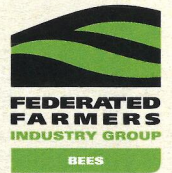


The NEW ZEALAND BeeKeeper

JUNE 2015 | VOLUME 23 No. 5



The National Beekeepers
Association of New Zealand



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BEES



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What if I lose my bees?

Don MacLeod

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Front cover: It's conference time! If you haven't yet registered, you can do so online: www.apicultureconference.co.nz See you there!

Correction: the volume number for the May 2015 journal was incorrectly stated as volume 24 rather than volume 23.

The New Zealand BeeKeeper is the official journal of the National Beekeepers' Association of New Zealand (Inc.)
ISSN 0110-6325
Printed by South City Print, PO Box 2494, Dunedin 9013, New Zealand
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JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:

— 11 Issues —
NZ \$155.46 GST inc - incl P&P
Australia \$183.22 + NZ \$25.00 TT fees and incl P&P

Rest of the World \$195.43 + NZ \$25.00 TT fees and incl P&P.

Subject to review if postage charges increase
Credit card payment facilities are available on the NBA website: <http://www.nba.org.nz/shop/publications/new-zealand-beekeeper-journal/>

DEADLINES FOR ADVERTISING AND ARTICLES:

Due on the 6th of the month prior to publication
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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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

CHANGE IS CONSTANT: BE PREPARED

Ricki Leahy, NBA President

I hope that you have all taken the opportunity to read the information about restructuring our bee industry and the recommended industry model that has been sent to you. This is also available on our website nba.org.nz, as well as the New Zealand Apiculture Industry Unification Project website www.beeunified.org. I do understand that it is a lot of information to digest. *[Editor's note: please also refer to the insert in this journal, which provides additional detail about industry unification.]*

Those of us on the Interim Working Group have been working on this proposal for a long time now, and it's great that the group has worked together so positively. We have been asking the hard questions, working through the model options and have ended up with something that will provide a sound structure for the future.

There is still a lot of detail to work through, including the options for funding. The industry will need to be consulted on these options before final decisions can be made.

First though, we need to agree that the model is acceptable. If a positive direction is given from members and the wider industry, then further work can progress in the knowledge that the industry supports the concept.

Why do we need an association at all, you may ask?

Beekeepers produce and deliver products to others in the industry who maintain markets and add value in many ways to grow and broaden the industry. We all depend on each other and need contact through an association to understand and communicate our individual needs to maintain any growth and/or success.

"We need to be supportive of each other and of all our associated sectors."

In other words, an association gives us the opportunity to create and maintain an environment in which all our stakeholders understand and appreciate each other. In such an environment, the relationships among stakeholders are positive, facilitate 'best business practice' and protect and grow our industry.

What should beekeepers expect from a well-functioning industry association?

A modern and progressive association will be led by skilled personnel, have a consultative approach with its stakeholders and develop the industry. Different industries experience ongoing influences that are forever driving change, some of which are unpredictable.

So a well-functioning industry would be one that is geared to handle those influences as they arise. Likewise, within our apiculture industry, our particular influences include but are not limited to changes to our honey standards, changes to biosecurity policy (e.g., the Government Industry Agreement from the Ministry for Primary Industries) and, as always, changes from government in response to evolving regulatory requirements.

Let's not forget matters such as RMPs, verifications, food safety, issues associated with other government agencies and primary industries, as well as funding and market concerns. Any small industry would need a well-functioning association to handle these myriad topics for the behalf of their members. Change is constant.

There are also the other day-to-day benefits we would expect from being a member of a strong organisation, such as giving an industry a powerful voice as with the concept of a union with 'strength in numbers'. There is the information sharing, the networking through which you meet people, the development of job opportunities, making of business deals, building relationships and the establishment of friendships. One should also expect to have the opportunity to develop a sense of ownership by contributing and becoming involved in some way.

Interim working group presentation at Conference

This is my last report before the New Zealand Apiculture Industry Conference in Taupo. I have heard that the Wairakei Resort venue is fabulous and that planning is coming along very well. The organising committee has been extremely busy, as all conference committees are. Please check out the itinerary at www.apicultureconference.co.nz to see the wide variety of workshops, speakers and other activities that many will find of interest.

On the Wednesday morning of conference, the Interim Working Group will be giving a presentation on the recommended industry model that has been developed over the past summer and autumn. This will be a very worthwhile seminar to attend, not only to understand the changes that are proposed, but also to take the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process.

