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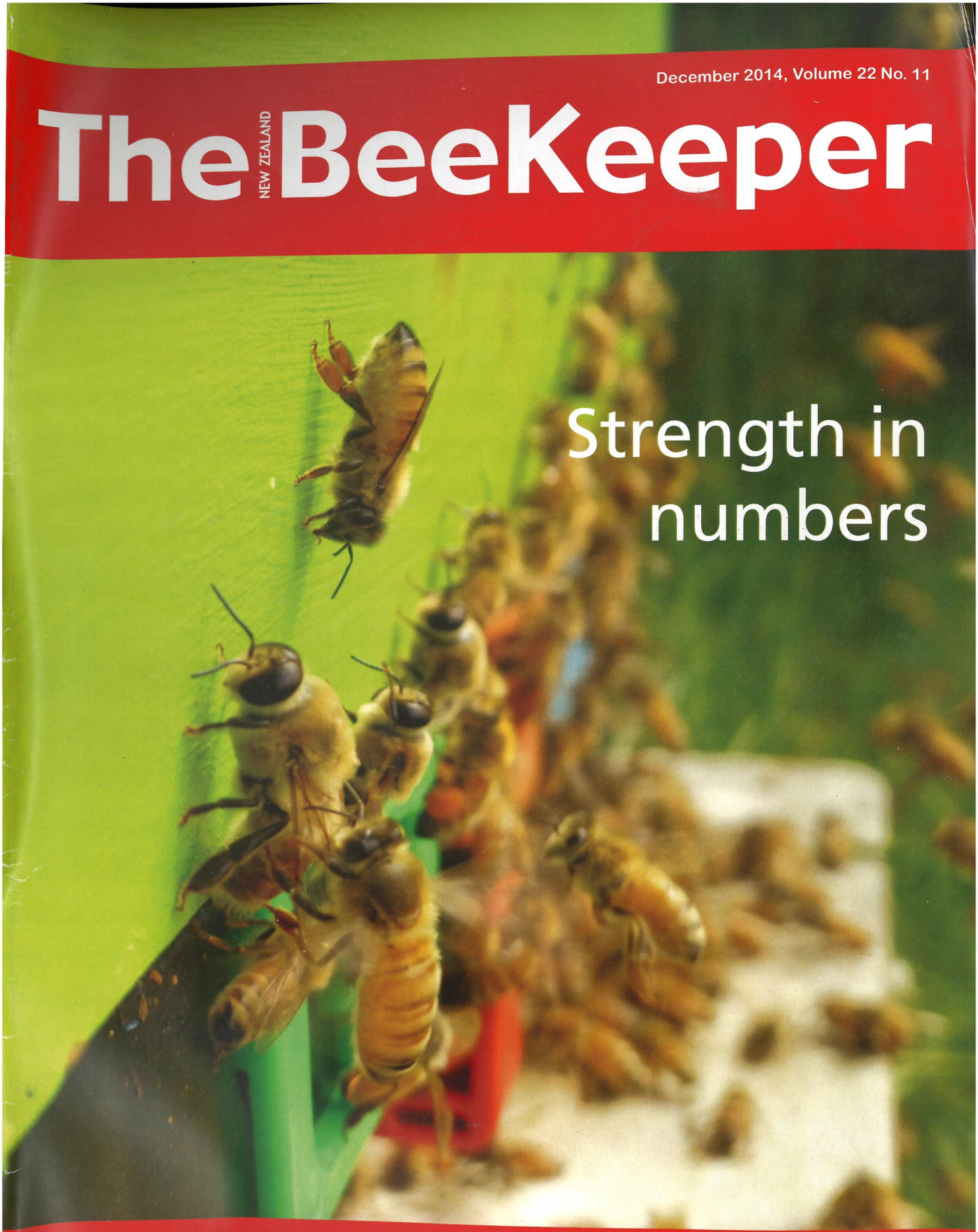
The New Zealand BeeKeeper



Strength in numbers

- Industry unity survey results
- Organic acids for varroa control
- Conference 2015 update

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All articles/letters/photos to be with the Editor via fax, email or post to Nancy Fithian (see details above).

Articles published in *The New Zealand BeeKeeper* are subject to scrutiny by the National Beekeepers' Association management committee. The content of articles does not necessarily reflect the views of the association.

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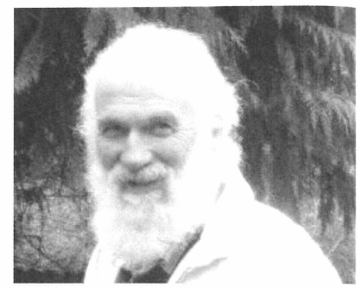
Front cover: Bees returning from foraging and drones returning for the warmth of the hive in Appleby, Nelson. Photo: Elliott Kennedy.

Strength in numbers

By Ricki Leahy, NBA President



The EC met in Wellington on 12 November. This time for convenience we chose the Wellington Airport Conference Centre, which turned out to be well suited to our needs.

Our association is coming to the end of the year in a strong financial position, with memberships continuing to rise steadily. We have agreed to pursue investment into an integrated management system that will streamline administration, allowing time to be freed up, which in turn will enable the Management Team precious time to deliver value to our members.

The meeting again had a full agenda with several key decisions being made. After receiving a recent letter from MPI informing that the Import Health Standards for honey from Australia are to be revoked and that the process is to be started again, we were very fortunate that Dr Matthew Palmer QC was able to attend. Dr Palmer advised us on implications and likely outcomes that we should be aware of and suggested ways in which we can constructively contribute towards this process.

The Consultancy Contract (the annual contract between the Executive Council and the Management Team) was unanimously agreed on to renew for another year. This was both heartening and a relief, as you never really know who's thinking what until you have the conversation.

I would like members to be aware of how much work, dedication and commitment both Daniel and Pauline put into administering and managing our association. They are so supportive and dedicated to achieving success, with the broader understanding that success for the overall industry is also success for the association.

GIA Working Group meeting

On 13 November the NBA's GIA Working Group, along with representatives from Federated Farmers BIG, met with officials from MPI.

We had the opportunity to ask questions and have a general discussion focusing on the overall concept regarding such topics as the cost of financing industry's contribution and finding ways to evaluate in-kind work such as maintaining surveillance hives and response activities.

Naturally we explored values of commodity and/or biosecurity levies and discussed how to determine cut-off points of where a levy may take effect, taking into account the administrative cost of collection from small hive holdings.

This was an information-gathering exercise so we can present some factual pros and cons to members when the time comes for seeking a mandate from industry as to whether the industry should sign up to a GIA or not.

Lessons from forestry

I was trawling through the Internet looking for information on the giant willow aphid (*Tuberolachnus salignus*) and what a critter that is. It's very interesting—but quite concerning—how fast it seems to have spread and how quickly the populations build up. They seem to just multiply, making clones of themselves with no need to mate. A weakness for them, I think. It will certainly be interesting to observe if they build up as quickly again this summer.

Anyway, I stumbled onto the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association (NZFFA) website and sidetracked myself by learning what they have been up to. It seems that their association is quite similar to ours, with 27 branches throughout the country that organise local field days and suchlike. I learned that their activities had stagnated for quite a few years. As for us beekeepers, membership in the NZFFA was voluntary: any good that developed from that, by default, benefited all in forestry, including those who weren't contributing. So NZFFA applied for a commodity levy that they received in January 2014, and which has changed things considerably. Well-funded research is now starting to be undertaken as well as other levy-funded industry-good activities.

