt with by other entities. So, to make it easier for you to know who to call for what we thought we would give you an easy reference guide.

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See page 11 for more AsureQuality contacts.

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# AsureQuality Limited report to Conference

By Murray Reid, National Manager Apiculture

The following report was presented to the NBA conference AGM on 20 June 2013.

## Personnel

Tony and Margaret Roper relocated from Christchurch to the AsureQuality office at Mt Maunganui in 2012 but continue to service the South Island. Bob Derry is based in Hamilton and is available Monday to Wednesday only each week. *[Editor's note: information for Apiculture Officers and Registrars of Apiaries is provided at the end of this report.]*

## Hive numbers continued to increase

Hive numbers increased seven percent from 2012, which was similar to the eight percent increase observed between 2011 and 2012 (Table 1 and Figure 1). The number of registered beekeepers increased 12

Table 1: New Zealand beekeeper, apiary and hive statistics as at 30 June 2013

	Beekeepers	Apiaries	Hives
Northland, Auckland, Hauraki Plains	1,050	4,353	62,934
Waikato, King Country, Taupo	341	2,949	62,085
Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, Poverty Bay	431	4,029	83,761
Manawatu, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa, Wellington	935	6,086	103,405
Marlborough, Nelson, West Coast	383	2,335	32,596
Canterbury, Kaikoura	671	3,990	58,035
Otago, Southland	468	3,364	49,202
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>4,279</b>	<b>27,106</b>	<b>452,018</b>

Source: AsureQuality Limited

percent from 3806 in 2012 to 4279 in 2013, with the greatest increase in those owning less than five hives. (Hobbyist beekeepers are considered by the industry as those beekeepers owning less than 50 hives.)

The largest increase in beekeeper and hive numbers was again in the North Island, where beekeeper numbers were up 13 percent and hive numbers increased eight

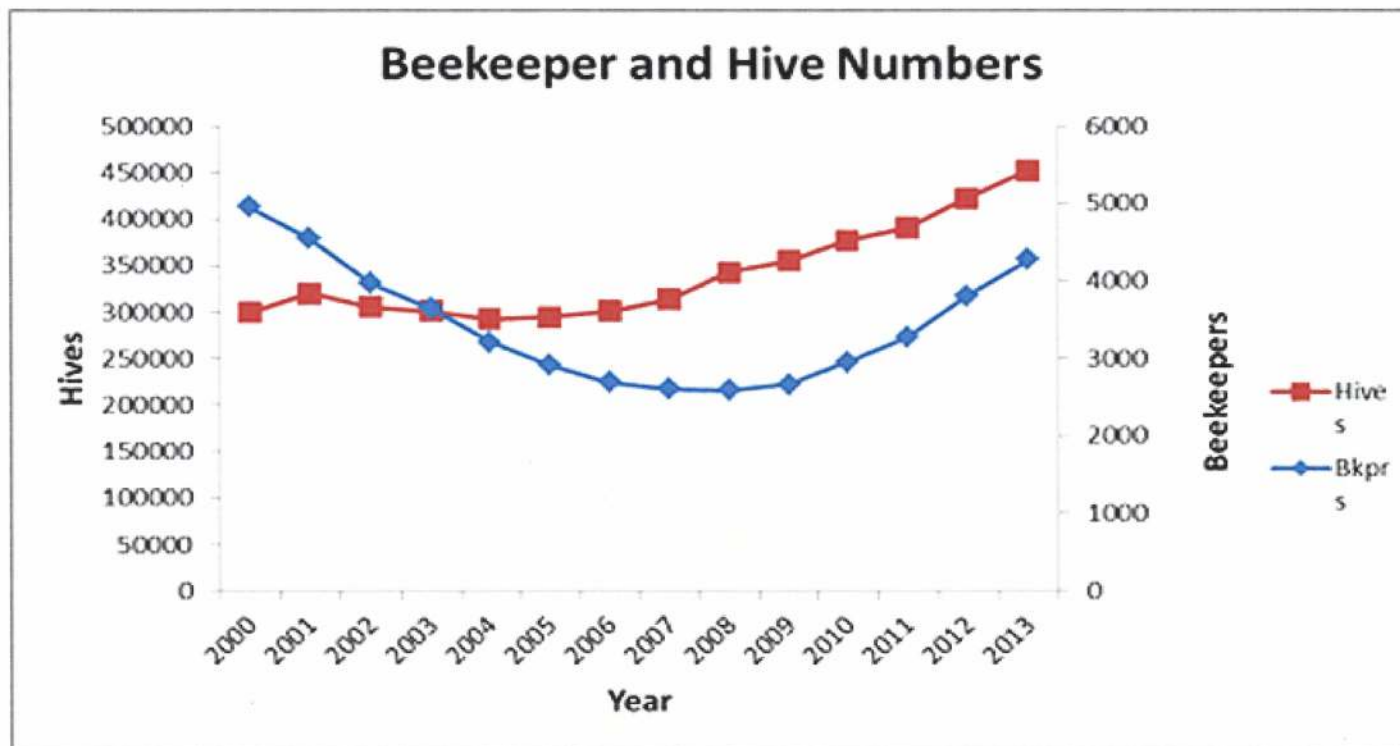
percent compared to 2011/12. In the South Island, beekeeper numbers increased eight percent and hive numbers increased three percent over 2011/12.

The increase in hive numbers in the North Island is a reflection of new commercial beekeepers entering the industry and existing operations increasing hive numbers, primarily for manuka honey production. Several established bee products processing companies continued

*Continued on page 11*

Figure 1: Registered beekeeper numbers and hives: 2000–2013

(Varroa was discovered in Auckland in April 2000)





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Continued from page 9

Table 2: New Zealand honey crop 2008 to 2013 in tonnes (t)

Year ended 30 June	2008 (t)	2009 (t)	2010 (t)	2011 (t)	2012 (t)	2013(t)	6-year average (t)
Northland, Auckland, Hauraki Plains	1,186	1,756	1,285	1,992	1,195	1,906	1,553
Waikato, King Country, Taupo	1,436	1,864	1,584	1,410	1,533	2,462	1,715
Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, Coromandel, Poverty Bay	2,492	2,250	2,376	1,423	845	3,271	2,110
Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu, Wairarapa, Wellington	2,755	2,082	2,318	1,963	2,014	4,127	2,543
Marlborough, Nelson, West Coast	966	1,140	1,400	470	940	1,112	1,005
Canterbury, Kaikoura	1,980	1,718	2,200	1,045	1,650	2,816	1,902
Otago, Southland	1,560	1,755	1,390	1,144	2,205	2,129	1,697
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>12,375</b>	<b>12,565</b>	<b>12,553</b>	<b>9,447</b>	<b>10,382</b>	<b>17,823</b>	<b>12,524</b>
Yield/hive (kg)	36.0	34.7	33.3	24.2	24.6	39.3	32.0

Source:ASUREQuality Limited

to purchase or create beekeeping operations and increase hive numbers.

