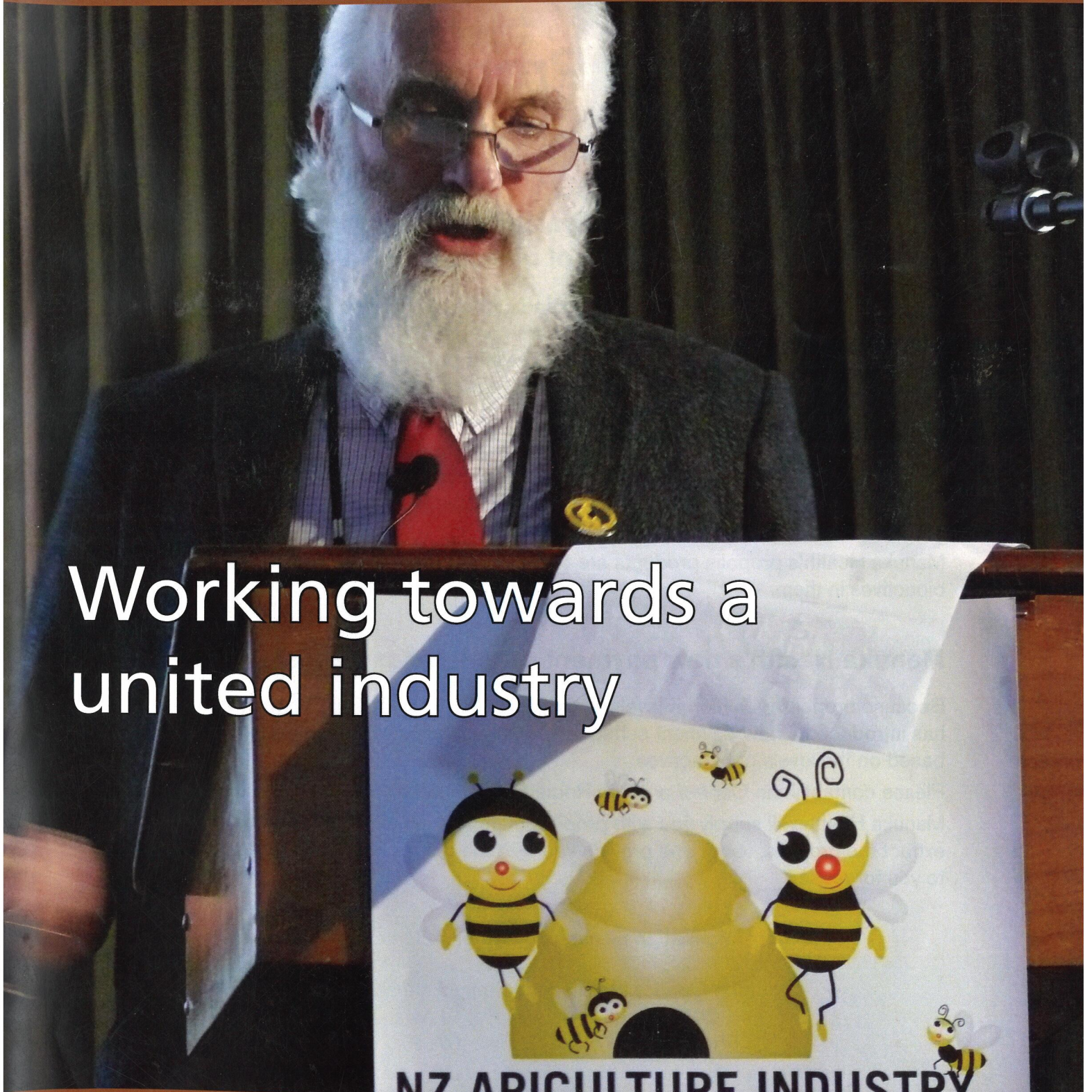
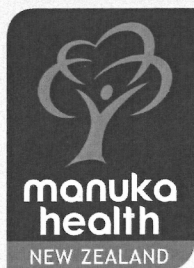


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Working towards a united industry

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- Recollections of Taupo Honey Seminar, 1974



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Front cover: NBA President Ricki Leahy gave an industry perspective at the industry workshops on Tuesday 24 June, as part of the inaugural New Zealand Apiculture Industry Conference, Wanganui 22–26 June 2014.

# Working towards a united industry

By Ricki Leahy, NBA President

What a beautiful city Wanganui is, and what a fantastic venue for the first New Zealand Apiculture Industry Conference held at the Wanganui Racecourse.

It was a huge success to have everyone in our industry feel so very welcome and to have the opportunity to 'bee' together.

Congratulations to the Southern North Island Branch for having the initiative and the vision to create the occasion. I have heard so much positive feedback about all aspects of the conference. The whole conference committee should be very proud of themselves for a job extremely well done.

The organisers were able to find ample space for the sponsors' displays spread over three levels. The funny little stairways, walkways, etc. resembled a sort of rabbit warren that took a while to get used to. It was so spacious and yet felt so full, but I never felt crowded.

Full marks to the organisers, who did a marvellous job in setting up the venue and making sure that everything ran like clockwork.

A big thanks to the sponsors, whose displays created a smorgasbord of information and a supermarket of interesting stuff for beekeepers. The sponsors are an integral element to the success of the conference; not only for their financial contribution, but also for the attraction they create.

The outdoor displays were excellent, with all the space in the world for the 'boys' toys' department of trucks and cranes and other things on wheels. We were very lucky with the weather, with ample opportunity to wander around and 'kick a few tyres' with a cuppa in hand.

It was also great to rub shoulders with those we may not have seen for a while and to have had the opportunity to meet others from the industry. Hopefully everyone—whether hobbyist, larger commercial operator or those connected to the bees in some other way—

took something home with them, be it useful ideas or new business contacts established. Many congratulations to Mary-Ann Lindsay on being awarded life membership of the NBA. Mary-Ann has been at the forefront of many activities for a very long time, always contributing her time to the Association for the love and good of the bees and their keepers.

### Executive Council changes and activities

Heartfelt thanks to Mary-Ann Lindsay as she steps down from her time on the Executive Council (EC). I have always found her input sound and to the point.

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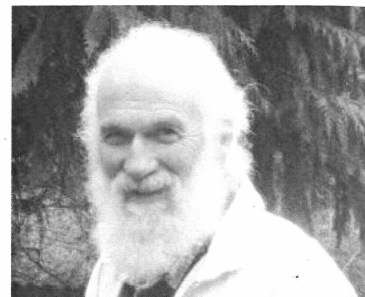
**"We need to step out of the past and dive into the future."**

---

Unfortunately, Neil Stuckey is also leaving the EC and will be sorely missed, particularly as he was the EC's representative on the Bee Products Standards Council (BPSC). Neil has been a steady pillar, always displaying valued opinions gained from his extensive knowledge and experience of the industry. Many thanks to both: your work and time has been very much appreciated.

However, we are very fortunate that Peter Ferris (Southern North Island Ward) and Kim Singleton (Northern Ward) have been elected as our new EC members. Peter quickly agreed to be appointed as the new EC representative on the BPSC. Kim has wasted no time to display his eagerness to get involved, and I am sure that his talents will add value to the executive.

I would like to congratulate Roger Bray and Dennis Crowley on their re-election. There were two nominations at the AGM for Vice



President and after a paper vote, Dennis Crowley was elected. I thank Stephen Black for his support as Vice President for the last year. I am extremely grateful that he will continue his very good work as the EC's member of the AFB PMP Management Board.

I am very happy to have been given another year as President and intend to continue leading our Association towards industry unity. Unity goes far beyond simply joining, for instance, with the Federated Farmers BIG. It will probably involve us all to find the will to restructure the NBA to whatever extent the wider industry requires, so that more people see the value of joining. That value could come in part from recognising that they have genuine elected representation at EC level for their particular sector, be it beekeeping, packing, pollination, exporting, supply or whatever.

I would also suggest that a restructured association would need an alternative to relying on funding on a voluntary subscription basis. We need to step out of the past and dive into the future.

We are no longer a poor industry. The beekeeping industry is recognised as an important cog in the viability of this country's primary production and, at the end of the day, in the success of government's balance of payments.