It made me think of how this scenario of compulsory contribution could benefit us all. We could do so much more if we didn't depend on voluntary subscriptions and donations, often received from the same few individuals or organisations.

Resignation of Deanna Corbett

It is regrettable that our representative for the East Coast Ward, Deanna Corbett, has resigned from the Executive Council. Deanna took on an enormous amount of work, lending her skills to such topics as the subscriptions and membership surveys, serving as an NBA representative on the Industry Interim Working Group and the Research Committee, and chairing both the publications and website committees. That is a lot of stuff to do.

So a huge thank you, Deanna. I hope you find more time now to enjoy with your family and to work on your bees. It is heartening that you have decided to stay on as secretary of the Hawke's Bay Branch, as you certainly involve yourself fully with keeping things active. I'm sure that all those new beekeepers you nurture along will continue to appreciate all the tuition that you bestow on them.

Enjoy some time off

Christmas and New Year are creeping up on us again. It can be a difficult time of the year for us beekeepers. With everyone needing to have time off, there is always a bit of a rush and pressure to have the hives set up sufficiently to find some quality time to relax with our friends and families. Mind you, it is very satisfying when all that urgent work is done. After a few years we probably realise that there is no need to panic and stress, as mostly everything is fine. The bees keep working on making that honey while we just stand around the barbecue, no doubt talking about bees.

I wish you all the merriest of festive seasons and the happiest of new years and of course, the best of luck for the rest of the season. Happy beekeeping.

Mahindra

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NBA survey says amalgamate

By Daniel Paul, Chief Executive Officer

The NBA survey on unification, sent to over 600 recipients, voted overwhelmingly in favour of amalgamation.

On a one membership, one vote basis, the survey showed a clear will for amalgamation of the national beekeeping organisations (NBA and BIG). Support for amalgamating the other industry organisations into one body varied.

What can be drawn from this, perhaps, is that survey respondents are mostly focused on amalgamating NBA and BIG into one organisation.

This mirrors the view that has been expressed over several conferences in recent years.

Organisations	Amalgamate	Remain independent	Don't feel strongly either way
NBA	68%	16%	16%
BIG	66%	6%	28%
BPSC	50%	11%	39%
Honey Packers and Exporters Assoc	45%	14%	41%
UMF Honey Assoc	38%	18%	44%
Miere Coalition	24%	6%	70%
Beekeeping clubs	30%	28%	42%

Based on the key survey results, there seems to be less interest in wrapping the other industry bodies into one industry entity.

The survey was undertaken in early July and sent to NBA members only. It elicited a 57 percent response rate (361 responses were received for the 627 sent).

The survey also showed large support for the concept of a levy. Support for 'some form of levy' to help fund the organisation was favoured by 74 percent of respondents (68 percent support when counted by votes).

The survey findings have led to the formation of an Interim Working Group (IWG) that has been established to look into how amalgamation might be achieved. IWG members are Ricki Leahy (NBA), Kim Singleton (NBA), Dennis Crowley (NBA), Kim Poynter (hobbyist), Allen McCaw (HPA), John Hartnell (BIG) and Peter Bell (BIG).

Subscriptions reminder

2015 Subscription payments

Payment of 2015 invoices for membership and Journal subscriptions is due on 1 January 2015. 'We are intending to send a Statement reminder at the end of November.

GST implications of the additional month of membership and Journal subscriptions invoiced for 2015

External tax advice was sought on this issue. We have been advised that this GST is triggered at the time of supply, which in this case isn't until January 2017. At this point in time, the GST content of the additional month can be claimed by members.

Membership cards

Membership cards will be printed up and sent out as early as possible in January.

Lapsed membership

A reminder that membership will be deemed to have lapsed if membership subscription invoices have not been paid by 31 March 2015.

Payment options

- Online banking
- Credit card payment via the shopping cart on www.nba.org.nz
- Cheque

Instalments

Those wishing to make regular instalments throughout the year, please contact the Management Team on 04 471 6254 or email pauline@nba.org.nz

Please note: the 2015 issues of the *New Zealand BeeKeeper* journal will be sent only to those members who have paid their membership subscription invoices by 1 January 2015. However, any backdated issues will be sent once payment is made.

The Management Team
Phone: 04 471 6254
E-mail: pauline@nba.org.nz or secretary@nba.org.nz

Outcomes of mānuka trees survey

By Merilyn Manley-Harris, Department of Chemistry, University of Waikato

The University of Waikato honey chemistry research group have recently published an article describing the outcomes of their survey of mānuka trees in which they ascertained the content of dihydroxyacetone (DHA) in the floral nectar.

During maturation of the honey dihydroxyacetone converts to methylglyoxal (MG), which is largely responsible for the bioactivity of mānuka honey.

The article details are: Williams S, King J, Revell M, Manley-Harris M, Balks M, Janusch F, Kiefer M, Clearwater M, Brooks P, Dawson M. (2014) Regional, Annual, and Individual Variations in the Dihydroxyacetone Content of the Nectar of Mānuka *(Leptospermum scoparium)* in New Zealand. *J. Agric. Food Chem. 62*, 10332–10340. DOI: 10.1021/jf5045958

For those who may not have access to this article, the main points are summarised below.

- A robust method was developed to ascertain the amounts of DHA and sugars in the nectar and these were expressed as a ratio, DHA/Tsugar, the assumption being that the sugar in the ensuing honey derives only from the nectar so that the ratio should remain approximately the same.
- Plants were classified as low, medium or high based around this ratio.
- Inter-regional variation was observed within the North Island.
- Intra-regional variation was observed from low to high, sometimes from plants located within a 100 m diameter (50 m radius).
- Variation between seasons for the same tree was also observed in some cases.
- No correlation could be found with soil type.
- No correlation could be found with sooty mould coverage.
- No apparent trend was observed between *incanum* and *scoparium* varieties.
- Male flowers contained higher levels of DHA than hermaphrodite flowers.
- The nectar sugars were fructose and glucose in the ratio 1.65:1. Nectars with this composition are associated with flowers that have an open structure and are available for pollination by a number of small, non-specialised pollinators.
- Some correlation was observed with some components of leaf oil for East Cape samples but similar correlations could not be derived for other areas.
- In a limited survey of Australian-related species, elevated DHA was also observed; this is not surprising since honeys originating from these species have elevated DHA/MG. The Australian survey is currently being expanded by Dr Peter Brooks at the University of the Sunshine Coast.
- Some garden cultivars exhibited high or extremely high levels of DHA/Tsugar; these cultivars were principally those with red or pink, single flowers; this may indicate a genetic linkage.