### Honey production: a New Zealand record

The difference between production in the North and South Islands was very marked again this year but was the reverse of what happened last season. The North Island crop of 11,766 tonnes, (37.7 kg/hive), was nearly double the 2012 crop of 5,587 tonnes (19.5 kg/hive). Meanwhile the South Island crop of 6,057 tonnes (43.3 kg/hive) was up 1,262 tonnes (26 percent) on last year's figure of 4,795 tonnes (35.3 kg/hive).

Exports of retail packed honey for the year ending 31 December 2012 totalled 7,709 tonnes, which was an increase of 543 tonnes (7.6 percent) on 2011. Exports of bulk honey (excluding honeydew) were down

453 tonnes on 2011 but a lot of this is packed into retail packs in Europe or the UK by companies associated with New Zealand exporters.

### Live bee exports to Canada increased 30 percent on 2012

Live bee exports were up 30% on last season. A package of bees generally consists of one kilogram of bees housed within a perforated

cardboard tube or a cardboard and wire screen box about the size of a shoebox. The package may or may not hold a supply of sugar syrup and a queen bee in a cage.

The strong demand followed winter losses in Canada and increased prices for honey. Canada took 32,511 one-kilogram equivalent packages, an increase of 7,569 packages over last season.

Table 3: \*Exports of live bees to June 2013

	**2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
One-kilogram packages	15,711	8,988	22,500	30,083	34,754	31,558	24,952	32,511
Queens	2,554	10,172	3,000	7,000	7,586	14,022	7,516	3,680

Source:ASUREQuality Limited

\* All the packages and the majority of the queen bees go to Canada.

\*\* The exporting season is late January to May.

\* The 6-year average is 29,393 one-kilogram packages.



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## NBA MEMBER PROFILE

# Interview with Peter Sales

Peter Sales is the President of the Otago Branch of the NBA.

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

### *How long have you been a beekeeper?*

Around 40 years.

### *How did you get into beekeeping?*

I first looked after a few hives in the early 1970s when a friend left the district and said, "Here you are, all yours!" I began beekeeping for a living in 1980 after two years beekeeping overseas when I caught the bug.

### *What do you enjoy about beekeeping?*

I have always enjoyed being my own boss, working in the countryside, and bees soon captured my fascination. There is a huge variation in the work and always something new in the job.

### *Tell me about your current business.*

I run about 500 hives in two distinct climatic and flora areas producing clover, including comb, and bush honey. I have marketed most of my honey in the Otago province for about 25 years and the balance is exported.

### *What made you decide to seek election as Branch president?*

Well it was a change from being Secretary! I guess I like the involvement with fellow beekeepers in what can otherwise be a solitary vocation.

### *Tell me about your priorities as Branch president.*

Getting new beekeepers involved to learn the art of safe and successful beekeeping.

### *What events do you have coming up?*

We hold a regular spring field day in

September attended by a real mix of beekeepers.

### *What do you think your Branch does well?*

We have run some pretty good annual conferences by all accounts.

### *What do you think the Branch could improve on?*

Getting new members actively involved in the Branch.

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

Dealing with varroa is the big one right now.

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

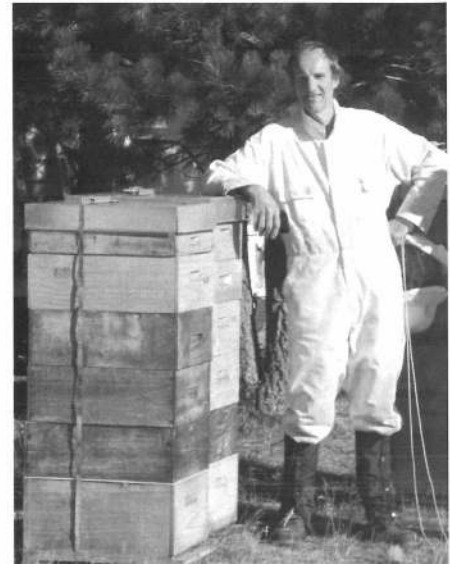
Economically, times have probably never been better for most beekeepers, even for the 'poor cousins' without active manuka.

### *What do you believe to be negative?*

Greed-driven behaviour by a few has certainly surfaced; dispossessing neighbouring beekeepers of their traditional sites with financial inducements to land owners is pretty distasteful to me.

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

An overriding body formed that can represent all facets of the industry when dealing with government.



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


I have become very involved in the Betta Bees breeding programme as I firmly believe that genetic improvements are the way forward in the challenging environments we increasingly have to keep bees in.

I love to be in the mountains and get a few days ski touring in the Southern Alps every winter. A few tramps from time to time and nowadays, time with the grandchildren.

### *What is your number one tip for beginner beekeepers?*

'Keep' your bees, don't just have them. More fun for all.

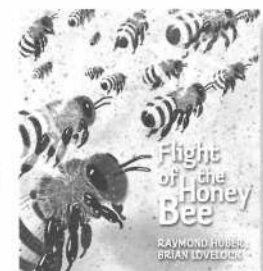
### *And for the more experienced?*

Take good care of breeding and feeding! Fundamental principles in raising livestock. 

## A great holiday gift

*Flight of the Honey Bee* is the third bee title from New Zealand author Raymond Huber, and is receiving rave reviews overseas. It tells the great story of a scout bee as she searches for nectar to sustain her hive. Beekeepers, nature lovers and scientists-to-be will love to explore the fascinating life of a honey bee and enjoy the beautiful illustrations by Brian Lovelock. This new book is available through Whitcoulls bookshops or online at [www.whitcoulls.co.nz](http://www.whitcoulls.co.nz). I would recommend that you check out the author's website at [www.raymondhuber.co.nz](http://www.raymondhuber.co.nz) (Hardback, 32 pages, \$31.95.)

- Maureen Maxwell



# Key results from two surveys

By Russell Berry, Lower South Island Ward representative, Subscriptions Committee member and Research Committee chairperson

I would like to thank all of you who took part in the two NBA surveys carried out recently.

The reply rate to the Subscription Proposal was truly outstanding. I cannot remember an NBA survey that had a better response from the membership.

625 surveys were sent out by email and by snail mail. We had a response rate of 34 percent. This is a very good indication that email surveys do work.

The results of this survey have given the NBA Executive a very clear guideline that you want change. Total number of votes cast in favour of change was 195. Total number of votes cast against change was only 16. In other words, 93% of the people who cast their vote are in favour of change.

The replies were from both large and hobbyist operations, roughly in the same percentage as we have members of our association. The Executive will now have to look carefully at these survey results and determine how best to implement your wishes. I am all for carrying out your wishes as soon as possible, after again looking further at administration and financial implications to the NBA and making sure there are no problems with its implementation.