We have grown into a rich industry with a respected and important role to play. We need to recognise the value of that role to our industry and take our share of the responsibility. We need to be led by the success we have amongst us. We need to encourage those that may be held back somehow by their own circumstances to get on board and support the vision for the future of our industry.

*Continued on page 6*

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Continued from page 4

## Member survey

As I write, the EC is preparing a survey to send out to all NBA members. Your replies are intended to give us some information about your involvement in the beekeeping industry and will also tell us what you want. We hope that your replies will provide a clear indication that will enable us to move forward in the knowledge that we are working in the direction that our members request.

What are those bees up to? It's August. So sorry, but it's time to get your nose out from under the sheets, get those overalls on and start looking at those hives. We always start by driving around our apiaries and hefting each hive for stores, picking up the inevitable odd one that a cow might have leaned against.

Even if there isn't much to do, it makes you feel better as you spend the last of the cold days in the workshop. Happy beekeeping.

[Editor's note: profiles of new EC members Peter Ferris and Kim Singleton will be published in an upcoming journal, along with further material from Conference.]

# New Executive Council



Sitting, left to right: NBA Vice President Dennis Crowley (Bay of Plenty Ward), Deanna Corbett (East Coast Ward), Kim Singleton (Northern Ward), NBA President Ricki Leahy (Upper South Island Ward). Standing, left to right: Russell Berry (Lower South Island Ward), Roger Bray (Central South Island Ward), Stephen Black (Waikato Ward), Peter Ferris (Southern North Island Ward).



New NBA Life Member Mary-Ann Lindsay and Neil Stuckey were thanked for their contributions to the Executive Council. Photos: Frank Lindsay.

## National Honey Show 2014

By Maureen Conquer, President, Apimondia Oceania Commission

Following is the report of the chief judge and list of results of the 100% Pure New Zealand National Honey Show, held as part of the combined industry conference, Wanganui, 24 June.

Each year it is so rewarding to see new competitors and some fine quality exhibits, and this year's competition is no exception. The three highest scoring competitors were breathtakingly close!

I thank all our sponsors, especially our chief sponsor Steve Lyttle from 100% Pure New Zealand Honey. I also wish to thank my co-judge Claudine McCormack from Airborne Honey, Leeston, and guest judge Alessandro Tarentini from Italy for their time and support.

I give special thanks to Lynn Green, who compiles all the results so competently. Without her help, I would be lost.

Honey competitions are about respecting our past traditions but looking forward to a positive future for all our stakeholders.

I encourage each and every one of you to look at your production, take pride and present it to us and the world as the finest that New Zealand can offer. 100% Pure New Zealand Honey: now that's worth celebrating!

Congratulations to all winners—well done.

I look forward to seeing and tasting an even bigger and better showing in 2015. Start planning now!

### List of results

**Class 1: Liquid Honey—light** (sponsored by New Zealand Honey Co.)

- 1st Jeff Lukey
- 2nd Arataki Honey Rotorua
- 3rd Carol Downer

**Class 2: Liquid Honey—medium** (sponsored by New Zealand Honey Co.)

- 1st Carol Downer
- 2nd Jeff Lukey
- 3rd Arataki Honey Rotorua

**Class 3: Liquid Honey—dark** (sponsored by New Zealand Honey Co.)

- 1st Jeff Lukey
- 2nd Arataki Honey Rotorua

**The winner's trophy** (sponsored by New Zealand Honey Co.) **for the highest scoring liquid or clear honey from classes 1,2 and 3 was awarded to Carol Downer, Auckland.**

**Class 4: Naturally Granulated Honey—Light** (sponsored by Arataki Honey Hawke's Bay)

- 1st Paul Badger
- 2nd Peter Ward
- 3rd Mossops Honey

**Class 5: Naturally Granulated Honey—Medium** (sponsored by Arataki Honey Hawke's Bay)

- 1st Paul Badger
- 2nd Carol Downer
- 3rd Mossops Honey

**Class 6: Naturally Granulated Honey—Dark** (sponsored by Arataki Honey Hawke's Bay)

- 1st Mossops Honey
- 2nd Carol Downer
- 3rd Jeff Lukey

**Class 7: Creamed Honey** (sponsored by New Zealand Beeswax Limited)

- 1st Neil Stuckey, Waitemata Honey
- 2nd Allen McCaw
- 3rd Allan Pimm

**Class 8: Chunk Honey**

- 3rd Prize and commendation to Arataki Honey Rotorua

**Class 9: Traditional Wooden Whole Frame Honey Comb**

- 1st with a beautiful frame ... Arataki Honey Rotorua

**Class 11: Honey Cut Comb** (sponsored by NZ Comb Honey Producers Association)

- 1st Arataki Rotorua
- 2nd Mossops Honey
- 3rd Greenvale Honey

**Class 12: Beekeeper's Special Reserve Honey** (sponsored by NZ Honey Packers and Exporters Association Inc.)

- 1st Murray Elwood
- 2nd Martin Lynch-Sweettree Honey
- 3rd Martin Lynch-Sweettree Honey

**Class 13: Inter Bee Club Trophy** (sponsored by Honey New Zealand)

Trophy won by the Auckland Beekeepers Club

**Class 14A: Natural Beeswax Block**

(sponsored by Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies)

- 1st Carol Downer
- 2nd Arataki Honey Rotorua

**Class 14B: Brood Wax Block** (sponsored by Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies)

- 1st Carol Downer
- 2nd Jeff Lukey

*Continued on page 9*



*Judges at work. Left to right: guest judge Alessandro Tarentini (Italy), chief judge Maureen Conquer and co-judge Claudine McCormack (Airborne Honey.) Photo supplied by Maureen Conquer.*

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Order in multiples of 800 strips	<b>9,600+ \$ 1.54 + GST per strip</b>
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Continued from page 9

The winner's trophy for beeswax, sponsored by Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies, goes to the highest score of classes 14A and 14B. The trophy was awarded to Carol Downer.

**Class 15: Pollen-Cleaned and Dried** (sponsored by New Zealand Beeswax Limited)

- 1st Martyn Lynch
- 2nd Murray Elwood

**Class 16: Products of the Hive** (sponsored by Maureen Conquer, Wild Forage Limited)

This class is designed to encourage innovative use of hive products.

- 1st Joe Peeters, for his Kawakawa Honey Schnapps
- 2nd Joe Peeters, for his Manuka-cured Honey Schnapps
- 3rd Martyn Lynch, for his Sweettree Honey Propolis Tincture

The Supreme Award 2014, sponsored by 100% PURE NEW ZEALAND HONEY, goes to the highest scoring exhibitor overall, with the sum of the top six scores of an individual exhibitor being taken into account.

Supreme winner (by a hair's breadth): Carol Downer, Auckland



## BAM returns

The hugely successful Bee Aware Month (BAM) will this year be held in September. Initial planning is already under way and we are looking forward to another high profile, nationwide event that earns revenue for the NBA and promotes bees and beekeeping in New Zealand.

Last year's event generated thousands and thousands of dollars of publicity and advertising, all of which promoted the NBA. We have already started to receive calls from the media about BAM 2014.

If you'd like to be involved in some way, please email [secretary@nba.org.nz](mailto:secretary@nba.org.nz). And don't forget to keep an eye on our Bee Aware Month Facebook page.



Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon Nathan Guy, addressing conference. Photo: Frank Lindsay.

## ALERT for all beekeepers: Quality data needed

As you may be aware, the Ministry of Primary Industries has issued a Request for Quotes (RFQ) for a bee loss survey with a closing date of 31 July from interested service providers.

It is not clear how quickly this process will be consummated. The purpose of this alert is to ask all beekeepers to make careful note of what they find in their hives when they start working them this spring.

You have the hives you hope will be your operational hives in your apiaries right now. For your own interest, as well as for any broader survey, consider tabulating the following:

How many planned production hives are there in your apiary as you set it up last April/May?

After you assess the hives after this winter, how many of the colonies are weak? How many hives are lost?

For the lost colonies:

- how many had queen problems like drone-laying queens or no queens at all?
- how many had dead workers in cells and no food present in the hive?
- how many had symptoms of starvation while food was present in the hive?
- did you observe a large amount of faeces inside the hive?
- how many did not have dead bees in front of the hive?