[Editor's note: the full-text article published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry *is available as a download from DOI: 10.1021/jf5045958. See list of options for gaining access: charges may apply.]*

Canadian beekeepers sue chemical companies

Canadian beekeepers have initiated a class action against Bayer and Syngenta with respect to losses caused by their seed treatment chemicals. You can find the detail here: http://www.ontariobee.com/issues-and-advocacy/ongoing-issues-and-actions/spring-2012-bee-poisonings/siskinds-class-action-on-behalf-of-ontarios-beekeepers. (Or http://tinyurl.com/otoux8n)

I understand that in Ontario, beekeepers have to report bee death incidents and these are investigated by Health Canada, the nation's pesticide regulatory agency. During the 2012–2013 season, Health Canada determined that neonicotinoids used for seed treatment was the main cause of bee deaths. See http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/pest/_fact-fiche/bee_mortality-mortalite_abeille-eng.php. (Or http://tinyurl.com/m2r8eqn)

The key message for New Zealand beekeepers is to report all beehive deaths to the EPA. We hope they will eventually do similar investigations to those conducted by Health Canada.

- Don MacLeod

Africanised bees

By Quentin Chollet, Apiculture Officer, AsureQuality Limited, Lincoln E-mail: Quentin.chollet@asurequality.com

Africanised honey bees (AHB) are the product of a cross-breeding programme gone wrong.

In the 1950s, Brazilian scientists imported the African honey bee, *Apis mellifera scutellata* from South Africa to improve productivity of the local European honey bee (EHB) populations, which were poorly adapted to tropical conditions. The aim was to select for docility within the imported *A. scutellata* stock and then use it for a breeding programme to improve the productivity of EHB under tropical and subtropical conditions. Breeding research was interrupted when 26 queens accidentally escaped from the quarantine zone. They interbred with EHB colonies, and AHB was born. Note that AHB are a cross or hybrid between *A. mellifera scutellata* and European races.

AHB started to spread (without human intervention) at a rate of 320 to 480 kilometres per year, becoming one the most successful invasive species of all times! In the 1990s, the bees were settled throughout South and Central America, and started to move into the USA. To date, all countries of South America (apart from Chile, protected by the Andes, and Uruguay, where beekeepers constantly replace Africanised queens with Europeans) and the states of Texas, New Mexico, Georgia, Arizona, Florida, Nevada and California in the USA are affected by AHB. The geographical limits on the American continent, to which they are currently restricted, are from 34° latitude North to 32° latitude South.

Figure 1: Spread of Africanised honey bees as of 2011 (black area). (Adapted from: ARS, USDA, 2011.)

Africanised honey bee/European honey bee: what are the differences?

Biology

The biology of European and Africanised bees is very similar. In the field, only an expert can detect the slight size difference between them (Africanised bees are smaller). In the lab, morphometric or DNA-based tests are used.

The main biological difference between the two subspecies is the length of their metamorphosis or brood cycle (see Figure 2).

	European honey bee	Africanised honey bee
Queen	16	14
Worker	21	19–20
Drone	24	24

Figure 2: Developmental time from egg to adult (in days). (Source: University of Florida, 2009.)

Another key point is that AHB do not hoard honey like the European races but rather convert it into new brood as quickly as possible. Therefore AHB have a higher brood to honey ratio than EHB. This explains why A. m. scutellata have difficulties withstanding long and cold winters with a honey dearth, lack of food being a limiting factor. However, some Africanised drones are likely to survive and therefore continue to spread AHB genes in the environment.

Behaviour

The behavioural differences between AHB and EHB are summarised in the table below.

Many of these AHB characteristics explain its ability to spread around a whole continent very quickly. AHB is more defensive, flies faster (23km/h vs. 16 km/h), and is also more

	European honey bee	Africanised honey bee
Hive defence and stinging	May send out 10–20 guard bees to a disturbance up to six metres away	May send out several hundred guard bees in response to a disturbance up to 40 metres away
	Once agitated, will usually become calm in 1–2 hours	Once agitated, may remain defensive for much longer, perhaps several days
	Disturbed colony will result in 10–20 stings	Disturb colony may sting 6 to 10 times more than a European colony
Swarming and absconding	Swarm 1–2 times per year	Can swarm 10 times or more and the new swarms will produce their own swarms in a few weeks
	Swarms are larger and need larger volume to nest	Swarms are much smaller, some not larger than coffee cup
	Rarely abscond from nesting location	Abscond often and relocate to more suitable nesting location
Selection of nesting sites	Look for large cavity about of 40 litres	Will nest in cavities from 12 to 24 litres large
	Will nest in protected, dry and clean cavities, above the ground	Will nest practically anywhere, even in underground locations or exposed locations

Figure 3: Differences between European Honey Bee and Africanised Honey Bee (Source: University of Florida, 2009).

resistant to diseases and pests (such as varroa and small hive beetle).

Dominance

In an area where EHB and AHB are present, hybridisation with an AHB dominance will occur because of specific parameters within the hive:

- Africanised queens mature faster than their European counterparts and kill their sisters that emerge later
- AHB produce more drones than EHB, and AHB drones are more active. This increases the probability of a successful mating
- the queen flight time and distance seems to encourage her to mate with AHB drones
- Africanised genes are commonly dominant over European ones
- AHB has a tendency to swarm often to occupy the territory.

Beekeeping with Africanised bees

Beekeepers in South and Central America are now well used to working with AHB. When well managed, AHB offer several advantages; amongst them, better hygienic behaviour, better foraging, better resistance to pest and pathogens, and superior pollination efficiency.

Nevertheless, there are precautions that beekeepers working with AHB should take:

- locate colonies 100 m away from roads or public places
- separate colonies (one per stand, at least two metres between them) so not to disturb others when working with one of these colonies
- shifted beehives should be closed, even at night
- use a bigger smoker and smoke amply before opening the hive (smoke may not calm AHB down)
- wear full beekeeping gear (beekeepers often tape boots and gloves to the edge of the suit)
- avoid black colours as it excites AHB. Veils should be white or light-coloured
- colonies that show consistent defensiveness should not be bred from and should be requeened.

What is the danger for the public?

AHB has gained the nickname of 'killer bee' over the years. However, this has been somewhat sensationalised as they have only caused eight deaths in the USA since 1990—much fewer than for many other dangerous animals. AHB can sting only once and their venom is similar to that of European honey bees. It is the number of stings that really creates a danger for people (according to Houck and Porter (2011), the rule of thumb being that the human body can cope with eight to 10 stings per pound of bodyweight).

The USA has several education programmes that aim to raise awareness of what AHB are, how you can reduce the risks (by destroying potential nest locations, inspecting your outside walls and so on), and what to do in the case of an attack, etc. It is important to note that these information materials present the importance of the role of honey bees in the pollination of food crops, in order to maintain a good public opinion, and minimise mistrust or potential misperception of the species.

In case of an attack, the basic steps are:

- run away quickly
- protect your face and airways
- keep running until you reach shelter (vehicle, building). Do not jump into water
- do not swat the bees
- once sheltered remove all bee stings
- call 111
- if you have been stung more than five times or are feeling ill, seek medical attention.

AHB can also be a threat to local fauna and flora. They compete with native species of bees and birds for food and nesting locations. They have also been found to be unable to pollinate many plants that evolved in the Americas (in particular because of flower size).

Likely impact on the New Zealand beekeeping industry

There is a fairly high perceived risk in New Zealand, as AHB swarms could enter the country through ships coming from the Americas (or *Apis mellifera scutellata* could arrive from Africa). If AHB gets into New Zealand, its impact would be rather hard to minimise.