In order to make progress towards achieving industry unity, we need industry members to provide a clear direction of the pathway on which we should continue, and also to indicate that the industry is supportive of the launch date goal for the 'new entity' of 1 April 2016.

NBA members will decide at their AGM if they are prepared to go down that same pathway.

As I said, change is constant and it is important that the NBA is able to perform in a way that will meet the needs of the wider industry, not just for next year but for the many years to come. We need to make sure we are well prepared for the inevitable changes ahead.

Wintering down

Remember: how we winter down our hives affects how they perform in spring.

We're busy taking out strips and shutting down the bees for winter. As I write it's the second week of May and where we are, the days from now will become noticeably shorter and colder and brrrr ... there is still a fair bit more to do. Happy beekeeping.



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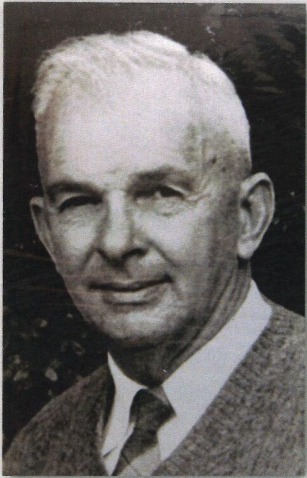


Photo provided courtesy of
Dr Mark Goodwin

ROY PATERSON TROPHY

The Roy Paterson Award was instigated by Professor Sutherland, Queensland and the late NBA Life Member Dudley Lorimer, of Hamilton.

The award remembers Roy and his work with the beekeeping industry, and recognises innovative ideas or inventions to help New Zealand beekeepers in their daily operations. The award trophy was created by John and Peter Berry from Hawke's Bay, and is presented annually at Conference.



If you have an idea or invention that you would like to enter into the 2015 competition, please go to <http://www.nba.org.nz/events/roy-paterson-trophy> for more information and an entry form.

NBA BIOSECURITY COMMITTEE

COMMENT ON THE **IMPORT HEALTH STANDARD**

Roger Bray

Recently the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) decided to proceed with the development of an Import Health Standard (IHS) to cover bee products from any country in the world.

The NBA has led the industry in its opposition to the importation of bee products and risk goods that would allow the importation of exotic bee pests and diseases that could compromise the health of our bees in New Zealand. The recent proposed draft IHS was developed to cover items that MPI considered as 'low risk' goods, such as bee products as ingredients in food items and drinks, dietary supplements and medical preparations and cosmetics.

Also covered was the proposal to allow the importation from any country of beeswax, bee venom, honey of New Zealand origin as well as honey from specific Pacific Islands (Niue, Pitcairn Islands and Samoa).

The IHS was developed to cover only three identified risk organisms: European foulbrood (EFB), American foulbrood (AFB) and the small hive beetle (SHB).

The NBA response to the IHS has been co-ordinated by Executive Council member Russell Berry with advice from Dr Matthew Palmer QC. Russell and Matthew continue to work for the health of our bees, largely through behind-the-scenes investigations critical to presenting a credible case. Some of the investigative work consists of seeking information via the Official Information Act.

While the MPI might consider that the current IHS may cover low-risk items and only three specified pests and diseases, the NBA considers that the spread of pests and diseases around the world is of sufficient concern that the NBA continues to place New Zealand biosecurity as a very high priority. The introduction of small hive beetle

"...the NBA continues to place New Zealand biosecurity as a very high priority."

into Italy and the recent identification of *Crithidia mellificae* in the USA and Belgium shows how vulnerable beekeeping is to the spread of unwanted organisms.

It is interesting that the IHS also covers honey of New Zealand origin to be returned to New Zealand. In some cases this may be desirable if honey that has left New Zealand is unable to complete the process for eventual sale in overseas countries.

The NBA awaits the response from the MPI and further developments toward the importation of bee products.

NBA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I LOSE MY BEES?

Don MacLeod

The Technical Committee has become aware of two serious losses of large numbers of bees this season:

- a unexplained depopulation event in the Western Coromandel Peninsula from September 2014 to January 2015 that wiped out an unknown number of hives. Some beekeepers lost 90 percent of their honey production in this area this past season.
- three beekeepers lost a large number of hives in the Matamata/Waharoa area, which is clearly the result of pesticide poisoning.

In both cases we (that is, all beekeepers) lost some valuable data about what was happening to our bees due to poor communication amongst ourselves. So let us look at what went wrong and how best we can help our workers—our bees.