My feelings are that it is always good to enact membership views. In this case, these views give a far stronger indication of what members want than the small vote we had at our last annual general meeting and should be acted on. But some of the Executive Council members may rightly have a more cautionary approach than I have. But I am very much on the other side of the coin when it comes to importation of new bee diseases. I am really pushing the precautionary approach to not bring in honey or bee products with the possibility

of bringing in new bee diseases. We are still waiting for the results of the Supreme Court hearing involving the Pork Board, the beekeeping industry and the MPI. We are certainly hoping the judges will be advocating that the MPI take a more precautionary approach to bringing in any new bee diseases in the future. Any new bee diseases could put increased pressure on our New Zealand bees—already seriously affected and stressed by varroa mites. This precautionary approach, of course, would not only apply to beekeeping but to diseases of kiwifruit vines, pigs, etc.

### Research Committee survey

The Research Committee survey has also had a great response, not as good as the subscription survey, but still very good. Some of the suggestions made for research are listed below.


1. What is causing high winter losses of beehives in some areas of New Zealand?
2. Establish a formula for assessing various areas to assist in assessing maximum stocking rates to not substantially decrease honey crops.
3. Better Beekeeping, Better Marketing: how do we better achieve this?
4. *Nosema ceranae*: is it a major factor in high winter losses in New Zealand bees?
5. Which strain of bee has the potential to produce the most profits for beekeepers in New Zealand? a) Italians b) Carniolans c) crossbreeds
6. Selective breeding for varroa-tolerant bees.
7. Comparative performance of alternative style of hives.
8. How to eliminate AFB.
9. How to promote the working life of queen bees.
10. Develop a good wasp-only poison.
11. Effective varroa control.
12. Identifying all chemicals that are harmful to bees.
13. Using genetics to improve honey bee breeding.
14. Developing more accurate techniques to determine honey purity.
15. The importance of nutrition to keep bees healthy.
16. Sugar feeding.

17. Benefits of pollen substitutes.
18. How can we prevent MPI making serious mistakes such as the importation of kiwifruit pollen?
19. Introducing virgin queens to honey hives.
20. Queen excluders—which is the most profitable way of farming beehives in New Zealand?
  - a) an excluder over the bottom box confining the queen to one brood box
  - b) an excluder over the second box confining the queen to two brood boxes
  - c) no excluders, allowing queens to breed unrestricted.
21. The benefits and qualities of honeydew.
22. Do new clover varieties produce as much nectar as old varieties?
23. An accurate analysis of all New Zealand native honeys.
24. The benefits of eating honey compared with eating sugar. Literature search and results published in the journal.

And many other good research topics have been received. The diversity is quite outstanding. I actually thought it was going to be mainly about varroa but it certainly is not.

Our thanks go to the Auckland Branch of the NBA and Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies Ltd for their sponsorship, which has encouraged this wonderful response.

The other thing I am very excited about is the number of projects the Branches could be involved in. This will strengthen Branches and improve communication among beekeepers and not, in most cases, cost a lot of money. There's no need for a commodities levy for a lot of this research! Just a lot of time and the wisdom that so many New Zealand beekeepers have, which is just awaiting the opportunity to be used to assist the whole of New Zealand's economy.

I remember well what the late professor Cameron Jay, one of the top world bee researchers from the University of Manitoba, Canada, said, "Beekeepers find the answers, the researcher just proves it 10 years later." 

# Submission to the EPA on sulfoxaflor

By Roger Bray, chairperson

The Technical Committee attended an Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) hearing on sulfoxaflor, a new product that Dow Agro Sciences (Australia) Limited (Dow) has developed as an insecticide.

The NBA has been involved in 'negotiations' over the application to EPA for registration of this chemical.

The NBA has opposed this application, initially as the application was presented with errors and somewhat misleading information. John McLean expressed his concerns about the systemic nature of sulfoxaflor, which means that it will end up in the pollen and nectar and be transported by forager bees back into the hive. He was concerned as to how safe this would be for the nurse bees that feed digested pollen to the queen as well as the larvae. He supported the use of sulfoxaflor only after petal drop.

The other worrying aspect of the application which was not well publicised is that Dow proposed to alter the regulations regarding spraying plants in flower, by seeking approval to allow applications of the chemical up to one hour before the temperature reaches 12°C. We considered that the proposed 'controls' would severely compromise bee health and were particularly worded to suit the applicator of the product rather than protecting pollinators.

It was proposed that the label must contain the following statement:

*"Highly toxic to bees. Will kill foraging bees directly exposed through contact during spraying and while spray droplets are still wet. For treatments made to crops in flower or upwind of adjacent plants in flower that are likely to be visited by bees at the time of application, spraying should not occur during the daytime if temperatures within an hour after the completion of spraying are expected to exceed 12°C. It is recommended that flowering plants on orchard floors be mown just prior to spraying. In top fruit crops the risk to bees from spraying during flowering applies from pink/white bud until after petal fall."*

Some of the questions we posed appeared to engender some food for thought for the EPA, which could highlight some interesting dilemmas for them in the future. The chairman commented that EPA may need to reconsider other applications in the pipeline that may have been heading down the 12°C scenario. It was our concern that if we accept spraying plants in flower during the day, the floodgates would open for all insecticides at the possible expense of our bees. This concern was borne out by the chairman's comments.



*This photo shows bees working on flowers at a temperature of 10.7°C. Photo: Roger Bray.*

Any decision may be some time away, but it is fortunate that there is some scrutiny of the approvals process for chemicals as beekeepers have missed the boat on some aspects in the past.

Hopefully we will have some positive news for our members who are involved in the pollination of fruit trees and crops that may keep their bees safe.

Thanks to Michelle Taylor in assisting with some research work suggesting that bees (and also bumble bees) fly at temperatures lower than the temperature suggested.

To give members an indication of the 'work' that the NBA committee has undertaken on this application, there have been two pre-hearing meetings and a hearing involving eight person/days in Wellington, as well as preparation time probably another eight person/days. There were some travel costs to get our representatives to Wellington, which have been paid by NBA, as well as some private funding.

The NBA was the only submitter to this application.

### Further reading from overseas

<http://www.croplife.com/article/34999/beekeeping-industry-files-appeal-against-epa-for-full-registration-of-sulfoxaflor>

### Prof Peter Molan receives KuDos

We extend our congratulations to Peter Molan MBE, Professor in Biological Sciences at the University of Waikato, who received a KuDos Award for Lifetime Achievement on 26 September at a ceremony at the Claudelands Events Centre, Hamilton.

The University of Waikato Lifetime Achievement Award "recognises a Waikato scientist whose research has made a major contribution to the Waikato and the international profile of New Zealand science".

Prof Molan has recently compiled a comprehensive database of research into the therapeutic properties of honey (see the October 2013 journal, page 33). Go to <http://waikato.academia.edu/PeterMolan/Papers>

Source: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/9215671/Manuka-honey-expert-doesn-t-like-taste>

# Kiwifruit and the bee industry

By Gordon Skipage, Zespri Crop Protection Development Manager

The kiwifruit industry and the bee industry have a symbiotic relationship where each benefits commercially from the other.

Kiwifruit growers need high-quality hives to maximise pollination and, in return, beekeepers are paid for the use of bees and expect their hives to be well looked after. Zespri also has a role in this and takes its responsibilities towards protecting bees very seriously.