Climate conditions in New Zealand are such that pure AHB strains could struggle to overwinter, especially in the colder parts. Nevertheless, AHB traits tend to be dominant, so AHB drones will likely mate with European queens and pass on some Africanised genes. This could result in increases in aggressiveness and would also interfere with breeding programmes. In warmer parts of the country, such as Northland, AHB should establish without any major issue, therefore causing big changes in the genetic pool.

In the case of early detection, eradication is a possibility.

Public opinion of the beekeeping industry could suffer in case of serious attacks. Good communication and health recommendations are important in the maintenance of support for the beekeeping industry.

Diagnosis

The cell size used by AHB is smaller but visual inspection of combs or bees does not provide a definitive diagnosis.

Only morphometric and PCR analysis can be used to positively identify the African honey bee or the Africanised honey bee. If you have concerns about any beehive that suddenly has become extremely aggressive, do not hesitate to contact the MAF Hotline (0800 889 966) or your nearest Apiculture Officer, who can arrange an identification test.

References for figures

Figure 1: Ellis, J., & Ellis, A. (2008, revised November 2012). Featured creatures: African honey bee, Africanized honey bee. Available online from http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/misc/bees/ahb.htm

Figures 2 and 3: University of Florida, IFAS Extension. The Differences between European and African Honey Bees: A Fact Sheet. Available online from http://entnemdept.ifas.ufl.edu/afbee/files/pdf/difference_factsheet2.pdf

Sources

Refer to nba.org.nz for the full text.

Online bulk honey auctions

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*In order to attract more potential buyers, different payment options can be offered while retaining security of your product.

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Pedigree queen bee breeding update

By Gary Jeffery, Mountain Beech Apiaries Ltd, Westport

Before varroa mites reached the UK, the late Vince Cook, a former New Zealand apiary instructor, and also the former director of the International Bee Research Association (IBRA), discussed varroa with me.

Vince suggested that we should try to breed bees with a shortened worker brood cycle to resemble that of the eastern honey bee (*Apis cerana*) and the African 'killer' bees (*Apis mellifera scutellata*) that were not affected by the mites. Apparently the mites only survived in the longer-maturing drone brood.

At that time, before varroa arrived in New Zealand, we were producing a lot of queens for the world market, and we located a breeder queen with an 18-day worker emerging period instead of the usual 21 days. We bred a lot from that queen but then a helpful worker drove over a bank with all our breeders on board and we lost them at that stage.

Last summer, circumstances out of our control saw us losing a lot of our hives due to the mites, but we also found six hives that appeared resistant to the mites even though they were robbing out the dying hives alongside and had not been treated for mites. These hives still have not been treated.

We then decided it would be ideal to reinstate our queen-breeding programme based on these resistant queens.

We eliminated one of these queens from the programme as it was susceptible to later mite infection and, more importantly, the Deformed Wing Virus. We have bred resistance in our bees to sacbrood, Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus, chalkbrood, and nosema spring dwindling, so refuse to include another virus in our programme. When we checked the remaining queens, we were delighted to find that their worker brood cycle was again back to the earlier 18-day cycle, which seems to be a crucial factor in breeding resistance.

A number of other beekeepers have joined with us financially to allow our breeding programme to progress. Their contributions will be rewarded next spring by us supplying the equivalent value in queen bees. Others are also welcome to join us.

We are now at the stage of requeening production hives with the progeny being tested to determine if the resistance is from dominant or recessive genes.

When selling queens in the past, we had a reputation for high-producing, quiet-tempered bees, and to include a degree of mite resistance would be a welcome additional feature. Resistance is the only long-term aim for the beekeeping industry, as even organic oils will lose their effectiveness.

The future of the NBA

By Ian Berry, NBA Life Member

The NBA needs to make some changes so that it is accepted by beekeepers in New Zealand as being the organisation that looks after the interests of all New Zealand beekeepers.

It will also need input from other specialty groups such as the New Zealand Honey Packers Association Inc or the UMF® Honey Association Inc.

Beekeepers who are not members of any beekeeping group or who belong to hobbyist clubs or the groups such as Federated Farmers Bee Industry Group (FFBIG) should be made to feel welcome to become members of the NBA. However, it must be remembered that the FFBIG has few members compared with the NBA, and in general FFBIG and the NBA often have directly opposing views on many matters of importance to all New Zealand beekeepers. For example, the introduction of genetically modified crops into New Zealand is apparently favoured by Federated Farmers and this could do serious harm to New Zealand beekeepers' booming export markets. Because most of the world's exports of honey come from countries that permit GM crops to be grown, they are not able to obtain the high prices New Zealand gets for its export honey because our honey is GM free.

Some of the other areas in which Federated Farmers and the NBA have strongly conflicting interests are:

1. the importing of various organisms to control or eradicate some of the most valuable sources of nectar and pollen which New Zealand beekeepers depend on, such as nodding thistles, gorse and broom
2. the widespread spraying of other valuable nectar and pollen sources such as blackberry and thistles
3. the continued use of pesticides in New Zealand that are banned in many overseas countries because they are suspected of being the cause of widespread collapse of honey bee colonies.

To have an organisation such as Federated Farmers, when they have such strongly conflicting interests, involved in running of the affairs of the New Zealand Beekeepers Association would seem very strange and would, I believe, lead to an even worse situation than we have now. Let the New Zealand Beekeepers Association work together to make the NBA an organisation run by beekeepers for the benefit of all beekeepers and for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

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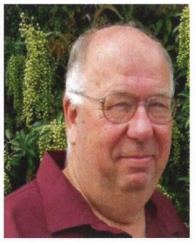

How to gain deck space

By Russell Berry

Most of you have probably seen the programme *Amazing Spaces* on TV, which focuses on making the very best use of small spaces for either living or working in.

Well, I thought it was about time to make better use of our space on the 4WD utes we have just bought.

More and more people are using these utes to farm their beehives in the springtime and some are even using them to take honey off. Some of you may be interested in what we have done to gain space.

The ute pictured on this page is capable of towing a 3.5 tonne trailer, but a 2.5 tonne is probably more appropriate (it only requires override brakes, which are more reliable than more complex braking systems) with a 2.5 tonne Gross Trailer Weight. We can carry one tonne on the back of the ute and another two tonnes on the trailer, which is enough for a lot of beekeeping jobs for most of the year.

By the way, we have gone to a single cab as it brings the deck more than half in front of the back axle, which is important as it stops overloading the back axle. We have traditionally used 1000L IBCs to cart sugar on three- to five-tonne trucks but by the time you have added the tank and the pump and the hoses, you have lost about half the deck space and you still have only 1.5 tonnes on your truck.

We find the maximum of 700L (the size of the tank on the ute) full of syrup is about the correct amount to carry in the springtime when you are carrying out full hive manipulation, so the tank we made for the utes can carry this maximum 700L (which, if it is full, gives you the maximum load for the ute anyway).

But often you only want it half full. We used Hercules Tanks Ltd in Kaitaia to manufacture the tank shown in the photo for us. This tank has two baffles running both ways, with drainage under the baffles. These baffles also strengthen the tank so we can stack supers on top of the tank. Each tank has two inlets and two outlets. The two outlets are so it can drain out completely even if the truck is on a lean in the apiary site. The outlets are linked together underneath the deck to the sugar pump, which is also under the deck to save room.