These and several other questions are routinely asked in COLOSS surveys of

beekeepers in European countries; see, for example, [www.irishbeekeeping.ie/images/PDF\\_files/coloss\\_form\\_2014.pdf](http://www.irishbeekeeping.ie/images/PDF_files/coloss_form_2014.pdf)

The early season data will be important to those who conduct the survey. Later season data on various topics, including varroa treatments, may also be requested.

Please keep detailed records for each of your apiaries for your own benefit as well as for the national survey. Together, these will enable sound judgments to be made on behalf of the whole industry.

- John McLean, NBA Research Committee



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Email them to [editor@nba.org.nz](mailto:editor@nba.org.nz)



# A dog called Jess

By James Corson, Gowanleagold Limited

Twenty-something years ago I had 13 beehives. They had sat derelict and unloved beneath the shelter of a gorse hedge just out of Hororata for several years, and were pushed onto me by my boss at Airborne Honey.

"Go and sort those bees out," said Barry. "They're a liability and need a bit of lovin'. Who knows, you might even make a dollar out of them."

They sure did need a bit of loving. The boxes had collapsed around the bees and the frames fell apart the first time I delved into them. I got into strife with the landowner too as there was a dispute over who owned them. The landowner reckoned they were his as he had bankrolled the last young fellah into getting them up and running on the promise of free honey. No honey had been seen and the cocky was not happy.

Barry is a master at PR and told me to go back with pots of honey and be amazed at the change. So the cocky and I came to a loose arrangement. I would run the bees, he'd get some honey and I might make a bit of beer money.

At that time I wasn't a great beer drinker, so a few years later I bought another 117 hives from a downscaling beekeeper. The second time I went through the bees I found AFB in two of them, and I guess that was the start of our battle.

Over the years our bee numbers have grown to 3000 hives. There's no doubt about it, we succumbed to the Bee Fever real bad. It's a terrible fever that grips you in the spring

when you open up a strong-looking hive and before you know it, you've grabbed a nuc out of it and hey presto, you've doubled your numbers, just like that.

Twenty-something years later we have six beekeepers on over the season, any number of trucks and things that need fixing, and one heck of a lot of work. Not that I mind it too much. Being a workaholic is one of the prerequisites of being a keeper of bees.

And as a business grows, one develops a way of doing things that becomes one's own uniqueness, like the smoker low down on the cradle that gently smokes the hive entrances as you pick them up with the crane; propolis and wax sweetly scenting the hessian and letting the girls inside know that it's only me and don't even think about coming out to say hello.

---

### "A dog's nose is thousands of times more efficient than the human nose."

---

Or maybe, for the real men who don't wear gloves, it's the nifty little gadget on the hive tool that grabs the varroa strips when you're pulling them out, thereby avoiding blindness and impotence from continual close contact with the pesticide.

Perhaps though, one of the niftiest gadgets we have put to use on our bees has been Jess. Several years ago, the family sat watching one of those endless border security programs. It was at about the time that our silent protest to the AFB Management Agency had come to a head and we were about to do battle. Our unpaid levy with interest and penalties had climbed to a five-figure amount. I was as wild as a rattlesnake and fumed at the thought of having to pay out a king's ransom to a scheme that was supposed to be eradicating the AFB in my operation, and yet I was still picking it up every spring.

I sat watching the TV, absentmindedly wondering why so many Chinese brought

so much food with them to a country that sends shiploads of it overseas, and where the heck was I going to find a king's ransom from at short notice. And look at that dog ... would you look at that dog that just smiled at the hippie as if to say "nice joint, mate," oblivious to the fact that he'd just consigned the young surfie to a quick return trip home from the big break for the possession of half a gram of low-grade weed.

That dog ... if he could smell out a joint in a bag, maybe he could ease my mind as I sent the Bee Boys out to do the spring rounds with the ever-present reminder ringing in their ears: "dead or alive ... check 'em all".

Roll the clock forward a few months. We did a deal with the AFB Management Agency and paid them a heap of money. Even after the bargaining and the agency's generosity, the payout cleaned out the bank 'til the following season. But what it did do was to spur us into action to find out if a dog could help us to clean out our foulbrood.

It only took a couple of phone calls to find our man. Rene Gloor lives in Dunedin. He's the son of a dog trainer and what he doesn't know about the canine mind probably isn't worth knowing. He dropped into our home one day on his way back south from Christchurch with a pointer dog destined to sniff out bear poo in Korea.

It wasn't a great first meeting. The dog killed my wife Richelle's pet chook, and we learnt it was going to cost ten grand to train a dog, plus the cost of buying the dog. We put the idea on hold for the next season and burnt another ten grand's worth of bees and honey instead. Is that what they call quid pro quo?

The following winter we had money in the bank again, so gave Rene another call. The rest, as they say, is history.

Rene arrived one day with Jess. He'd picked her up from a woman in Rangiora who didn't have the energy for her. She is the sort of dog who will chase a ball or a stick all day long and never get bored. Or to use dog-training terminology, she has a high play drive. →



*Richelle Doerner-Corson with Jess.*

Rene took Jess back to Dunedin for six weeks and put her through sniffer school. He started her with pop-up boxes that concealed a ball, so that when she smelt the ball in the right box he would click the garage door opener and presto, the ball in a box would fly open and Jess would get her reward for picking the right box. So the ball became the reward for identifying the correct odour. With time, the ball was replaced with AFB samples and she learnt that to receive the ball as a reward, she had to identify the box with the AFB sample in it.

A dog's nose is thousands of times more efficient than the human nose. The brain becomes like a barcode scanner with the odour the barcode. Put the two together and magic happens.

After six weeks Rene rang to say he'd like to bring Jess back and run her around some live bees. We'd put together a yard of quarantine hives. They were hives on pallets from which we'd burnt a hive, and therefore the neighbour was possibly infected.

It was mid-spring and the bees were building up on a kowhai flow. I checked them for disease the week before Rene came up, but found nothing except slabs of brood that could satisfy my Bee Fever. In between the hives I put a recently found diseased hive.

Initially we weren't sure how Jess would react to bee stings. Past experience with employees has taught us to start new beekeepers off gently. Full suits, gloves and the boss standing by with an EpiPen® at the ready, just in case. So what about a dog? Would she go into anaphylactic shock on her first sting and we'd say goodbye to ten grand and a dream?

That first morning we ran her was bitterly cold and the bees stayed inside 'til well

after breakfast time. Rene coaxed her in and around the hives, presenting the bees to her and whispering encouraging "find its" to her.

Jess ran around the hives several times, totally ignoring the planted infected hive but sitting at one of the ones I had checked the previous week. Not exactly a great start but as Rene said, it was early days yet.

He took her out into the paddock and played ball for a few minutes, then brought her back to the bee yard for another run. She sniffed at the infected hive and moved on to sit at the same one she had sat at previously. Rene put her back in the truck and I set to and opened up the one she had indicated on. It was a box of bees with eight slabs of brood, new pollen, nectar and just humming.

Our disease incidence ticks along at about one percent. Some years it spikes when one of the casuals is particularly casual. But what it means is that we are continually reinfesting hives as we work them. It's incredibly frustrating not to be able to nail the disease when it can lurk in the gear undetected for years and years.

One of the things I reiterate to our beekeepers is that we are the ones who spread the disease. Sure, there might be the odd spread through a rob-out or such, but it's more than likely to be us moving frames around to boost weak hives or make up a dud.



*Jess at work. Photos supplied by Gowanleagold Limited.*

Some hives are prime candidates to split or remove brood from. So we check the brood for sunken cappings, pinholes and scale in the bottom of cells. It's also important to scratch the odd healthy-looking capping to see what lies beneath. Sometimes your find will surprise you, just as it was about to surprise me that first morning with Jess. I scratched a healthy-looking capping to reveal a coffee-coloured goo that roped out on the end of a matchstick. I opened up more healthy-looking cells, but they were stubbornly healthy. It was one of those moments that send a tingle down your

spine: at last, perhaps here was a 'tool' that could detect AFB before it became visible to the human eye.

"Not such a silly dog, eh," said Rene.

Jess has been on the payroll now for 18 months. Richelle takes her out in the early morning or later in the evening when the bees are all snug at home. They've both been stung a few times but it hasn't seemed to have dampened their enthusiasm for the work. They do a spring round followed by a round prior to honey boxes going on, then another round before any honey comes off, and a last round as the varroa strips are pulled out in the autumn. It doesn't take too long either—about 15 minutes to get around a yard of 200 hives.