Zespri regulates the agrichemicals allowed for use in its supplying orchards. The Crop Protection Standard (CPS) outlines the permitted chemicals and their use patterns on Zespri-supplying orchards and this is updated regularly. Bee safety is a critical factor we consider when allowing agrichemical use and investment in research is undertaken, in consultation with the beekeeper representatives, to ensure the products used on kiwifruit orchards don't harm bees.

Use of bee-toxic sprays in the industry is virtually non-existent now and Zespri provides regular best practice education to ensure no bees are foraging when agrichemicals are applied. For example, around 60 percent of kiwifruit growers last year did not apply a fungicide over the flowering period and those that do are encouraged to apply in late evening or at night to avoid bees.

The new fungicide Luna Privilege® has been added to Zespri's CPS this year for *sclerotinia* control. This is a positive development because it can be applied before bees are placed in the orchard, eliminating the need for spraying fungicides when bees may be present. Luna Privilege® is not toxic to adult bees.

This reflects similar results to that undertaken with Movento® several years ago. Movento®, a revolutionary new product for scale control produced by Bayer®, allowed the kiwifruit industry to virtually eliminate the use of bee-toxic insecticides within the industry.

KeyStrepto® is an antibiotic spray approved to help battle the new *Pseudomonas syringae* *pv. actinidae* (Psa) disease, which has seriously impacted the industry since its arrival in 2010. KeyStrepto® has again been approved for off-label use as a Psa protectant on fruiting and non-fruiting kiwifruit vines this season. It is permitted for use until one week before the first kiwifruit flowers (male or female) open in the orchard or until 15 December 2013, whichever comes first. Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH), an industry organisation set up to control Psa, conducts compulsory on-orchard pre-spray audits to ensure no flowering sward is present. This is the same permitted use pattern as last year.



*The bee industry and the kiwifruit industry in action. Copyright © the New Zealand Institute for Plant & Food Research Ltd. All rights reserved.*

Zespri will once again test 100 percent of supplying orchards for more than 300 residues—including antibiotics—in the 2014 season. No antibiotic residues were found in fruit submitted to Zespri's inventory last year. Testing by various honey marketers also found no antibiotic residues in honey.

The regulatory body ACVM (the Agricultural Compound and Veterinary Medicines group

within the Ministry for Primary Industries) is processing a more permanent limited label claim for KeyStrepto® as an aid in the control of Psa and this is expected shortly. This is likely to see a relaxation in auditing requirements, which is based on the science undertaken that indicates the risk of honey contamination from spraying antibiotics, in the allowed use pattern, will not result in any antibiotic residues in honey.

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**“...Zespri provides regular best practice education...”**

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A New Zealand chemical company, Etec, is also pursuing ACVM registration of another antibiotic product Kasumin® (active ingredient kasugamycin) as a Psa protectant as well. A decision is expected shortly. Kasumin® is a bactericide used solely on plant-based bacteria and fungi and has no applications in human or veterinary health. It is expected industry requirements around its use will be the same as KeyStrepto®.

While antibiotics are a very useful tool to help control Psa, Zespri is committed to finding control options that will not require their use long term. A comprehensive research programme on product testing and management options is in place.

So Zespri and the kiwifruit industry are working hard to manage risks to beekeepers. On the flipside, kiwifruit growers, more than ever, require high production to allow them to recover quickly from the impact of Psa and achieve the planned industry growth. High-quality hives that meet the Industry Pollination Standard and regular hive feeding are required for all orchards to ensure pollination is maximised. Participation of beekeepers in hive-auditing schemes or membership of the Kiwifruit Pollination Association (KPA) is strongly encouraged. By each industry doing its bit, the continued success of both industries is ensured. 

# FROM THE COLONIES

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## Auckland Branch

What a boomer of a spring we're having. The hive populations have built up well and so far there are few reports of swarming. After a mild winter, we are now experiencing some lovely warm spring weather, albeit with occasional periods of high winds and spring showers.

There is an abundance of clover in pasture ready and waiting for a generous flow, weather permitting, and beekeepers in the region seem generally to be happy with their lot.

- Helen Sinnock

## Waikato Branch

We are definitely in the midst of Koanga (spring) now. The weather has been wet, warm, windy and cold: all typical for this time of the year. The bees, by all accounts, have fared well over the winter. They are really podging up in the hive and most of us are gearing up to split, hopefully before they swarm! There is plenty of willow, wattle, gorse and heather flowering—the farmers are making their silage and ploughing up their paddocks for maize. Encouragingly, some of my farmers have asked what trees they could plant to help the bees. Brilliant!

I recently watched a wee video of Marla Spivak, an American professor of entomology from the University of Minnesota. She is currently studying how bees collect and use propolis. The video, though, is an overview of the state of bees in America and shows great visuals of huge swards of almond farms and NOTHING else. She said that in 1945 there were 4.5 million hives in America; now there are only two million—1.5 million of those are needed to pollinate the almond fields alone. America is at the tipping point. Marla is a strong advocate of feeding bees heaps of different foods.

Nothing any of us don't already know, but we still need to try to educate those dairy farmers out there that are still spraying madly, pulling out all their hedgerows, planting maize and rye grass and then wondering why they don't see any bees in their backyard.

To see Marla's video, go to: [http://www.ted.com/talks/marla\\_spivak\\_why\\_bees\\_are\\_disappearing.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/marla_spivak_why_bees_are_disappearing.html)

- Barb Cahalane

## Poverty Bay Branch

What a strange year the East Coast is having. After one of the mildest winters on record, spring has turned wet and cold. Luckily the hives were very strong coming out of winter, but have eaten a lot of surplus stores and have stored very little of the willow flow at most sites.

Swarming is not posing the major problem that it would have been had there been fine weather throughout the willow flow. Hives are building up well for the honey flow.

### Trees for Bees project

The plants that survived last year's drought are now doing very well and producing a small array of flowers.

- Paul Badger, Branch President

## Hawke's Bay Branch

We have been having glorious spring weather: even hives that were quite backwards are now getting short of room. Where hives are being used for pollination (especially in apples), they are, in many cases, doing too well and swarms are starting to be reported on a regular basis. Many plants seem to be flowering heavily after an off year last year and the need to give hives supplementary feed has been much reduced.

Despite the fine weather we have also had good rains so things are looking promising at the moment, although it is still very early. Pollination started later than last year but things have closed up. It looks like some of the later crops may be earlier than last year.

- John Berry, Branch President

## Southern North Island Branch

### Camp Rangi

Over 120 people attended our Camp Rangi weekend of bee education. It was nearly 10 years since we held the last one and there was a huge response.

Our overseas guest speaker was Des Cannon, who will be known to some readers. Des and his wife now own and produce *The Australasian Beekeeper* journal, so this, with a lifetime of beekeeping meant that Des has many interesting topics to talk about. He amazed us with one talk about cycling 1500

kilometres around Europe (with his wife) and all the various beekeepers, etc that they met on the way. Des covered a number of other subjects and also participated in 'hands-on' beekeeping when we held practical sessions on spring work, splits, queen cell grafting and general beekeeping matters. It is a huge effort by the branch running these weekends and it may be a couple of years before we hold another.