This arrangement allows weight to be right forward on the truck and enables us to stack boxes on the top of the tank. We are fortunate to have a good engineer in our workshop, so we build our own decks exactly to the specifications we require to fit beehives, bee boxes and pallets sizes. The top of the tank now becomes deck space and the height of this is actually not much higher than some of our other truck deck heights. We have the sugar tank well forward so the weight is in the right place. One person asked, "why not put the tank standing up in the front?" In utes it is very important to have the weight forward and low, as this makes it far less likely to roll over.

I believe that now we have made far better use of the deck space on our utes. I'm happy to share this information with you.

Avoid dehydration!

Working bees in summer is hot work and dehydration can quickly set in.

Some of the main signs to look for are dry mouth, you stop sweating, urine output decreases, hearing your blood pressure in your ears, headache.

You need to drink water all the time (two litres a day or more), consumed between hives if necessary, especially when manually loading trucks. If you get hot, cool off in a creek.

Conference 2015 update

By Jane Lorimer, NBA Life Member, on behalf of the conference organising committee

The next New Zealand Apiculture Conference (NZAC) will be held from Sunday 21 June to Thursday 25 June 2015 at Wairakei Resort Taupo.

Conference planning is well under way. The largely Waikato-based committee has chosen Wairakei Resort Taupo for its spacious grounds and welcoming staff, which will allow the programme to be based around a theme of 'Practical Beekeeping'.

The programme that we are working on will have some additional elements to it.

Sunday will be a seminar day that we are gearing towards both the hobby and commercial sectors. In addition, we are planning on running up to five different practical workshops—one of which may be how to do queen raising, catch, mark and cage queens, while another will be the AFB recognition course, either to do a refresher or sit the test.

We are aiming to run workshops that will give beekeepers and their employees an opportunity to gain some practical experience with at least a certificate of attendance, which will indicate that the person has begun the road to gaining a qualification in the topic of the workshop (e.g., outdoor first aid certificate). We are yet to look into this closely to see if it is possible in the time we have allowed for the workshops, which of course will depend on the likely cost to run these sessions.

Monday will see the usual interest group sessions (e.g., Pollination Association meeting, Honey Packers and Exporters Association meeting), and we will have further workshops for those not involved in the interest groups. The workshops may either be a repeat of the Sunday session or have some additional topics.

The rest of the programme will continue with the main seminars on Tuesday and Wednesday morning. Wednesday afternoon is being set aside for industry discussion topics, and is being left to the NBA and BIG executives to organise. Conference will end on Thursday with the Annual General Meeting(s). We are also looking at the possibility of a Friday field trip that may visit beekeepers and some tourist spots of the region.

We have already approached some potential overseas speakers with two from Australia indicating they wish to attend and one from France. These speakers will be covering topics on bee genetics and viruses. We also hope to have another speaker on bee health.

We have gained permission from the resort to have beehives on site that will allow for some hands-on experience, and also to use some of the grounds for FarmSafe 4WD and quad bike training, etc.

We are also exploring the possibility of providing for online registration and payments.

We will be providing regular updates on progress once speakers have been confirmed.

Wairakei Resort Taupo's website states:

> "Wairakei Resort Taupo believes in providing visitors to Taupo with a one-of-a-kind geothermal experience, and provides modern hotel room and villa accommodation, abundant indoor & outdoor leisure facilities and exquisite New Zealand focused dining options.
>
> Since the late 1800's, people have come from all over the world to experience the beauty of Lake Taupo, the Waikato River and to stay within the geothermal grounds of Wairakei Resort.
>
> The hotel is the largest international 4-star resort in the North Island with 187 rooms, but still enjoys a wonderful historic & relaxing atmosphere. Wairakei Resort is located in the beautiful Wairakei Tourist Park, on the northern fringe of Taupo, New Zealand."

Both the conference committee and Wairakei Resort Taupo look forward to your attendance at the New Zealand Apiculture Industry Conference 2015.

Aerial view of Wairakei Resort Taupo, courtesy of the resort.

The New Owners of Ceracell
Introducing... The Clow Family

Profile of Bruce and Susan Clow

(From Left to Right: Thomas, Susan, Bruce, Phillip, Mélanie, Matthew & Josie)

Married in 1980, Bruce and Susan Clow's pride and joy are their family. Their eldest son and daughter-in-law live and work in Canada. Their second son attends university in Canada. Their daughter is just finishing a gap year during which she represented New Zealand at the Triathlon World Champs as a Junior Elite. Next year she will be attending the University of Canterbury studying for a B.Sc. Their youngest son is finishing Year 11, plays the bagpipes and loves tennis.

Susan is a Kiwi, born in Morrinsville to dairy farming parents, grew up in Dargaville, and attended Papakura High School when the family shifted to Hunua. After dental nursing school, she met and married Bruce, then went on to the University of Otago and dental school. Bruce was born and raised in Canada, where he earned a degree in Chemical Engineering. Both before and after marrying Susan, he worked in the oil refining industry, and then when Susan went to dental school at Otago University, Bruce studied there earning his MBA. He lectured in accounting and finance for three years at Otago. After Susan graduated and they moved to the Franklin area, Susan set up a dental practice in Pukekohe, where she still works. Bruce taught accounting and finance at MIT for some years while managing Susan's practice and a satellite practice in Orewa. Ten years ago, Bruce started a business based in the Waikato, manufacturing wood fuel pellets. Unfortunately that coincided with Solid Energy getting into the same business and building a plant in Rotorua, then Taupo. Bruce surrendered to the inevitable and closed his pellet business this year.

Bruce has kept bees for many years as a hobby, even serving as the Treasurer for the Franklin Bee Club for a time, and one year winning the prestigious FBC's "Big Sting" for his honey and beeswax entries at the club's annual competition. As a beekeeper, Bruce has been a customer of Ceracell's for many years, and the timing of the opportunity for getting seriously involved in an industry for which he has a passion, was too tempting.

"I have been acquainted with Trevor and Peter Cullen for some years, and I always love going into their shop and absorbing the smells of beeswax and woodware. In looking more closely at the business, I was impressed with the happy work environment they created, even though for many months of the year it is extremely busy and hectic. Sort of reminds me of the workings of a queen-right beehive. Susan and I are excited about the opportunities and challenges Ceracell offer. We're grateful to Trevor and the Cullen family for choosing us to carry on their legacy and to build on the success they have created, not just in their business but in the wider beekeeping and honey processing industries," says Bruce. "But that's not to say Trevor is hanging up his staple-gun for good. We get on really well together, and he will stay on for some time in a consulting role. So all his long-time customers needn't worry they'll lose his years of experience and knowledge."

Bruce and Susan Clow take over the running of Ceracell the 1st of December this year. ***Business as usual***

Use of organic acids to control varroa

By Don MacLeod, Committee member

Varroa was first detected and identified as being present in New Zealand in April 2000.

In 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) published the book *Control of Varroa – A guide for New Zealand beekeepers*, written by Mark Goodwin and Cliff Van Eaton. This book is commonly referred to as the 'varroa guide'.

The guide was published by MAF "as part of its on-going assistance to the New Zealand beekeeping industry…" (Goodwin & Van Eaton, 2001). The first edition is still available as a download from http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/files/pests/varroa/control-of-varroa-guide.pdf

The NBA undertook to publish a hard copy of this book. This revised edition was published in 2007 (print only) and is still widely available from many bee industry suppliers and the NBA (Goodwin & Taylor, 2007).