When Jess indicates on a hive, we mark it with a red flash. That hive then goes into quarantine, as it may well take two years before the visible clinical signs of foulbrood show up. As we bring in and sort dead gear we get Jess to take a look at it, whether it be brood boxes, bottom boards or any other associated gear. Anything she indicates on automatically gets burnt or sterilised in the paraffin wax bath.

American foulbrood is an incredibly frustrating disease. We've had the disease since I bought the 117 hives from a local beekeeper back in 1992. About six years ago we bought an outfit from a deceased estate. There were 400 live hives and about the same number of deads. For a year or so afterward, I'd get the occasional phone call from a cocky to say that they'd found a yard of bee boxes in a patch of gorse they'd sprayed out the year before. We made the mistake of sorting out the good dead gear and reusing it. That was a big mistake. An enormous midwinter bonfire would have saved us a great deal of heartbreak.

I suspect that we are not the only ones who are battling away with AFB. It fills me with envy when I hear of beekeeping operations that haven't seen scale for years or who take honey off without checking the brood. Now, with the help of Jess we are confident that we can make some real progress and nail it. One thing's for sure, she never shows up for work with a hangover, and as yet, has never intimated that a pay rise would be nice.

*[Editor's note: use of sniffer dogs is an extra protection, and does not exempt normal regulatory inspections that are required for harvest, etc.]*



# Taupo Honey Seminar, 1974

By Grahame Walton

It is now 40 years since the beekeepers' honey seminar was held in Taupo from 13–15 August 1974. I was rummaging through some ancient files and thought it would be of interest to post a reflection on that event.

The seminar was organised by the then Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), in association with the National Beekeepers' Association (NBA). I chaired this seminar and was ably assisted by Messrs. Alf Bennett and Doug Briscoe from the MAF and Dudley Lorimer as the NBA representative.

The theme of the three-day conference was 'Honey: Its Production, Processing, Packaging and Promotion'. From the 1950s through the 1970s, MAF (or its precursor the Department of Agriculture) had held a number of beekeeping seminars alternating between the North and South Island, but this was the first one that had almost exclusively focused on honey.

The seminar was held at the Lake Taupo Yacht Club premises on the lakefront. Some 150 people registered for the event, including six beekeepers and an equipment manufacturer from Australia. It was in the days of a free advisory extension service and the cost of registration was just \$7.00. And, believe it or not, a small profit was achieved that could not be held in MAF accounts so was transferred to the Waikato Branch of the NBA!

The opening address was by Malcolm Cameron, the Assistant Director of Agriculture, who went on to become the Director-General. He set the scene. He was



*Russell Berry (at left), introduced by Doug Briscoe, welcoming participants to Arataki Honey's Waiotapu honey house.*

followed by 26 presentations on such diverse topics as: the new developing international honey standards (Murray Reid), meeting these honey quality changes in New Zealand (Colin Rope), honey through the ages (an entertaining presentation by Ted Roberts), handling manuka honey (Peter Pegram and Malcolm Haines), honey marketing (sessions by Alan Ward, Colin Wicht, Dudley Ward, Mike Stuckey, Kevin Ecroyd and Percy Berry) and the consumers' action and reaction to New Zealand honey packs (P. Dickson). The second day of the three-day seminar was a bus field trip, first to Acacia Bay Apiaries (Robin Jansen) and then onto the geothermally supported Arataki Honey at Waiotapu (Russell Berry). Trade displays by equipment manufacturers were also on hand.

Seminar proceedings (138 pages) were sent to all participants and Apiary Section Staff, and some copies were deposited in major libraries.

I must confess that one of the drivers for the theme of this conference was an experience I had while visiting the basement food emporium of the Myer department store in Melbourne, Australia. I was examining the range of international honeys on sale, which included well-presented New Zealand floral source honeys (pohutukawa, rewarewa and tawari), in one-pound jars, but the labels read "Packed by Rowse Bros, United Kingdom"! How come? New Zealand's sole bulk honey exporter at that time, the New Zealand Honey Marketing Authority (HMA), was exporting honey in bulk 300-kilogram drums to the United Kingdom, which was then on-sold, repackaged in retail containers and

exported halfway around the world again, no doubt at a profit. How crazy was that?

That wasn't the only crazy thing. The Honey Export Regulations 1953 were on the legislative books at that time, which had changed little from the version first introduced in 1927. The regulations required all New Zealand export honey to be government graded for colour, flavour and condition. Samples from export lines were drawn by Apiary Section staff and sent to the Honey Grader in Auckland. Dark-coloured and strong-flavoured honeys were downgraded and penalised to the extent that they could not be exported. Manuka honey and some of our other unique honeys were only good enough for beekeepers to retain as colony feed honey.

When I was subsequently appointed to the position of Chief Advisory Officer (Apiculture) in 1978, I reviewed the requirements for honey by countries importing New Zealand honey. There was not one country at a government level that imposed controls over the colour and flavour of imported honeys. Of course, colour and flavour is particularly important between buyer and seller and between exporter and importer, yet at a government level New Zealand was restricting honey exports with its export controls when no importing country at a government level had any such concerns about colour and flavour of honey.

The third area, honey 'condition' was particularly important to importing governments; namely, that honey was a pure and unfermented product. In the 1970s, the European Commission introduced a honey directive that strengthened the definition of honey and honey labelling (including floral predominance and regional identification). It also included levels for moisture and hydroxymethylfurfural.

With the support of the NBA and the HMA, new Honey Export Regulations were introduced in 1980 that removed the need for governmental colour and flavour grading of New Zealand export honeys, and better addressed the EC requirements

*Continued on page 15*



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Continued from page 13




New Zealand honey on sale in Shekou, China (2013). Manuka UMF20+ selling at Yuan 1095.00 (NZ\$206) for 250g.  
(Photos by Grahame Walton.)

for labelling and purity. This law change, together with the dissolution of the Honey Marketing Authority in 1983, facilitated the opportunity for private exporters to market New Zealand's unique honeys worldwide in the form of retail and gift packs which we see today (see photo at left).

Perhaps, just maybe, the beekeepers' honey seminar at Taupo in 1974 was one of the catalysts to some of the significant changes that subsequently took place in the New Zealand honey industry.

Grahame Walton was Apicultural Advisory Officer based at Palmerston North 1968–1977 before his appointment as Chief Advisory Officer (Apiculture) from 1978–1983. He had other senior jobs in MAF until retiring from MAF in 1998. (His address: waltonz1@yahoo.com) 



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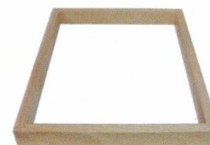
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## What a wonderful conference

By Russell Berry, NBA Life Member

It was great to see the Federated Farmers Bee Industry Group (BIG) joining with the NBA in a combined conference where we share ideas.

We were certainly spoilt with the huge number of trade displays and many excellent guest speakers. Both the seminar days and the speciality group days were first-rate. What's more, we had a wonderful hobbyist day on Sunday. I think it should be renamed 'the practical beekeeping day', as the commercial beekeepers who attended learnt far more on this day about beekeeping than they did during the rest of the week.

This conference amply demonstrated what the NBA, BIG, the UMF® Honey Association (Inc), the NZ Honey Packers and Exporters Association Inc, the NZ Honey Bee Pollination Association and the NZ Queen Breeders Association are really all about: beekeepers getting together with fellow beekeepers sharing ideas and getting to know each other. The guest speakers bring in new ideas. We have to remember that New Zealand has a great wealth of knowledge in beekeeping when you join all of the various facets together and everyone starts talking to each other.

Well done to the Southern North Island Branch for doing the bulk of the work to bring this wonderful conference together for all the various groups.

It became pretty apparent during the week that none of the associations or speciality groups wanted to be dissolved, except for BIG. Some people are now carrying out investigations on how to bring the groups together.

We have a very strong NBA Executive Council and I believe that we will be able to further develop the NBA so that commercial

beekeepers will not be able to afford **not** to belong to the NBA, and hobbyist beekeepers will want to belong to the NBA due to the increased enjoyment they get from their beekeeping.