### New Zealand Apiculture Conference 2014

Yes, you read it correctly: this will be a conference for all beekeepers and associated bee industries. We are excited about it and have a special group to look at sponsors and trade exhibits.

As it will be the major bee conference for the year we hope to attract a lot more trade exhibits. The Bee Industry Group (BIG) will be joining us for the first time. More information will be released shortly on the programme. We are asking NBA Branches and BIG to make suggestions as to the type of discussions and lectures that members would like covered during the conference.

Around our area the mild climate has stimulated the bees—as I write this, swarms are popping up all over the show. Last week several were found around Palmerston North and Wanganui. Most areas are similar. It's back to basics of checking hives for queen cells every 10 days. Maybe an early honey flow this season.

- Neil Farrer, NBA Life Member

## Nelson Branch

It's a busy time of year for beekeepers, great and small, in the Nelson region. High brood levels coming out of winter have likely contributed to the swarm season being a touch earlier than usual. There have also been reports that the barberry flowering may be ahead of schedule. Consequently the commercial beekeepers can't afford to miss a beat with their swarm control. For hobbyists, meanwhile, this is a great opportunity to increase their colony numbers via swarm collection.

Local pollinators have been busy getting lost and found in pipfruit orchards, and will soon be navigating gold kiwifruit blocks. For a while yet we will be creatures of the night.



For people who work outdoors a lot, we beekeepers don't get a lot of sun on the skin, what with wearing full body suits, and the frequent stints of nocturnal activity. This may be part of the reason for one beekeeper getting his first case of sunburn while visiting Kaiteriteri beach recently.

May the warm weather continue, and give us the opportunity to collect some honey and wear some sunscreen.

- Nahum Kelly

### Canterbury Branch

Spring is finally under way in Canterbury. Growth was slow to get going but thankfully the bees came out of the winter quite well.

With the bees in reasonable condition for the time of year, it was looking like being one of the easier springs we have had in a few years. This turned out to be wishful thinking.

It is absolutely amazing what wind damage can be achieved in 20 minutes, which is about all it took. We had quite a few apiaries that had to have a track cleared to them, especially in the forestry blocks and I had more than my fair share of damaged hives with windfall.

I really am wondering what natural disaster Canterbury can throw at us next. We must be running low on options!

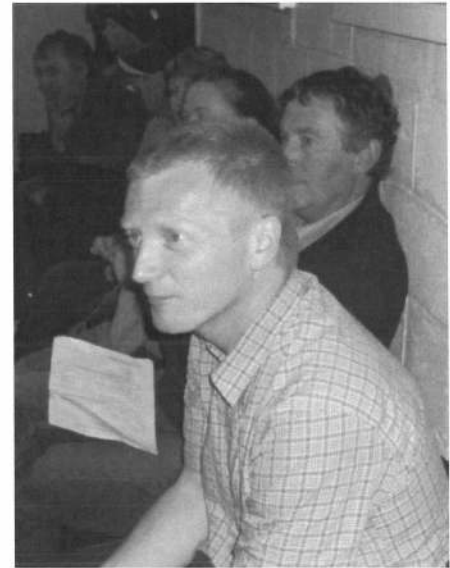


*Cutting a path to the hives. Photo: Brian Lancaster.*

- Brian Lancaster, Branch President

### Otago Branch

The Otago Branch spring field day was held on Saturday, 28 September 2013, in the Outram Community Hall. Seventy-nine people attended, including from Southland and South Canterbury as well as Otago. A good number of hobby beekeepers were present.



*Marco Gonzalez and Otto Hyink (foreground). Photos: Tudor Caradoc-Davies.*

Marco Gonzalez fromASUREQuality Limited spoke about AFB in Otago, Otto Hyink of the University of Otago gave updates about bee genetics, followed by Allen McCaw, a member of the Bee Products Standards Council, who spoke about honey quality and standards (manuka, pyrrolizidine alkaloids, and the C3/C4 sugar issue). These were informative presentations and generated much discussion over lunch.

In the afternoon Marco Gonzalez spoke about exotic pests, followed by a panel discussion about varroa with Marco Gonzalez, Tim Wood, Reece Adamson, Peter Sales, and Russell Berry. After tea Russell Berry, our NBA representative, gave an update covering many of the current issues facing the NBA Executive members. These include proposals to change the basis of the NBA member subscriptions, research

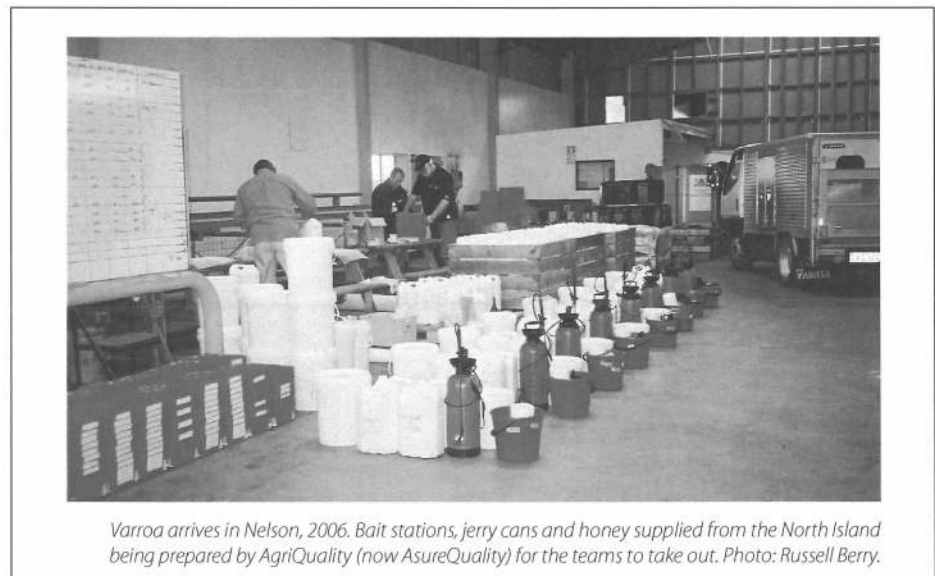
priorities, honey imports, and considering the Government Industry Agreements (GIAs) proposal.

We had planned a practical spring hive management session with Reece Adamson, but the weather prevented this. Instead, a useful discussion was held on inspection, swarming, splits and requeening.

It was a good day and it was very pleasing to have such strong representation from the wider region.

Generally spring seems to be two to three weeks early: the weather has been ranging from warm to cold. Nectar flows include tree fuchsia and willow.