The varroa guide is a very useful document as it covers a great deal of information to assist the beekeeper. I have discussed the original version of the guide with staff from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). MPI recognises that the 2001 version still contains information of assistance to beekeepers, but are currently reviewing whether this edition should remain on its website as they have no plans to further update it. This review is based on MPI's recognition that a lot has happened since 2001 and the management of the varroa mite is now a routine part of hive management for beekeepers.

What was significant about the 2001 version of the guide was that MAF recommended a number of pest control treatments using organic acids that were not approved or registered under the Agriculture Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) Act 1997. Beekeepers have been able to use these treatments (such as organic acids) on their own hives, provided they comply with 'the own use exemption' under the ACVM (Exemptions and Prohibited Substances) Regulations 2011. (Note: the exemption is in the ACVM Regulations, not the ACVM Act.)

Oxalic acid for use mixed as a dribble-feed sugar solution for bees was registered by MPI under the trade name Api-Bioxal™ in January 2014. In March 2014, MPI registered formic acid in the form of Mite Away Quick Strips™ (MAQS) for varroa control.

The good news is that as a result of these registrations, both chemicals are now exempted from Maximum Residue Limits of Agricultural Compounds when used as a pesticide in bee colonies (Ministry for Primary Industries, 2014). So we need not fear concerns about these organic acids leaving residues in our bee products that are sold in New Zealand. Those beekeepers exporting honey and other bee products must take into consideration that an importing country may have imposed restrictions by residue levels for these organic acids.

But these registrations now present some further difficulties, as all the uses of organic acids as recommended in the 2007 edition of the varroa guide are not registered or included in the above registrations (Goodwin & Taylor, 2007). What does this mean to a beekeeper using organic acids? Well, you need to sort out the issues listed below.

1) A beekeeper can still legally purchase organic acid from the chemist shop, hardware shop, beekeeper supply centre etc. for their own use on their hives only; i.e., compliant with the own use provisions of the ACVM (E&PS) Regulations as mentioned above (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2012). It is illegal for any person to on-sell to any other person an unregistered product for the specific use as a pesticide that has not been registered under the ACVM Act 1997 – Section 8. (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2014).
2) If one is commercially selling formic acid for use in strips, it must be the registered product Mite Away Quick Strips™. If oxalic acid is being sold specifically for sugar mixture dribbling in hives, it must be the registered product. These are the presently registered trade name products authorised for such use. The important issue here is the way you are distributing the product for this end use. If it is for commercial gain, then you must comply with the ACVM Act.
3) If you are purchasing formic acid for use in making absorbent pads, bottom boards as described in the MAF Varroa Guide (Goodwin and Van Eaton, 2001), you need to comply with item 1 above. You should purchase for your own use, as to date there is no registered product for this end use.
4) If you intend using a vaporiser to apply oxalic acid, there is no guideline, no mention in the *Control of Varroa* guide, no registered pesticide (the device itself is not required to be registered). So you can treat your own hives as per point 1 above. Purchase for your own use, as to date there is no registered product for this end use.

I do feel for beekeeping suppliers who have to determine how best to legally distribute organic acids. They can supply organic acid for unregistered uses (oxalic acid for vaporisers, as an example) but cannot promote the product for varroa control as it is not registered. If asked for a dribble treatment for varroa control, they have to sell the legally registered oxalic acid product Api-Bioxal™.

I have asked MPI to comment on the situation and their comments are as follows:

> *"MPI advice to beekeepers [is] to use varroa mite treatments which have been registered under the ACVM Act. These treatments have been assessed on efficacy, bee safety and residues. This is not the case where beekeepers use compounds under the own use provisions under the ACVM (E&PS) Regulations. MPI does not advise use of unregistered products where there are appropriate registered products available."*

Beekeepers now face a crazy situation where two organic acids are registered for limited uses, but other methods for the use of organic acids are not registered. MAF

Continued on page 21

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Summer is a good time to start preparing for the national honey competition and the Ecroyd/Apiculture industry photography competition, both of which will be held at the New Zealand Apiculture Conference, Wairakei Resort Taupo, June 2015. Visit www.nba.org.nz/events for a sample of the schedule, rules and entry forms for both competitions.

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Continued from page 19
promoted these end uses and MPI still does. I feel that MPI could have looked at how they regulate copper sulphate as an example. This is widely used in horticulture and agriculture as a pesticide, but as copper sulphate is commonly available, MPI has determined it is exempt from registration under the ACVM Act. Organic acids are widely available and as MAF promoted their use, MPI could have made all use of these acids exempt from registration when used for beekeeping purposes.

WARNING: Formic acid and oxalic acid are hazardous substances and can be harmful to a user if not handled safely. Carefully follow instructions and ensure that all Personal Protective Equipment is worn to ensure safety to yourself or your staff. Read the label and take special care when using.

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BUSINESS

Commercial beekeeping in 2014

By Barbara Pimm

In Opotiki there are at least seven resident commercial beekeeping outfits of varying size, ranging from one-man bands to employing four or more people.

These beekeepers keep the majority of their hives around the Opotiki district over the late autumn, winter and spring for supply of pollination hives into the local kiwifruit and avocado orchards.

The rich pollen sources for the bees are in dwindling supply, so local beekeepers work together to manage this limited supply and not overpopulate the district with bees.

Like all stock, the land can only sustain a certain number of healthy hives and as the years have passed and land use changed, we have needed to place hives more carefully, in lower numbers and at greater distances from home bases.

This year has seen the arrival of the corporate beekeeper. They are here to use the local spring pollen sources to build hives, which will then be moved down the coast onto 'manuka sites'. They contribute little to the local economy.

See the photo for an example of corporate hives placed on a local farm and compare that to the local beekeepers' sites you see around the district.

Our district can not sustain these huge bee sites and at the same time produce healthy strong bees. Simply put, this is overstocking. New Zealand beekeepers used to laugh at photographs of American bee sites with large numbers of hives and the bees dying from CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder). We now have bee outfits doing the same here.

Photo: Barbara Pimm.

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5pm Friday 19th December
& Re-open on Monday 12th January 2015

Have a very Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year!

Ceracell ownership changes hands, from the Cullen family to the Clow family (read their profile featured in this magazine)

A Message From Trevor Cullen

A big thank you to everybody in the NZ beekeeping industry. What a fascinating and exciting 25 years it has been, but it is now time to go. I leave Ceracell with a lot of regret but reassure you that it is in good hands with the Clow family. Thank you NZ Beekeepers once again for your patronage, support and friendship. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and may your honey supers be full at the end of the season.

From, Trevor, Peter and Ida Cullen

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Waikato Branch

The weather is still a bit cold at night and continues to be unsettled, with rain showers followed by really hot sweaty days, but good conditions for mating. Splits are going well, and so are the swarms: the now fully flowering barberry hedges are great for this. Otherwise, it's all go, with most gearing up for pollination and/or sorting out manuka sites and the shifting to them.

Loved the quote from the Comvita beekeeper *[ad on page 2 of the November journal]* "the only downside to beekeeping is once you're hooked on bees, there's no way back." So TRUE!

- Barbara Cahalane

Hawke's Bay Branch

Apple pollination has been a drawn-out affair this year with both late and extended flowering. I have not seen or heard of any poisoning this year for which the growers must be commended, it is now several years since there has been any serious problems.