I am constantly amazed at the tremendous depth of understanding of beekeeping that hobbyist beekeepers have. Commercial beekeepers have a great deal of expertise on how to run a successful beekeeping business, but hobbyists have more time to study beekeeping and often experiment with various procedures. We should be encouraging these hobbyist beekeepers to help with the overall welfare of New Zealand beekeeping as a whole. I am sure they would be happy to do some research work for the beekeeping industry. And of course, many commercial beekeepers begin their beekeeping careers as hobbyists.

Let's not downplay what the NBA has done over the years. We have certainly been the major player at keeping honey and bee diseases out of New Zealand by stopping imports of honey and bee products. This has been a major achievement and is ongoing.

The next most important thing is the running of annual conferences and seminars and beekeeping field days. We have had great success in controlling the use of chemicals that would have affected our bees and our honey by now, if it were not for the work of the NBA Technical Committee.

The National Pest Management Plan for AFB (American foulbrood) is the responsibility of the NBA by law and we have been able to keep AFB down to a reasonable level despite the increased number of new beekeepers. This area is of huge concern to the NBA: we must make sure that AFB does not become rampant in New Zealand. This could easily happen if, for instance, EFB were to come into the country and we use chemicals to control it, or if we had a downturn in the profitability of beekeeping and beekeepers are forced to retire from the industry.

Let's not forget *The New Zealand Beekeeper* journal, which is the flagship for our industry. Bee Aware Month, the NBA Library and

the NBA website all deserve mention. The Executive Council also writes submissions on important issues on your behalf. Many members don't realise the large amount of time that Executive Council members donate to the Association for the benefit of all members.

I am very pleased to say that the NBA Executive appears to me to be in a much stronger position this year than it was last year. Some of our past Executive members have gained experience and confidence to take action and we also have some superb new members. I think our current Executive is ready to make very significant changes during the next year to meet the requirements of our members. In the past we did not seem to have had the drive to make rapid change, but I believe we do have now. As I see it, the beekeepers of New Zealand want the NBA to be actually doing things, not just talking about doing things.

The Executive has set up a new NBA Commercials and Hobbyists Committee to look at two very important issues: (1) what commercial beekeepers want from the NBA and how we can provide it; and (2) likewise for the hobbyist beekeepers.

This committee has been charged with setting up a programme that will help NBA members to provide the information you require in an easily accessible way, and to make the NBA into an entity that commercial beekeepers, clubs and hobbyists will decide they cannot afford not to join.

Over the past few years, the NBA has been falling behind at the goal of providing what commercial beekeepers require. We have not been doing some of the things our members expect us to do. We have tended to get bogged down with administrative matters and we need to thoroughly look at this and get it sorted once and for all. We now have the necessary drive to cure these problems and to build the NBA into an organisation to which all beekeepers are proud to belong.


I haven't said too much about hobbyist beekeepers, but their numbers are →

increasing at a dramatic rate. People are very concerned about their environment and want to help it by having a hive or two in the backyard. These people recognise the huge value of bees in pollination and how we New Zealanders rely on pollination for the commercial viability of this country. In some quarters, this knowledge is disappearing. I have struck farmers, even Landcorp, wanting

to charge us for putting hives on their property. They don't understand the huge value of the bees pollinating the clovers in their pastures, thereby reducing nitrogen runoff into our waterways. Nitrogen runoff is detrimentally affecting our environment.

We need to help these hobbyist beekeepers to enjoy their beekeeping even more. And

we need to recognise these beekeepers are often the future commercial beekeepers of New Zealand. The NBA Executive Council is setting out to achieve this and I assure you we will.

The NBA is here to stay—it is not going away. If you are not already a member, please support the National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand by joining today. 

## Conference report

By Frank Lindsay, Southern North Island Branch and Conference Secretary

The Southern North Island Branch wishes to thank all the sponsors and those who attended for making this a most successful conference.

To those who presented, and to the team and all those who helped behind the scenes, another big thank you.

The idea of holding a combined conference achieved its aim. Those who attended overwhelmingly supported forming a single organisation. Hopefully both organisations and the Ministry for Primary Industries will set things in motion so this comes off as quickly as possible. The conference also supported establishing a levy for research.

From an organisational standpoint, most things went well: the odd thing was not so successful. One hundred and sixty-four people attended the Hobby Day and 67 extended their visit to attend Monday's Wanganui Beekeepers' Club activities. Russell Berry suggested that calling the Sunday programme a 'Hobby Day' was a misnomer, as he always learns something from these presentations and recommended that commercial beekeepers should also attend. Russell suggested that the programme be renamed 'Practical beekeeping'.

Our skills day was not well attended. The concept was good but the timing was wrong. How were we to know you would find the scientific day so interesting? Perhaps it should have been held on the Sunday or the Monday: future conference organisers take note.



*Some of the organising committee.*


The decision to feed all attending each day kept everybody in the complex. We fed 170 attendees and sponsors on Sunday, 200 on Monday, 500 on Tuesday, 425 on Wednesday and 75 AGM attendees on Thursday. The caterers kept putting out food until everyone was satisfied. They did a marvellous job.

The shortening of speaking times during the Wednesday afternoon session was introduced to enable all who wished to speak with the opportunity to impart new information. We are perhaps getting to a stage where we could have three seminar days. The idea was floated that perhaps we should hold plenary sessions for the main speakers, then break into two groups. As it is now, if somebody isn't interested in a particular speaker they can go and talk to our sponsors. Hopefully you all took the opportunity to talk to them. We had a lot of new ones this year with interesting products. The sponsors who attend conference and advertise in *The New Zealand BeeKeeper* are a backbone of our industry. Without their continued support, we would be all the poorer. Please consider them ahead of anyone else when putting your wishlist together.

A lot happened in the week leading up to conference, including run-throughs of the

sound and TV monitor coverage. A spurge of late applications saw the treasurer and her assistant working into the small hours (2–4 am) most nights to get everyone into the system. Registering early makes it easier on the team.

As we had last-minute sponsors coming on board, printing was delayed until the Friday before conference. Unfortunately we missed putting the sponsors' contact details into the programme, for which we apologise. We are looking at establishing a conference website where we can list all the sponsors, their product and contact details: something overseas conferences do. This could also be used to give advance notice of next year's conference venue and topics.

I trust you are now back into work mode but for the organising committee the job continues: the books have to be balanced, GST paid, receipts and refunds issued, but this is what we signed up for when we took on the task. We trust you enjoyed conference, swapped ideas, learnt something from the speakers that will help you in your beekeeping, told porkies and otherwise had a good time. If you didn't register for conference and want videos of the proceedings, expect to pay the admission price. 

# FROM THE COLONIES

## Waikato Branch

Brilliant conference—really positive and forward thinking. Lots of beekeepers went, so there were great networking opportunities as well. I learnt heaps: I was especially surprised to learn that it is best to have two EpiPen® devices (or the equivalent), and/or ampoules of adrenaline, as one is not enough in a severe reaction situation.

It was great also to hear first-hand about GIA, the progress on manuka standards, information on the diversity of our bees and to see all the exhibits, new gear available to buy, mmmmmm.

Then, like quite a few other beekeepers, I went on holiday. So what to report? The weather has got really cold (snow closed the Desert Road in early July) although most days the bees are out, gathering pollen and puttering away.

I've now returned and like everyone else I'm waxing frames, making boxes etc., gearing up for another season. And like most farmers, I'm hoping it's going to be a bumper crop this year!

- Barbara Cahalane

## Bay of Plenty Branch

June was warmer and wetter than average: enough to trick some plants into flowering out of season. As I write this in early July, gorse, wattle, broom and other plants are in flower. There is even some manuka flowering on the Kaimai Road side—go figure.

Our Branch was well represented at conference. It was well run by the local Wanganui crew, thank you. Good to see lots of new faces. The conference was very informative and it was a great time to network. I was kept busy for much of the time demonstrating our ApiJuneda Beehive Manipulator that we imported from Spain last year. As a result, half a dozen more outfits will be using these handy cranes in the coming season.

- Greg Wagstaff

## Poverty Bay Branch

After a very good autumn, winter has been very dry and warm with only a few short spells of wet weather. Midway through winter I am still able to drive on

most paddocks. The local experts tell me that unless the winter is cold and wet, the manuka will not produce well the following summer.