- Tudor Caradoc-Davies,  
Branch Secretary



*Varroa arrives in Nelson, 2006. Bait stations, jerry cans and honey supplied from the North Island being prepared by AgriQuality (now ASUREQuality) for the teams to take out. Photo: Russell Berry.*

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## OUT AND ABOUT

# Eye on Nature focuses on honey bees

By Kim Kneijber, Auckland Beekeepers' Club Inc.

Eye on Nature is an environmental educational event.

The event is run by the Manukau Beautification Trust and the Auckland Botanic Gardens, with other programme partners including Landcare Research, Auckland Zoo, Waicare and others.



*A group of students learns about bees.*

This year's event was held from 20–23 March at the Auckland Botanic Gardens. The first three days were for local students and the last day open to the public. During the student educational days, as many as 500 students visited from 40 different schools. They enjoyed educational displays, arts and crafts and other activities including a maze and games.



*Members of the Auckland Beekeepers' Club arrive in style.*

The Eye on Nature logo includes the words 'Bugs, boots, roots and shoots', and this year they concentrated on the honey bee for the 'bugs' part of events. They wanted to impart these messages to children: not to be afraid of bees, that bees play a very important role in our ecosystem and we are dependent on bees for pollination.

Sara Russ did a wonderful job of displays with me assisting. We had help from Rosemary Weir, Eunece Oliver and Peter Biland to give talks in three different tents with the same displays over the three days.

The Eye on Nature team also set up a tunnel with a bee theme. People could make bee-themed sun hats and take a quiz on bees. Children could taste honey after each talk and there were a few very friendly bees

flying around, which everyone learned not to be scared of.

On Saturday, Sara continued with the talks and opened up beehives for the public to view, which are in an apiary set up in the grounds.

The grand finale of the event was a fashion parade of Wearable Garden Art, and several entries included a bee theme, which was great to see.

Eye on Nature will be held again in April 2014. For more information and photos, go to the Eye on Nature site <http://www.beautifulmanukau.org.nz/eye-on-nature.html>



*One of the participants in the Wearable Garden Art fashion parade. Photos supplied by Eye on Nature.*

## Sorry for the delay!

We apologise for the late distribution of the bumper October journal due to mechanical and other difficulties. We hope no one was inconvenienced and that you've enjoyed reading it.



*Varroa arrives in Nelson, 2006. These feral bees at this bait station were very yellow. Normally feral bees are very small and black, particularly in the bush areas. Photo: Russell Berry.*

# Wanganui Beekeepers' Club 30th birthday

By Graham Pearson

A group of keen new members arranged a wonderful 30th birthday celebration for the Wanganui Beekeepers' Club on 25 September.

Attended by over 50 members, past members and partners, the occasion was a chance to celebrate the wonderful contribution made by club stewards John and Jan Brandon, and Anne and Alf Hulme. Humorous stories and pictures of

club activities stirred up memories. John and Jan's many years of sharing knowledge and fostering interest in all things bee related was acknowledged. The evening concluded with everyone congratulating Anne and Alf on their recent diamond wedding anniversary. 🐝



*Top: Club stewards Jan and John Brandon. Bottom: Alf and Anne Hulme are wearing crowns as the 'girls' had written a wee skit of fantasy, making Anne the Queen of Hearts, as in Alice in Wonderland, for the presentation to them. It all made for a very fun night!*

*Photos: Graham Pearson.*



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## The decade 2003–2013

By Apiarius Antiquary

As we look back over the last decade, some events will remain vivid in the minds of beekeepers.

The industry has evolved considerably in the last 10 years, with beekeepers generally being 'better off' than their forebears.

The AFB strategy had been without a funding mechanism since the rejection of the commodity levy by beekeepers in 2002. The NBA conducted further consultation with beekeepers with a view to funding through a biosecurity levy on all beekeepers.

As written in the November 2003 journal,

*The levy will be calculated on the apiaries registered on the 31st March each year. All beekeepers will be required to fund the levy, although those beekeepers who have registered fewer than 11 beehives on fewer than 4 apiaries will only be required to pay the base fee plus one apiary—ie \$28 +GST. This year's rate will be \$20 base levy, and a fee of \$8 per apiary excluding GST.*

Varroa was a major issue at the start of the decade. Control lines drawn on a map of the North Island proved little barrier to varroa



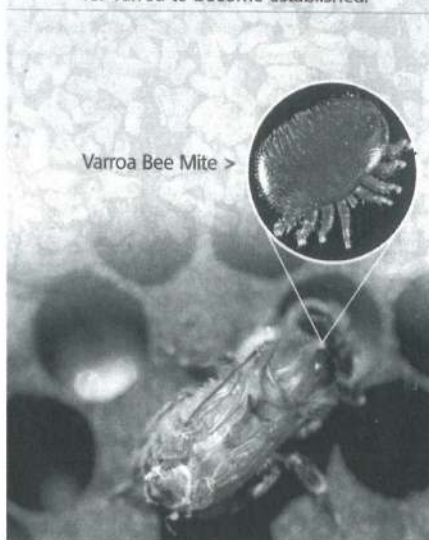
*This graphic was part of the MAF's campaign to stop the spread of varroa to the South Island. It appeared on the placemats used at the NBA centenary conference, Ashburton 2013.*

## Keep the South Varroa Free

The South Island remains free of the Varroa Bee Mite, which kills honey bees.

With your help, we can keep the mite out and protect our beekeeping and agricultural sector.

Varroa is moved on bees and used beekeeping equipment. All it takes is one mite on a bee to reach a South Island hive for Varroa to become established.



which invaded North Island hives, often travelling at the speed of a beekeeper's truck.

For the South Island, a Varroa Pest Management Strategy (PMS) was proposed "to keep the South Island free of varroa". The Varroa PMS was notified in October 2003 and the NBA voiced their concern that the strategy as written was unlikely to keep the South Island free of varroa.

NBA requested that a 'Board of Inquiry' be set up to officially review the proposal. A Board of Inquiry was notified by the Hon Jim Sutton MP "due to a lack of agreement among South Island beekeepers on the content of the proposal. This will give all interested parties a chance to put their views to an independent body".

The decision to proceed with the strategy was made and beekeepers provided

\$200,000 of the \$750,000 for the strategy by way of a biosecurity levy, the balance being provided by the regional councils of the South Island.

Perhaps more significant was the issue that governance of the strategy was undertaken by a 'board' of regional council appointees, with the beekeeping industry having only one representative. The NBA at the time submitted that it appeared to be of little benefit to the funders to spend \$750,000 per annum on a 'strategy' that would enable a flag to be raised where varroa entered the South Island.

### Nelson conference

The conference of 2003 was held in Nelson and offered a different concept than its precursors. The usual specialty groups were catered for and a new format of two days of seminars followed by the AGM was appreciated by those who wished to be informed but did not wish to be involved in the 'beekeeper debates'.

One point that has been 'missed' with the 'notices of motion' (NOMs) at AGM is that to a certain extent, NOMs set the policy of the NBA as a result of a consensus view; i.e., bringing both sides of an argument forward then reaching a common view via a vote. The organisers were apprehensive that the 2003 conference may have been a financial liability but the 170 beekeepers that attended signalled that the NBA was well on the road to becoming the foremost industry group for beekeepers.