We have to admit that to date we have been lucky, as it is only by chance that that your Technical Committee has learnt what has happened. The current situation is not good enough—and clearly needs to change if we wish to be productive managers of our bees.

- 1) The disease outbreak on the Coromandel Peninsula was discovered, fortunately, after beekeeper John Bassett dropped in for a visit to Oksana Borowik to discuss what he was observing in Coromandel. Both beekeepers had been losing bees from strong hives without explanation. John visited Oksana in October 2014. Oksana quickly communicated the problem to Dr Mark Goodwin at Plant & Food Research. They called a worthwhile meeting of local beekeepers on 8 December 2014 and started gathering data for research (Borowik, 2015).
- 2) The Waikato bee deaths in the Waharoa/Matamata area were first noted by beekeeper Keith O'Reilly on 12 February 2015. He contacted two local beekeepers. After these three beekeepers inspected their apiary sites, they observed and noted the same problem—a massive bee kill due to pesticides. Samples of dead

bees began being gathered for analysis on 18 February 2015. Some excellent photos were also taken that showed the extent of the bee kill.

To date I have only met one beekeeper who lost bees at both locations: Keith O'Reilly. But I did not learn that until 29 April 2015, and it was only after Keith had read Oksana Borowik's article in the April 2015 edition of the journal. Unfortunately Keith never knew about the Coromandel beekeepers' meeting to discuss the Coromandel depopulation event. Yet his hives were about one kilometre from Oksana's home apiary site.

I also learnt that Keith and his son searched neighbouring paddocks to their apiary site for his missing bees and collected a sample of dead bees found. It remained in his freezer until March 2015, when it was disposed of. This was a terrible loss, as all the analysis of the bees to date has been conducted on samples of live bees remaining in the hives; no analysis has been conducted on dead bees that never came back to the hive. The samples showed very high levels of *Nosema ceranae* and *Nosema apis*.

As Oksana Borowik described it, "My hives would be within a kilometre of Keith's. I don't know him and I have never heard of him so I

would not have been able to get him to the meeting in December. Losing 64 hives is a big deal, why didn't he report it? If he had known there was a depopulation issue, those bees he collected may have provided important evidence".

Yes, it is true that we were encouraged to keep the Coromandel depopulation event quiet, and that was from a beekeeper leader. The reason stated was "trade issues", but MAF Biosecurity (2010) had already determined in October 2010 that it was not a trade issue. Canadian researchers had also noted that New Zealand package bees have infestations of *Nosema ceranae* (personal communications to John McKay and Oksana Borowik). Oksana's article in the April *BeeKeeper* was first discussed for publication in the March journal.

The key message from both these incidents is that beekeepers should not leave things to chance. We need to communicate more openly and more often. We need to meet and talk things over with our neighbouring beekeepers.

Peeling the onion

Determining the cause of why your bees are dying is like peeling an onion, one layer at a time. Each time a layer is removed, it still looks like an onion. We have only a few bee



An example of spotty brood found in an affected hive in Coromandel. Photo: Dr Mark Goodwin.

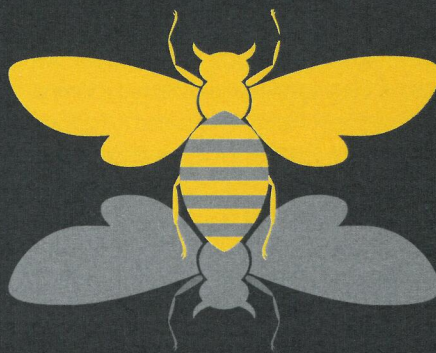
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scientists in New Zealand and they have only a small amount of knowledge about our bees. We still do not have definitive knowledge of all the bee diseases and pathogens present in New Zealand.

The peeling-of-the-onion metaphor is also appropriate in the Waikato bee deaths around Matamata/Waharoa.

I live less than 80 kilometres away from the sites, but wasn't told the names of the beekeepers involved until mid-April whom I met on 29 April. Finally, in early May, I obtained the report from Hill Laboratories of their analysis of our samples of dead bees taken on 18 and 25 February 2015.

Initial observations assumed that the deaths were the result of facial eczema (caused by the fungus *Pithomyceschartarum*) after helicopter spraying of pastures with fungicide on 9 February. But the beekeepers I spoke to said that bees still were dying in the apiary yards on 18 February. The laboratory analysis of four samples of dead bees showed that only three samples showed the presence of the fungicide carbendazim. But all four samples showed the presence of the insecticide fipronil (Hill Laboratories, 2015).