Hives went into the winter heavy with honey: some doubles weighed 80 kilograms. The willow dew honey that many of the hives collected in February partially granulated in the cells very early on but has not set up any harder, and at a recent check the bees have been feeding on it over winter. Mite numbers are generally low and under control.

## Conference

It was great to come back from conference knowing that the beekeeping industry is finally heading in the right direction by looking at forming an industry-wide organisation. The conference was very well run, although speaking times were a little short for most speakers. Any members who have not attended conference should make the effort to go, as a lot of information and beekeeping tips can be gathered over the two days of seminars.

## Trees for Bees

Some of the hebes and tree lucerne that have been planted over the last two years has been flowering over the late autumn and winter. Plant survival has been better this autumn than in 2013, when the ground was very dry. During 2014 there was some rain just when the ground was getting very dry and this has helped the plants get through.

The 10 hives on the scales are weighing from 53–68 kilograms so the bees have plenty of honey left. (An empty hive weighs about 45 kilograms.)

- Paul Badger, Branch President

## Hawke's Bay Branch

It might be the middle of winter, but hives are already going in for early stonefruit pollination. There has been a real lack of winter chilling this year, so it will be interesting to see what happens with the flowering dates of later varieties.

I went for a walk today and saw two hives within one metre of a public footpath that would have several hundred schoolchildren walk past every day. They were behind a six-foot fence, which would help, but not enough in my opinion. I also have a friend

who lives just around the corner—he is so severely allergic he has nearly died several times; fortunately, he is now getting desensitised. These hives were as far from the person's house as possible.

I'm not saying you shouldn't have hives in town but if anyone gets stung it should be you, not your neighbours or innocent passers-by. Some commercial sites in rural areas are just as bad.

- John Berry, Branch President

## Southern North Island Branch

Conference was huge, with greater numbers of beekeepers and sponsors than we have had for many years. To quote a long-time beekeeper, "I have never been to one as big as this one". Most of the Branch members were exhausted by the end. We were very appreciative of the help and support from the Wanganui Beekeepers' Club members. We had 20 red vests from Manuka Health Limited and we used them all. We certainly stood out in the crowds, which was the aim.

One of the conference sponsors was Euroquip, who displayed water blasters. I was impressed and bought one: it certainly makes it easier to clean up the old plastic frames. I understand that a number of other beekeepers also purchased them. The turbo head/hot water combination is great.

Now it is back to catching up on apiary work. At least this spell of fine warm weather has made it easier (I wrote this on 10 July), as we have not had the extremes of weather.

Spring seems very close. Willows are starting to bud up and other early spring blooms look to start flowering soon—could be interesting if there are early swarms. Happy beekeeping.

- Neil Farrer, NBA Life Member

## Nelson Branch

As I write, there is a good bit of snow down and few regular frosts occurring in the upper South Island and Nelson. I like to see that in winter, as frosts kill bugs and provide chilling for a lot of crops. Without such weather, we would be unable to grow a lot of fruit crops, such as apples, pears, and blackcurrants, which provide a useful income via pollination needs for several beekeepers in our region.

*Continued on page 21*

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Continued from page 19

Given those conditions, it is not surprising that there is not much bee activity. Most beekeepers seem to be busy doing repairs, maintenance, keeping warm around a hot-dipper and possibly drinking too much coffee.

All those who went to the conference found it interesting and positive, and I think it is important for our industry to continue to work towards a united group.

- Jason Smith

### Canterbury Branch

A big thanks to the Southern North Island Branch for running the inaugural New

Zealand Apiculture Industry Conference. It was very well run and there was a great range of speakers. It certainly provided a lot to take home and digest as to where we are heading in the future.

On behalf of the Canterbury Branch, I would like to inform the membership that the 100-year NBA Conference held in Ashburton last year made a profit of approximately \$45,000, in no small part due to the generosity of our sponsors. Our conference committee decided to retain our profit and use it on research that we consider important to our region and beekeepers throughout New Zealand.

The first project we are undertaking is to look into using current 'sniffer technology'

to determine if we can identify AFB from the smell emitted from the hive. We have a grad student prepared to do the work; however, to date we are having trouble getting permission from the AFB PMP Management Agency (MA) to undertake research, education and training. Our first application was rejected.

- Brian Lancaster, Branch President

### Otago Branch

The Otago NBA Field Day for this year is planned for Sunday 19 October, to be held in Lawrence. Details will follow next month.

- Tudor Caradoc-Davies, Branch Secretary 

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## EXECUTIVE UPDATE

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# NBA Committees as at 10 July 2014

*Committee chairpersons and NBA Executive Council representatives to the Bee Products Standards Council (BPSC) and the AFB National Pest Management Plan (AFB PMP) are listed in bold.*

#### PUBLICATIONS

**Deanna Corbett**, Frank Lindsay, Mary-Ann Lindsay, Nancy Fithian, Trevor Cullen, Serena Richards, Tom Baty

#### TECHNICAL

**Roger Bray**, Barry Foster, John McLean, Don MacLeod

#### BPSC REPRESENTATIVE

**Peter Ferris**, Fiona O'Brien, Pam Flack

#### AFB PMP REPRESENTATIVE

**Stephen Black**

#### BIOSECURITY

**Russell Berry**, Frank Lindsay, Dennis Crowley, Kim Singleton

#### RESEARCH

**Russell Berry**, Barry Foster, John McLean, Graham Cammell, Jane Lorimer, Deanna Corbett, John Berry

#### POLLINATION

**Dennis Crowley**, Russell Berry

#### GIA WORKING GROUP

**Ricki Leahy**, Dennis Crowley, Stephen Black, Roger Bray, Daniel Paul

#### GOVERNANCE REVIEW

**Stephen Black**, Deanna Corbett, Kim Poynter

#### WEBSITE

**Deanna Corbett**, Daniel Paul/Management Team

#### NOM 11 CHANGE MANAGEMENT

**Kim Singleton**, Dennis Crowley, Deanna Corbett

Note: The NOM 11 Change Management Committee was established as a short-term committee as a result of NOM 11 at the 2014 NBA AGM.

"NOM 11: The Executive Council moves that the AGM agrees that the EC should explore the value in uniting with other industry stakeholders in the formation of a representative industry body."

#### NBA COMMERCIALS AND HOBBYISTS

**Russell Berry**

## October issue deadlines

The October issue of *The New Zealand BeeKeeper* goes to all registered beekeepers in New Zealand.

The deadline for articles (and for reserving advertising) is 6 September 2014.

Articles and advertising material received after 12 September might not be published.

#### Contacts

Advertising: leonie@southcityprint.co.nz

Articles: editor@nba.org.nz

Membership and subscription enquiries: secretary@nba.org.nz

## Good news

By Don MacLeod, Committee member

The Committee has a new name: as a result of this year's AGM, it is now known as the Technical Committee rather than the Technical and Submissions Committee.

### Food study published

Two members of the Technical Committee have played an active part in a study of neonicotinoid insecticide residues in foods. They are Dr John McLean and Barry Foster, who supplied pollen samples and input for the study to the team at Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, Massachusetts.

The study is the first in the world to examine the presence of neonicotinoid residues in food. The good news is that the team found these residues even in organic food.

The study used modern detection methods to examine fruits, vegetables and pollen to detect the presence of multiple neonicotinoid insecticides in many fruits and vegetables in the United States and New Zealand. The levels detected were below the Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) set by our New Zealand Food Safety Authority (EPA).

Of concern is that imidacloprid was detected in pollen samples of kiwifruit when that product is not authorised for use in that crop. This learning is crucial to understanding that the world's most widely used systemic insecticide is now so commonly found throughout our environment that no foodstuff can be considered free of any residue.

The paper is entitled 'Quantitative Analysis of Neonicotinoid Insecticide Residues in Foods: Implication for Dietary Exposures' and is published in the *Journal of Agricultural and*

*Food Chemistry*. Further details are provided in the References section. The online content is limited to journal subscribers and ACS Publications members (which will include some libraries), or to those wishing to purchase temporary access to the content. However, you can view an abstract of the paper from <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/ipdf/10.1021/jf501397m>

### APP201609: Ortus Decision

The applicant, Adria New Zealand Limited, initially made an application to the EPA for the importation and release of Ortus insecticide (containing thiomethoxam) as a foliar spray on flowering crops such as kiwifruit and for seed treatment coatings.