### Imported bee products

MAF has, for some considerable time, wished to open New Zealand borders to imported bee products. Submissions were called from interested parties to a new Risk Analysis for imported bee products in February 2005. The NBA has actively opposed the importation of foreign honey on the grounds that it poses an unacceptable risk of exotic diseases entering New Zealand. The President's report in the June 2005 journal contained the following comment:

*Continued on page 23*



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Continued from page 21

*The Executive has recently received a letter from MAF indicating that the risk analysis submissions process has been delayed due to time and staff constraints. It appears that most of the people who have been involved in this area have now left MAF for other less stressful jobs.*

Further NBA action through the court system has cost the NBA significant amounts of time and money—it is sad that there has not been a better whole-of-industry contribution to the cause. The government of the day saw the necessity to amend the Biosecurity Act as a result of our legal action in not only protecting the beekeeping industry but also pointing out deficiencies in the protection of our primary producers.

In line with the requirements of the Animal Products Act 1999, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA), in conjunction with industry representatives, developed a Risk Management Programme (RMP) and associated Code of Practice (COP) for bee products. Although the requirements of the RMPs are applicable only to certain export markets, beekeepers saw value in upgrading processing facilities and producing honey that complied with the processing and traceability provisions of the RMP. As NZFSA did not wish to negotiate with beekeepers on an individual basis, selected industry groups were invited to provide up to three persons to provide representation for their respective organisations. This group became called the Bee Products Standards Council (BPSC) and deals with issues involving the COP and market access requirements. RMPs became operative in July 2006.

### Varroa detected in Nelson

The bad news for South Island beekeepers was the detection of varroa in Nelson on 15 June 2006, which caused a scurry within the Varroa Agency Incorporated (VAI). Although the Varroa PMS surveillance programme found varroa, the VAI was little prepared for any subsequent action that would keep the South Island free of varroa. The Government indicated that an eradication attempt would not be made; however, a group of beekeepers felt that a private eradication attempt could have a chance of success.

As written in the November 2006 journal,

*This article is designed to assist in understanding and hopefully to provide clarity as to why the extensive efforts of many have been engaged. The South Island Varroa Control Group Incorporated (SIVCG) was created because the New Zealand Government elected not to try and eradicate varroa when it was first discovered in the upper South Island. This came as a real blow to many industry participants, with some standing up and taking proactive steps to change the imminent outcome.*

*Even if SIVCG does not achieve its aim, then it can be said SIVCG will still have significantly slowed the spread of varroa to the rest of the South Island and at least given it a good go. Efforts so far have allowed the wider industry to plan and take stock of what could be described as an 'industry catastrophe' affecting many affiliated businesses.*

The eradication attempt involved depopulating bees from the Nelson area by moving hives to the already affected North Island and poisoning any feral colonies that remained. Work was undertaken by volunteers and funding was provided by donations from beekeepers and the wider community. The Hon Jim Anderton directed Biosecurity New Zealand to assist with the legal aspects regarding the purchase and removal of beehives, but could not assist in allowing for the 'off label' use of fipronil to eliminate feral hives via poison bait stations that had been placed in the affected area. Although there were differences of opinion of beekeepers that an eradication attempt was a good industry choice, there was some unity of purpose displayed by those who participated in the attempt. Those hopes were dashed when no chemical was able to be used, and the beekeepers felt they had been let down with the whole concept of keeping the South Island free of varroa.  
*[Editor's note: see more historical varroa photographs on pages 17 and 19.]*

### Death of Sir Edmund Hillary

NBA paid tribute to our most famous beekeeper following the death of Sir Edmund Hillary in February 2008. A smoker



Front cover of the February 2008 journal.

with a floral arrangement of bee-friendly flowers and an engraved brass plaque sat on the casket during the state funeral service, perhaps signifying the great heights a humble beekeeper can achieve.

### Tutin poisoning

A timely reminder to beekeepers that New Zealand bees do collect toxic honeydew appeared when people who purchased comb honey from the Coromandel area became ill with tutin poisoning. Although the long-established beekeepers were →



The tutu plant. Photo: Frank Lindsay. This photo appeared on the April 2008 back cover along with botanical information on the tutu plant.

aware of and managed the risks with tutu plant, an increasing number of new entrants into beekeeping were unaware of the risks. The direct selling of honey by hobby beekeepers has increased the risk of further poisonings.

### Statistics

The 2013 database shows that 4273 beekeepers owned 453,820 beehives on 27,142 apiary sites.

### Centenary celebration

The celebration for the NBA's 100-year anniversary was held in Ashburton in conjunction with the 2013 conference. The event started with a get-together and afternoon tea followed by the formal activities. NBA President Barry Foster presented the Mayor of Ashburton with a lime tree and plaque celebrating the centenary. A 'beehive' cake was cut by the oldest life member attending, Bob Blair,



*Tree presentation at the celebration of 100 years of the NBA. Left to right: Barry Foster and Ashburton mayor Angus McKay. Photo: Jody Mitchell.*

assisted by the other three members who are over 80 years old: Ian Berry, Kevin Ecroyd and David Penrose. Among the 150 attendees were 11 of our 17 life members. Our oldest life member, 98-year-old Dudley Lorimer, had planned to attend but was admitted to hospital two days before the event. Te Radar provided the evening entertainment: a hilarious talk with a link to beekeeping.

As a memento of the occasion, participants were given 100-year badges and laser-printed stainless steel hive tools, the costs being provided by some individual donations from the 'friends of the NBA'.

### Sources

*The New Zealand Beekeeper*, 2003–2013.

American Foulbrood National Pest Management Plan Report to National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand (Inc), June 2013.



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# Keeping ahead of the bees

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

As I write this in mid-October, a cold spring storm has just gone through but many of the early bush sources are flowering, stimulating the bees into early honey production.

Any breaks in the weather, such as the one we have just experienced, can turn the bees' attention to swarming. Generally those who requeened every hive last season shouldn't see hives swarming but sometimes hives just swarm, even small developing hives.

It's a fine line keeping ahead of the bees, giving them room to expand upwards. Once the bees reach a honey barrier or start storing nectar around the top of the brood frames, the bees and the queen become restricted, causing congestion. Some will start hanging out in the top feeder or up the front of the super above the entrance, while other nest mates will polish and reduce the open end of the queen cell buds, encouraging the queen to lay an egg in each. Generally the first queen cell buds the queen will lay in are along the bottom bar of the super, immediately above the brood nest. Soon after that, all other queen cell buds will be laid in, making it necessary to inspect the whole hive to remove them.

Most beekeepers who do not use queen excluders will continue with their 10-day quick check of the super immediately above the brood nest for developing queen cells by tipping it back and looking into the queen cell buds. No eggs means you can relax slightly but if the brood is concentrated into the second super, reverse the bottom and second super again to give queen room to move back up again, and perhaps add another honey super on top. That sealed brood will be emerging in a few days and has to go somewhere. The number of stored

honey frames will also be assessed and if the hive only has three frames of honey left, the hive will need sugar feeding.