The samples were not analysed for the surfactant used with the carbendazim because it is not considered a pesticide when tank-mixed in a spray tank. The Technical Committee is still waiting for the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) review of surfactants used in a wide and dispersive manner in our environment.

The toxicity of carbendazim to bees is in question: there are some claims it is toxic. The European Food Safety Authority states the following with respect to bees, "The risk to bees, earthworms, other soil-dwelling macro- and micro-organisms, non-target plants and biological methods of sewage treatment was assessed as low" (European Food Safety Authority, 2010).

There was rain in the Matamata/Waharoa area between 12–18 February and the spraying occurred on 9 February. If the bees were still dying on 18 February, then the most likely factor in that death was probably the insecticide fipronil. (Please note: this suggests correlation, not causation, as there is no data linking a trail from the insecticide use to the hive.)

Fludioxonil is a fungicide used on a number of specialty crops such as botrytis control in grapes, onions, strawberries and *Rhizoctonia* in seed potatoes. It was detected in two

**"Vigilant, observant
beekeepers are
our industry's best
line of defence
for a biosecurity
incursion and/or a
major bee kill."**

samples of dead bees. A European Food Safety Authority scientific report (European Food Safety Authority, 2007) rates the risk to honey bees as very low, and minimal when used as a seed treatment for potato tubers, for example.

The Matamata/Waharoa area is becoming increasingly important as a growing area for onions and potatoes. It is possible that the pesticides that killed these bees came from spraying of these crops. Fipronil would present a significant risk to bees if it had been sprayed on flowering onions.

What beekeepers can do

As we still do not know the full details of both the Coromandel and Waikato bee deaths, we cannot emphatically state exactly what happened and how it happened. What we can do is get beekeepers talking about what they can do when they observe something that is not right with their hives.

Following is a checklist of what you should do if you observe that something is wrong in your apiary or a hive that you cannot explain.

- 1) Admit to yourself you do not understand what is happening. Do not be afraid of saying you have no explanation for what you are observing.
- 2) Gather evidence: apiary site, hive number, photographs of what you see.
- 3) Take samples. Always carry some ziplock bags in the truck to hold samples. Take a sample of dead bees, take a sample of sick bees, sample some healthy live bees, and take a sample of any strange insects you spot. Clearly label each bag, date, sample type etc. Samples then should be frozen so they can be analysed at a future date.
- 4) If you have suspect brood frames and or disease effects in hives, quarantine them and call MPI Biosecurity hotline for exotic

diseases and pests.

Phone 0800 80 99 66. Do not delay.

- 5) Contact and inform your local branch. Do items 1 to 4 promptly and check on your other apiary sites for the same symptoms or effects.
- 6) Complete a copy of the EPA bee incident form and submit it promptly to the EPA. (This form is available at http://www.epa.govt.nz/Publications/Pollinator_incident_reporting_form_2014.docx)
- 7) Discuss your experience with another beekeeper, especially neighbouring beekeepers.
- 8) If in doubt, always seek help.

Once reported, key groups will assist beekeepers; for example, MPI Biosecurity will lead the monitoring and controls for a major biosecurity incursion. In the Coromandel, it was worrying to learn of some delays at the laboratories to confirm diagnosis, but we were fortunate of the teamwork between private and government laboratories to overcome this problem.

There have been reports of similar bee deaths to those that occurred on the Coromandel from Raglan, Wairarapa and Christchurch. We can expect similar effects on your hives near you this spring as many of Coromandel hives have been transported out of the area.

For a pesticide kill, we will have to use our branches to help the beekeeper to gather the evidence so they can make a commercial claim against anyone who may be responsible. MPI no longer has an enforceable law against reckless spraying, so beekeepers will need to gather the evidence and make a claim through the courts.

New Zealand is soon to get a Bee Health Survey, which will be an excellent step forward. Canada (National Bee Diagnostic Centre, 2014) and the USA (Steinhauer et al., 2015) have both recently published results of their bee health surveys. It is interesting to track the significant losses of hives from season to season. Both reports are well worth a read.

NB: Dr Mark Goodwin, Dr Oksana Borowik and Don MacLeod will be participating in a panel discussion on this topic at the New Zealand Apiculture Conference. This discussion takes place on Tuesday, 23 June, at 2:30 pm.

continued...