Pollination aside, the only subject you will hear from Hawke's Bay beekeepers is the huge number of hives being dumped in the area. We have 'bee havers' going up to farmers and telling them that the existing beekeeper doesn't mind other beekeepers putting hives as close as 500 metres. This is, of course, an untruth otherwise known as lying.

Bees have mostly recovered from our extremely poor spring and soil moisture, which, while low, is adequate for the moment. Most of us are looking forward to a reasonable honey crop, weather and untruthful neighbours permitting.

Merry Christmas, and may your honey crops match your ethics.

- John Berry, Branch President

Southern North Island Branch

Weather has played a very important role and different role in our areas. In the Wairarapa generally it was a bad spring with huge differences in the weather, resulting in many hives being lost, partly from July/August and also from September weather. Those on the coast were OK but in the central Wairarapa many hives died.

In the Manawatu it has been quite different with a mild winter and most hives have come through very well. Around Wanganui it has been good and bad. Some of my hives are booming but other apiaries are struggling.

At the last Branch meeting we confirmed our support to scientist Michelle Taylor. Not only are some of our members assisting with bee samples etc., but the Branch is sponsoring Michelle's university fees for a year. The Branch is very keen to help Michelle to pursue her PhD, as we consider it vital to our continuing bee-related research to have scientists keen to undertake further education and training. The Branch also has made donations to Hospice Wanganui and helicopter rescue services from the proceeds from Conference.

The research project headed by Linda Newstrom-Lloyd has also been given a grant from the conference profit to assist her work on willows (pollen proteins) sourced from the old Ministry of Works (1980) plot at Aokautere, Palmerston North. Many types of willow are being checked that flower from July to possibly after November. It appears that many of the willows being investigated will not clog up waterways as has happened in the past with a few of the older willow types that had been used previously.

- Neil Farrer, NBA Life Member

Nelson Branch

Oh, what a mixed season weatherwise. As I write this in November, there's snow on the near hills, the occasional frosty morning and a recent hailstorm has devastated some orchards. I'm thinking that being a bee in a nice warm hive sounds very attractive!

This recent cooler weather has definitely reduced and slowed down the current honey gathering. There is good flowering of both barberry and hawthorn at moment, so that is encouraging. On the hive front, swarming has been a problem, possibly due to the strength of many hives coming through a mild winter. If anyone has an easy way of encouraging the little darlings to stay at home, please write. There has been mixed success with matings, but those which were successful appear to be doing well.

We had a great field day in Takaka, hosted by Kerry and Fraser Wilson. Well over 40 beekeepers were present, ranging from hobby to large commercial. It was great looking at the Wilson's new honey shed, hot rooms and extracting equipment. A field discussion on preventing swarming, bee stings and allergies was well received by those present as well as the pikelets, jam and cream! Thanks to the hosts, the NBA, Murray and Nicky for organising such a wonderful day and catch up.

Hopefully all will be able to have an enjoyable festive season. Like most, I will be wishing for some warm, sunny, windless weather and plenty of nectar of all types to gather for both bees and beekeepers.

- Jason Smith

Thanks, and see you in February!

The Publications Committee (Frank and Mary-Ann Lindsay, Serena Richards, Tom Baty and Trevor Cullen) and journal editor Nancy Fithian wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and New Year, and a bountiful honey season.

We hope you will be able to take some time to be with your families before resuming work.

Thanks very much to our advertisers, without whom the journal would not be published—please support them! We are also grateful to everyone who has contributed articles and photos over the past year.

Many thanks to the members of the Executive Council for their unflagging efforts on behalf of all NBA members, and to South City Print for a job well done again this year.

NB: The deadline for the February journal is 6 January, with a cutoff date of 12 January for articles and advertising. Please mark the date in your 2015 diaries now.

Keeping the hives ticking over

By Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

Most of the pohutukawa trees around Wellington are budding up to flower in December. However, some trees are already flowering in the warmer areas affected by radiant heat reflected off roads and in paved areas.

The same is happening with the scattered bushes of manuka on north-facing slopes. Clover has been in flower for a month, tempting the bees but only offering pollen. It needs to be hot and dry to produce nectar, which hasn't happened so far this season.

If everything has gone well, the hives will be overflowing with bees ready to bring in the crop. Once the flow starts, you can do the final inspection for queen cells and then forget about swarming, provided the hives have lots of storage space and the weather remains settled. Super hives by putting two supers on at a time as in a good flow the bees can fill a super in a week. They also need extra comb space to store the nectar as it's being ripened.

If you only have new foundation frames, lift up an outside honey frame containing nectar from the super below into the new foundation's super. If none is available, place a brood frame into the middle of the next super. This is called baiting the super. Bees don't see foundation as storage until the frames are drawn out.

If you have both drawn frames and foundation, bait the new super with a honey frame in the middle, then inter-space foundation and drawn frames: this will encourage the bees to draw out the foundation more quickly.

If you have different sized supers for honey and brood, don't worry. Lift the full-depth frame from the brood box, but leave the space empty directly below so the frame can hang down partly into the original super. The bees will draw drone comb below the frame as well as start to draw out the frames beside the original brood frame in the honey super.

In 18–20 days, return the frame to the brood super below but first cut away the drone comb below and feed it to the chickens (if you have them) as the comb will almost certainly contain varroa.

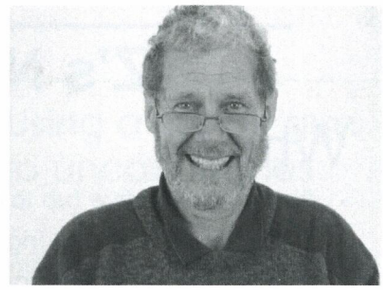
Drone comb trapping can remove 50% of your mites over two drone brood cycles so is worth doing; however, you won't get these results if you have more than 3% drone comb in the rest of the frames. The solution is to cull brood frames with patches of drone cells so the bees use the drone comb you supply. I place an empty frame (without wires or wax) on the outside of the brood nest in the second super. When the hive is strong enough and has an abundance of nectar and pollen coming in, the bees will start to draw out drone comb. When it's capped, the comb is cut out and the empty frame is replaced for the bees to draw it out again. However, don't allow the drones to emerge as this will double the number of mites in the hive.

"... in a good flow the bees can fill a super in a week."

Start making splits

Now is the time to start making splits to overwinter to make up for losses or for an increase.

As you super your colonies for the flow, move the top super back five to six millimetres to create an upper entrance between the top super and second-to-top super. This helps the bees provide an airflow to assist with evaporating the nectar, but also some bees will start using it as an entrance.



On your next inspection, move a frame of emerging brood, one of open brood with eggs and one of pollen up into the middle of the top super. The bees will immediately start to draw queen cells but they may select a larva that is older than 24 hours to make into a queen.

On the fifth day after pulling the frames up, cut out all the capped queen cells and leave one or two that are yet to be capped. The ones left were produced just after the egg hatched so will turn into well-fed queens. At the same time, put in a split board or if you haven't one, move the top super forward to create an entrance and divide the top super off with a piece of tin or coreflute, with the entrance facing the same direction as the previous opening. All the bees using the top entrance will now service the brood in the top super and before long you will have another colony that will gradually build during the honey flow.