Whether to use raw sugar or sugar syrup will depend upon the size of the colonies and the type of feeders one uses. Some beekeepers use a Miller top feeder with one side raw sugar and the other syrup. This allows the bees to use the syrup first and then start on the raw sugar, converting it into a liquid by adding water when all the syrup has been taken down. If the beekeeper is delayed in replenishing the syrup due to weather conditions, a breakdown or requeening, the bees won't run out of stores.

Those beekeepers who use queen excluders and restrict the queen to a single super will be removing a few frames of sealed brood (shaking all the bees off) and placing this in the second super immediately above the queen excluder. Refill the empty spaces on the outside of the brood nest with drawn frames so the queen has space to lay. The nurse bees will quickly move up through the excluder and keep the sealed brood warm. All this can continue until an egg is seen in a queen cell.

Once the queen has started to lay in the queen cell, you have to do something. Just cutting out the queen cells won't work as the bees quickly replace them and if one persists in this action, the bees could swarm well before the first cell is capped.

Making splits or four-frame nucs, reducing the hive to six to eight frames of brood and 12 frames of bees, usually relieves congestion and allows the bees to settle down to rebuilding again. A few foundation frames placed against the brood nest will give the bees something to do and will create extra room; hopefully they will give up on swarming.

Generally the bees draw out the best comb in the second super where it's warmer while on a strong nectar flow. I have found that by adding an unwired empty frame for the bees to draw out and produce drones in, they will draw perfect worker comb on the foundation or waxed plastic frames. You cannot mix wax foundation and plastic



frames as the bees will draw out the wax ones first and quite often will leave the plastic frames only half drawn out.

The drone comb is cut out every 18 to 20 days before the drones emerge, thus trapping the majority of the breeding varroa mites in the frame.

For those with hives in the rural landscape, November in some areas is a time of dearth. The bees have built up on the willow and the other minor early flows and should have enough to carry them through. But often with no nectar or pollen coming in, the bees quickly eat out their reserves and if they run short of food, will cannibalise their brood, starting with the very young, and will finally open up sealed brood in order to survive. If this happens, it creates a brood break and six weeks later, when the bees are starting to work the main honey flow, there won't be any replacements for those dying in the field. The result is a much-reduced honey crop.

Beekeepers soon learn those areas that suffer a dearth in November and will add pollen supplement and feed sugar syrup to keep their hives ticking over.

### Supering

Adding enough supers early enough is a learned thing. How many to add at once is determined by the bee population and the honey flow expected. The only problem with putting on too many to start with is that they have to be removed to inspect the hive but once the honey flow starts, brood inspections can be curtailed as the bees switch from swarming to honey production.

Generally it's better to add a couple of honey supers at a time. Bees require a lot of storage space to store wet nectar before it's ripened. A strong hive can fill a super with nectar in →

a week and then will start packing the fresh nectar in and around the brood nest if there isn't room elsewhere to store it. When all the frames are full of nectar, the bees will stop working, perhaps start queen cell development and will swarm off and there goes your honey crop. Once they have stopped working, they are hard to get working again so give them plenty of empty combs in the first place.

A lot of new beekeepers who started last year and successfully brought their hives through to the flow will have very little drawn comb. To get new frames drawn out, it's best to interspace drawn comb and new frames across the super. When adding another super, bring up an outside frame from the super below to encourage the bees to move up into it.

Bees don't see foundation frames as a resource to be developed and have to be pushed into them so the bees draw them out completely. Quite often the bees will not move up into such a full super of foundation, hence the need to bait them up.

Those with top-bar hives should move the brood area back a little from the entrance as the bees build new frames by moving forward towards the entrance. When there are sufficient numbers of bees, new baited bars can be interspaced around the brood nest just like we do in a vertical hive.



Waikato hobbyist beekeeper Cecilia van Velsen removes a frame from a top-bar hive.  
Photo: J.F.C. van Velsen.

Those with new nucleus hives should continue feeding them a 2:1 ratio of sugar syrup until they have all the frames in two supers drawn out. Generally you have done well to get the hive established in the first year but some in the city will develop into a full-size hive and will produce a honey crop for you. Remember it's a good idea to leave at least a super of honey for their winter reserves. Those with only early flows shouldn't remove any honey frames until late in the season (February), as the bees may use the stored honey to convert into brood if there is a dribble of nectar coming in to stimulate them. In this case, put on a queen excluder between the first and second super and shake all the bees into the bottom super if you haven't seen the queen to put her down into the bottom super. If you have a long honey flow, undersuper and interspace the drawn and foundation frames so the bees keep drawing out frames. Drawn frames are your most valuable asset.

**"...it's a good idea to leave at least a super of honey for bees' winter reserves."**

Not everything goes well in beekeeping. Some new queens don't lay as well as others. With two or more hives, it's easy to see the hives that just aren't progressing as well as the others. Inspect these hives to determine what's causing the problem. Generally it's an old queen. They start off with a hiss and a roar but then start to fail when the pressure for brood production goes on. Some will produce a supersedure cell to make a replacement.

When you see a fully capped queen cell, don't cut it out or destroy it before you have first checked for eggs in the open brood cells. If you squash the cell before checking, the hive will be lost if another frame with eggs is not added. By all means, cut around and remove any developed queen cells you come across until you have seen eggs or the queen. A few of my hives have developed chalkbrood infection, so I will change the queen and most of the brood frames to reduce the contamination within the hive.

## Dealing with AFB-infected hives

The reason some of my hives haven't gone ahead is due to AFB. I have had a smattering of the nucs I made in March and some production hives in one apiary come down with AFB. These bees had gone into the second super but then developed AFB. Some had nice brood in the second super and diseased larvae below. Some were riddled with the diseased cells; some had just a few diseased cells. It pays to do complete brood inspections and inspect at least a couple of frames where bees are emerging every time you open a hive.

Was it the frames of honey I fed to them that caused AFB? The wets in some of these hives cleaned out after extracting? The dead-out frames I used to start the nucs off with? (I always check these very carefully, but did I miss something?) Or was it from the manuka yard that didn't produce last season, meaning the bees had to scavenge for what they got? I don't know, but I do know I have a problem for the next 18 months in keeping everything separated, doing extra inspections and changing more brood frames each year to get the bees on to clean frames so I don't spread it to more hives.

It's a bugger but others have faced the same situation and worked through it. One beekeeper I know has a solution: for each diseased hive he finds, he produces 20 more, which makes him feel better. I think I'll be doing something similar to put into use all the spare supers I have stored in the hope that if they have diseased frames in them, they will show up sooner rather than later.

## Things to do this month

Check feed and pollen: there should be pollen in the outside brood nest frames and a good 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 (i.e., those with 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. Check that your spring varroa treatments have worked, be it sugar shake or alcohol wash, and get the treatments out well before the honey flow starts.



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