The applicant made a significant change and said that Ortus would be used solely as a seed treatment for maize and sweet corn. No reason was given for this change, but the EPA agreed to evaluate the product for seed treatment use only. This required the applicant to supply additional data to the EPA, which was not available at the time of public hearing. It was going "to be some weeks late," according to the applicant.

This additional test data request was to ensure that Ortus would bind to the seed and not be dispersed as dust during seed handling and drilling. This was discussed at the public hearing on 30 January.

The applicant supplied some data on 26 February that was rejected by the EPA, which then advised the applicant of "the level of information that they were expecting to see in this report". (NZ EPA, APP201609 Decision, Section 2.30, page 6)

A second report was submitted on 4 April, which the EPA rejected because of "its lack of comprehensive information". (NZ EPA, APP201609 Decision, Section 2.31, page 6)

One has to wonder how much help a chemical company needs from the EPA to get their products approved? We would have to expect a higher standard of research capability for anyone introducing a pesticide to the New Zealand environment than that exhibited by Adria New Zealand Limited.

The EPA Decision Report was critical of the applicant's second report based on three reasons:

- "the dose used in the report is different from the dose the applicant proposes to use
- "only one sample has been treated so there is no information about the reproducibility of the result, and
- "no information is available to allow a comparison between the laboratory method used to treat seeds in the study and the methods that would be used to treat seeds in New Zealand." (NZ EPA, APP201609 Decision, Section 2.32, page 5)

As a result, the EPA has not approved Ortus insecticide for two main reasons:

- "the risk to terrestrial invertebrates, particularly bees, during the use of Ortus are non-negligible; and
- "the benefits of Ortus are not significant enough to outweigh the risks". (NZ EPA, APP201609 Decision, Section 4.1, page 9)

This is an excellent decision for our bees. The risks to bees were significant because the applicant could not demonstrate safe use of his product. The use of Ortus required the addition of other unknown chemicals (adhesives, coating polymers, etc.) to effect the safe and proper use of the seed treatment that would reduce the dust hazard to bees and other pollinators in the environment.

This decision aligns our EPA with the European Community, which presently has a ban on the use of this chemical as a seed treatment. The EPA has not gone so far as removing an existing seed treatment with the same active ingredient, which can still be used in New Zealand.

It is reassuring to see that the EPA is prepared to look at the functional process of how a pesticide is used, as that is the reason why it did not approve Ortus. Unfortunately, the EPA does not apply this reasoning in all cases; for example, the NBA Technical Committee is still waiting to see when the EPA will reassess the wide dispersive use of surfactants with pesticides. One must not →

forget that the Authority made this as a written recommendation back in 2012.

### APP201835: Tordon™ PastureBoss for Aerial Application

The same week that the EPA announced its decision on Ortus insecticide, the EPA advised us that Dow AgroSciences Limited had withdrawn their application to seek approval for the aerial application of Tordon™ PastureBoss on hard-to-kill pasture weeds. The NBA Technical Committee was particularly concerned by the spray tank addition of Boost™ surfactant and its effects on bees if applied whilst the weeds were flowering.

Dow has advised me that it is not the bee issue that prompted the withdrawal of the application.

#### Report all incidents!

The EPA has established a website where you can record incidents involving your bees.

This is part of a worldwide initiative by the OECD to gather data from reported pollinator incidents and the EPA is gathering this information in New Zealand.

The primary focus is the effects on pollinators caused by pesticide use; however, as some of the causative factors are difficult to determine, we encourage beekeepers to report all incidents when and where adverse effects to bees are observed.

So what is a pollinator incident? This is not defined, but the reporting form has room for more causes than suspected pesticide poisoning. You can report bee health problems, hive pests, nutrition, etc., as well as possible effects from pesticide use. The form is simple and designed to be easy to use. The website link is <http://www.epa.govt.nz/about-us/monitoring/Pages/Pollinator-Incidents.aspx>

The Technical Committee encourages all beekeepers to report incidents with respect

to their bees and other pollinators. We do lack incident data and this is a great way to collect that data.

#### References

Chen, M., Tao, L., McLean, J., & Chensheng, L. (2014). Quantitative analysis of neonicotinoid insecticide residues in foods: Implication for dietary exposures. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, 62 (26), 6082–6090.

New Zealand Environmental Protection Authority (2014, June 19). Decision. Retrieved June 10, 2014, from [http://www.epa.govt.nz/search-databases/HSNO%20Application%20Register%20Documents/APP201609\\_APP201609\\_Decision\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.epa.govt.nz/search-databases/HSNO%20Application%20Register%20Documents/APP201609_APP201609_Decision_FINAL.pdf)



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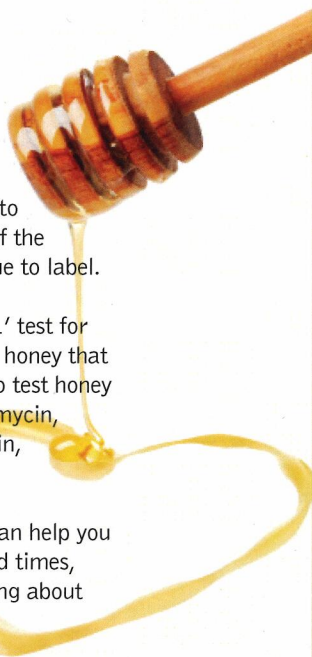


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# Winter break?

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

It's winter and I have been out working hives in 16-degree temperatures. A farmer I was talking to hasn't seen it this warm ever. Makes farming real simple, as the grass is growing and the calves are easy to feed.

It's also the first time in 40 years that I have been out inspecting hives during July. The bees have been able to capitalise on any sources flowering but most hives don't have much pollen around the brood nest, suggesting they are living day to day on whatever pollen is coming in. Strong hives had a three-quarter frame full of fresh nectar. Brood rearing is taking off and stores are quickly reducing. Hives left two supers high were light and needed feeding, while those left three high are just fine, being heavy when hefted.

I used formic acid flash treatments in my hives every time I visited the apiaries since Christmas and nothing for the last two and a half months. Some hives are very strong, with a beautiful brood pattern, but half are five-frame nuc size or smaller. This shows the inconsistencies one gets when treating with an organic acid. It perhaps didn't help that I didn't do enough follow-up treatments during the robbing season but it's a learning exercise.

Losses so far are mostly due to queen failure (these hives failed before winter set in), but I have lost a few to varroa as well as one nuc I forgot to feed. What a waste.

Some early nucs have AFB. I'm not sure whether I have contributed or whether it was due to robbing. The nucs with AFB were in

one apiary but weren't consistent enough to suggest that the AFB came from frames of honey fed to them two months ago. Each had only about a dozen cells but the brood pattern is spotty, so perhaps it's been there for a while and is only just showing now. A real disappointment and a wasted effort when you add these to the number of late nucs that were robbed out just as the queens started laying.

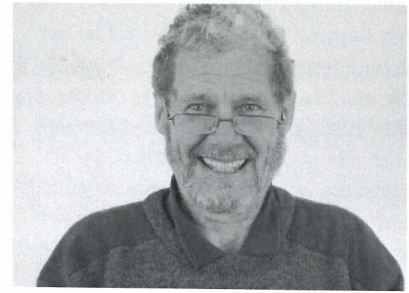
Diary entry: add robbing screens to all my autumn nucs next season if they are nearly full-sized hives—potential saving = \$150 per nuc. A robbing screen consists of a small wooden frame about 150-mm square, covered with flyscreen that has a small entrance to the side or bottom. Robber bees are attracted to the entrance but can't get in, while those bees in the nuc learn to use the side or bottom entrance. Sometimes it also pays to double mesh, as bees can land on the mesh and beg those inside for food and they will feed them through the mesh. They don't even need to go into the hive to deplete it of stores. Cunning little things, those robber bees.

**"Check hive weights and look in to see that there are capped frames of honey."**

The warm weather has had one downside. I left some of the hives knocked out by wasps in the field to be looked at later, but within a couple of months they were full of wax moth. Another job I didn't need but perhaps I should have attended to them earlier.