I was told the name for this procedure is called a 'walk-back split'. Beekeepers can make splits without having queen cells available and the bees will choose a cell and build it out to be a queen cell, provided there is a flow on. However, sometime the bees may have chosen an older larva to make into a queen and as you know, the first queen to emerge becomes the mother of the hive. This type of split is called a 'walk-away split'. The advantage of visiting the nuc again on the fifth day and cutting out the capped queen cells is that you get a better queen.

Caging the queen

When taking the honey off you have to inspect the brood for disease, so why not find and cage the queen at the same time? Leave her caged for two weeks and then release her again after checking that the bees haven't produced any queen cells. If

Continued on page 27

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they have, you have a choice of what to do with them: create another nuc or simply cut them out if they are surplus to requirements.

If you don't want the bees to produce queens, visit the hive again after five days and cut out all developing queen cells. On the eighth day after the queen is released, all the sealed brood apart from the drone brood will have emerged. This means that the majority of the mites are now phoretic (i.e., on the bees), waiting for the larvae to reach the right age for them to enter a new cell. It's a very simple matter to treat and kill most of the mites in one hit over the next three days (as the drones emerge). You can try an oxalic acid (OA) dribble or, if you prefer, put in one of the fast-acting strips (Apistan® or Bayvarol®) for a week or so, then remove them so they can be reused later in the autumn as a final clean-up before winter.

Mite control

If you use an OA dribble, put in your usual autumn treatment. **A word of caution:** the directions for use given on page 154 in the green varroa book (*Control of Varroa*, revised edition, by Mark Goodwin and Michelle Taylor) are based on a formulation using 97% oxalic acid. The stuff we get in New Zealand is 99.6% pure, so requires a change in formulation to achieve the 3.2 % oxalic acid weight by volume (w/v) mix. The correct amount for 99% OA is 45 g, not 78 g. If you want further advice, go to scientificbeekeeping.com and search for 'The learning curve – part 3: the natural miticides' and look at the tables for different strengths of OA.

If you are isolated from other beehives, i.e. more than four kilometres away from the next hive, it could be that you may not need to do another treatment in autumn if you have achieved a good kill. How can you tell how good the kill was? Monitor the hive with several sugar shakes or alcohol washes, or if you have mesh bottom boards, monitor the fall for a week and calculate the rate of drop.

Whatever approach to varroa control you use, try and keep mite numbers below 5% and preferably below 1% all through the year. You will get a higher honey production if the summer weather is kind to us: hot and dry with little wind.

Monitoring supers

As December goes on, I check the top couple of supers and move fully drawn frames outwards and the undrawn ones into the middle of the super where it's warmer for the bees to draw out.

If the flow turns out to be just a dribble, the bees may draw out frames only in the brood nest rather than any in the honey supers, especially plastic ones. In a good, fast flow, the bees will quickly draw out any foundation or plastic frames. *Don't mix plastic and wooden wax foundation frames in the same super.* If you do, the bees may ignore the plastic and draw wider wax frames or may make their own comb between the plastic frames. The secret with new plastic frames is to air them well before they go on the hives and not mix plastic and wooden frames. If the bees have only plastic frames available, they will draw them out.

Things to do this month

Check feed. Check for failing queens. Introduce nuclei. Super hives: get them on before the bees need them. Swarm control measures finish with the start of the flow.

Combine weak hives to make full-strength units for honey production or divide up the weak hives to make nucs. This is the best time to get queens mated for those making their own replacements or ordering replacement queens.

Prepare the honey house equipment. Undertake the first honey extraction in some areas. Do a full brood frame check for AFB before removing any honey or combining hives. Get the honey off before 1 January to meet all the testing requirements for those in the tutin/passion vine hopper (*Scolypopa australis*) areas. If it's a dry, warm summer, there could be problems for some but the prediction is that it could be wetter and cloudier than normal.

Fit foundation into comb honey supers. Put cut comb supers above a three-quarter super to prevent the bees storing pollen in the comb super frames if there's a break in the good weather.

Check hives for varroa mites. Randy Oliver recommended we do a quick knock down in the middle of the season rather than wait until the end of the season; i.e., at the beginning of December before the flow is ideal. Keep those mite numbers low: if there are strips still in the hives when the flow starts, get them out quickly.

All the best for Christmas and I hope the New Year goes well for you all. Take time off for family because soon it will be full on again.

Using a hot air gun to uncap frames

A couple of YouTube videos are available explaining how to use a heat gun to melt cappings. Here is one posted to the B-List by Bill Truesdell from Bath, Maine, along with his comments below. He actually took more time than I did to uncap a frame: I waited a bit longer for the gun to heat up.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RL7vbrJ6Pvw

"Tried the heat gun for decapping frames and it worked fine. It is great for hobby beekeepers. Takes a few seconds to uncap a frame, both sides. There are occasional hiccups but much less than I had with either a hot knife or scratch decapper. Plus, the mess is near zero compared to them. Got mine from Amazon, a Wagner 700-1000 watt heat gun which was #1 seller.

I work in our kitchen and spread poly sheets on the floor. Before heat gun, there would be drippings between the uncapping station and the extractor. With the heat gun there were none. Cleanest extraction I have ever had. Only drops of honey on the floor were from my tipping the extractor to get the last of the honey and then only a few drops.

Also rigged a 1/2 inch drill to the extractor and life is good. Between the two, I cut the time I normally need to less than half. Plus the frames were near dry. No aches or pains, an added benefit especially with my torn bicep.

The only drawback is zero wax, but I like that since the strainers were also zero wax so had no issues with clogging. I have plenty of wax from prior extractions and old frames. All in all, a happy camper."

– Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

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Manuka Health opens $10m honey plant

Manuka Health officially opens the doors of its brand new $10-million dollar, purpose-built honey processing and distribution centre in Te Awamutu today.

Local MP Barbara Kuriger and Manuka Health Chairman Ray Thompson opened the plant with more than 320 customers, local and international and distributor partners, bee keepers, local iwi, staff, and community members in attendance.

The customised new facility is the largest honey factory in New Zealand and the investment represents a significant step in the development of New Zealand's Manuka honey industry.

Manuka Health has enjoyed a 30% increase in sales compared to the previous year and has further strengthened its distribution network. The new facility enables the company to triple production from 672 tonnes to 2,200 to meet growing demand, while bringing far greater scale and efficiencies.

The plant combines internationally accredited laboratories, honey-drum storage, blending, packing and distribution under one roof for the first time in the history of Manuka Health. Combined with an extensive investment in hives, hive health and research and development, Manuka Health can now count itself as a leader in the natural health space. The investment is already reaping rewards – with international customers from Asia and Europe, joining the team for the grand opening.

Source: Abridged media release from Manuka Health, 21 November 2014.

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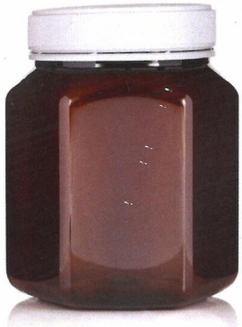

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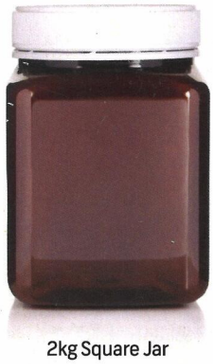

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