### Dipping methods

Normally I'd be making up replacement frames ready to be put in with drawn frames at the first honey flow, rather than working bees in this warm weather. Over the years I have noted that most frames break at the lug, as this bit remains slightly damp during winter so starts to rot. To overcome this, I have taken to paraffin dipping the top bars or just sticking the top bar ends in a 5 to 1



mix of mineral turps and Metalex®. Put a bundle of top bars in five millilitres of liquid and remove the bars as soon as the green liquid has run up to, or to just a little beyond the side bar groove. Leave to dry for a month before assembling to allow all of the mineral turps to evaporate. You could get better penetration if you place the top bars into a plastic bag immediately for a couple of days to prevent fast evaporation.

For years beekeepers have been treating the hive body parts with Metalex® to protect the wood from rot. Instead of just painting it on, I preferred to put them in their cut-down form into a bath of turps and Metalex® and wait for the air bubbles to stop. (I used to give them an hour as I did a lot at one time.) Then place the woodware into a large heavy-duty plastic bag (a bed mattress cover is ideal). Fillet each piece by placing thin pieces of wood (the full width at each end) to hold all apart and square so they don't warp, then remove as much air as possible and seal. Leave for two to three days and then assemble while they are still damp. Once assembled, leave until completely dry before painting.

I now use decking nails for most of my repairs as these hold well into pine, which is a soft wood. Straight flat head nails tend to pull out a little with rough handling over the years but decking nails don't.

Now, of course, I have a paraffin hot wax dipper. Hive parts are assembled but not totally nailed. I dip them in wax and paint them while still hot, then nail them fully when they're cold. You can paint over the nails to seal them against the weather if you like. Paraffin dipping is much faster, but does it give you a super that lasts 20 years? No, unless you re-dip every five to 10 years to keep them in good condition. →

## Observations from Australia

In Australia I have often visited beekeepers during the winter and if not working bees (they have winter flows), they will be out the back repairing gear. Most will get 20–30 years out of a super in their dry climate. Any joints, cleats and knotholes are filled with BondCrete glue, as it sets solid and seals against the weather. Then three coats of paint are applied: an undercoat and two topcoats. I quizzed one beekeeper about the time spent refurbishing just one super. He replied that it is only a few dollars when you put it against a 20-year recycling programme.

Australian beekeepers use cleats, a wooden handgrip that goes right across each end of the super. These form part of the hive spacing when hives are moved, meaning that each super and the roof are exactly the same size and can be pushed up tight on a load without moving. Air can get into the middle of each row, thus preventing suffocation or overheating in their hot climate.

In New Zealand we use handholds, which put 10 times the weight of the super on your finger joints. Consequently, most beekeepers end up with 'beekeeper's finger' during the honey removal season (swollen finger joints that remain sore for weeks). It's so much easier with cleats: you have a better grasp of the super and don't have to pop anti-inflammatories all day. And if you are wise (wisdom comes at 60 years), you will purchase and use a lifter to do all the work. There's a slight reduction in the number of hives you can put on the truck tray and in the storage shed, but it's so much better for moving hives and lifting individual supers.



*Cleats attached to supers to enable easy handling.  
Photo: Frank Lindsay.*

## Assembling frames

Wiring and waxing methods are changing for commercial beekeepers. Most now purchase wooden frames with a bottom groove and slip in a plastic insert instead of wiring and waxing. I have looked at plastic frames in the brood nest and personally feel that they conduct too much heat away from the cluster. With wooden frames you get better insulation and for quickness, use a plastic (wax-coated) insert. Just bend it a little top to bottom and it slips in.

I use a single 25-mm staple from the top bar down into the end bar and again on the bottom bar when making up frames. These are put together 10 at a time in a jig, which saves time. Yes, they will pull apart if jammed in with propolis, but won't if you prise apart the second frame in and remove this one first. If you really want to make this job easier with 10 frames in a super, put a plastic frame on the outside. Generally these are used for pollen and are far easier to prise out during inspections.

An ongoing debate is whether nine or 10 frames go into the brood chamber. With 33-mm end bars, there is five to 10 mm left on the edge with 10 frames in the super. Ten frames pushed up tight gives the correct bee space. Any wider and you need two bees between each frame to keep the brood warm. This means more bees are required in the brood chamber, so fewer bees in the air gather nectar. I spend a lot of time in the spring removing any build-up of propolis between end bars. Yes, it takes time, but I believe I have a more efficient hive.

## Things to do this month

Make up new gear when it's wet. Have everything ready by the beginning of October. Get queen-raising equipment, feeding equipment and grass spraying gear ready. Do your truck maintenance: oil changes, new tyres, clear the grass seed out of the radiator, etc., as you won't have time after the season starts.

Those in the warmer areas can now put foundation in the extracting frames. Some will order completely assembled frames ready to go into the hive (this can save a lot of time).

Check hive weights and look in to see that there are capped frames of honey. Don't be

lured into thinking the hive is still heavy with honey. It could be all brood and pollen. Feed sugar syrup if required. Start hive inspections (weather permitting).

Place an empty frame in the second storey about two frames in from the side for the bees to draw out and fill with drone brood. Early drones are required for queen mating mid-September/October, or they could be removed at the pink-eye stage to remove 50% of the varroa mite population. (Do this three times every 18–21 days, just after each frame is capped.)

Hives that are producing drones early are indicating they are very healthy. These perhaps will be the first to swarm if not split.

Review last year's records. Form a plan for this season and stick to it. If you're not sure about a certain aspect, read one of the old classic books on beekeeping. Nothing has changed in over 100 years and old books tell you why things went wrong.

Maintain strong hives, super early and two at a time: bees can fill a super in a week on a good flow under perfect conditions.

Varroa control is most important if you want honey production. We all heard about this at conference. Order queens or queen cells now if you already haven't done so. Generally most commercial beekeepers order queens 12 months ahead. Overwintered queens are a bit dearer but build quickly, and you don't have to rely on the weather to get them mated.

Take a few pussy willow cuttings about five feet high and leave them in a bucket of water for a couple of weeks. Ask your farmers if you can heel them in near your apiary site in a creek bed that has been fenced off as a riparian strip. (To heel them in, make a hole, push in the stick and press the ground around the cutting with your heel so it's firm. It has to be firm as the roots form at ground level. If the cutting moves in the wind, the roots will be broken and the cutting will die.)

Once the spring season starts you won't have any time to do anything but look after bees. If you are not smiling at the end of a hard day's work, think about doing something different.



# NATIONAL BEEKEEPERS' ASSN OF NZ (Inc.) EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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<p><b>Waikato Ward</b> Stephen Black Bees-R-Us 685 Uruti Road, RD48 Urenui 4378, Taranaki Ph: 06 752 6860 Email: bees@beesrus.co.nz</p>	<p><b>Bay of Plenty Ward</b> Dennis Crowley (Vice President) PO Box 16156, Bethlehem Tauranga 3147 Ph: 07 579 2554 Email: crowleys@slingshot.co.nz</p>	<p><b>Upper South Island Ward</b> Ricki Leahy (President) 151 Mangles Valley Road Murchison Ph/Fax: 03 523 9354 Email: beechdew@farmside.co.nz</p>	<p><b>Lower South Island Ward</b> Russell Berry 2488 State Highway 5, RD 3 Rotorua Ph: 07 366 6111 Mobile: 021 741 690 Email: russell@arataki-honey-rotorua.co.nz</p>

**NBA Branches: First named is President/Chairperson. The second named is Secretary.**

## NORTHLAND

Interested parties wishing to start this branch up again, please contact Kim Singleton 09 536 6516 or beewise2005@gmail.com

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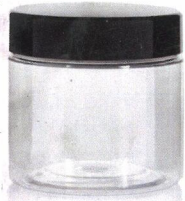
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360ml Round Pot



500gm Round Jar



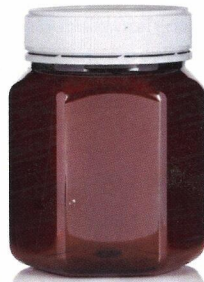
340gm Round Jar  
*(coming soon)*



250gm Round Jar



2kg Hex Jar



1kg Hex Jar



500gm Hex Jar



250gm Hex Jar



2kg Square Jar



1kg Square Jar



500gm Square Jar



250gm Square Jar

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