NZ APICULTURE CONFERENCE WAIKATO 2015

NZ APICULTURE CONFERENCE 2015

**Sunday 21st June to
Thursday 25th June at
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GET SNAPPING!

Conference is nearly here, so prepare your photos for entry in the seventh annual Ecrotek Beekeeping Supplies/NZ Apiculture Photography Competition.

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Class A. Close-up print. Subject must relate to beekeeping.

Class B. Scenic print. Apiary subject such as flowers, hives etc.

Class C. Portrait print. Person, beekeeping procedure, honey, hive by-product processing in appropriate setting, commercial frontage or beekeeping base.

Class D. Essay prints. A set of from 4 to 7 pictures depicting a beekeeping story.

Class E. 'Oh Darn!'—for all those 'oops' moments that occur in beekeeping!

The photo contest is open to all registered members of the NBA and BIG.

As an added inducement, winning photographs will be published in *The New Zealand BeeKeeper*, perhaps even on the front cover if taken in portrait format.

For more information, go to <http://www.nba.org.nz/events/apiculture-industry-photography-competition>



Conference photography competition to be judged at the conference, **Wairakei Resort Taupo, 21–26 June 2015.**

Acknowledgements

This article would not be possible without the help of beekeepers Keith O'Reilly, Greg Stitchbury and Dr Oksana Borowik, Kavitha Babu of Hill Laboratories, Raymond McMillan of EPA, John Mackay of dnature, and the NBA Technical Committee.

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Steinhauer, N., et al. (May 13, 2015). Colony loss 2014–2015: Preliminary results. Bee Informed blog posting. Retrieved from <http://beeinformed.org/2015/05/colony-loss-2014-2015-preliminary-results/>



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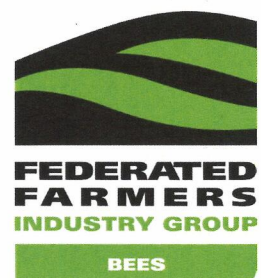
A reminder to all people wishing to attend conference: book online www.apicultureconference.co.nz to help the organisers cater for your needs.

Places are still available in most workshops including the AFB recognition course, First Aid and hands-on 4WD courses. The queen-raising course is most popular and nearly full.

Note that on the Monday we also have the meet and chat sessions with the overseas speakers and the specialty group meetings covered in the Monday \$100 fee. Everyone is welcome to participate in these sessions.



The National Beekeepers
Association of New Zealand



NOTICE OF THE 2015 INDUSTRY GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS
to be held at Wairakei Resort, Taupo

Thursday 25 June 2015

The AGM of Federated Farmers Bee Industry Group commences: 8.00am
The AGM of the National Beekeepers Association of NZ Inc. commences: 9.30am

Chief Executive Officer

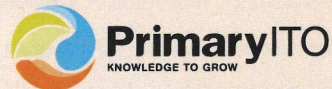
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PLEASE EXPLAIN

I am sick of people dumping sites on top of mine and of my friends and acquaintances. It would not be an exaggeration to say that many people in beekeeping hate their new neighbours. It is about the only topic of conversation you hear amongst beekeepers these days.

I have been a beekeeper long enough to know that too many hives in an area leads to reduced honey crops, increased expenses, higher losses and disease problems.

I'm not going to ask that you stop what you're doing; I've done this before politely. What I would like is for you to answer this letter in this public forum and justify what you're doing to fellow beekeepers and the beekeeping industry.

- John Berry, Hawke's Bay

AUCKLAND BYLAW

Auckland Council recently contacted NBA Head Office to inform that it has adopted the Animal Management Bylaw 2015, which comes into effect on 1 September 2015.

"The new bylaw introduces responsible hive management standards for beekeeping in urban areas, to enable the council to respond to complaints about nuisance and public safety. The drafting of these standards and guidelines would not have been possible without the assistance of [NBA Auckland Branch member] Kim Kneijber, so thank you very much for encouraging her involvement in the project."

Download the bylaw at <http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/en/licencesregulations/bylaws/pages/animalmanagementbylaw.aspx>.

RESPONSES TO NPA/MG ARTICLE

[Editor's note: the following two letters were written in response to the article by Prof Peter Molan in the April 2015 journal, entitled 'The true relationship of NPA and MG levels']

First of all, I feel Dr Molan has clarified much of the confusion that has occurred with manuka honey, since he first isolated the special character of manuka honey.

Secondly, I see that the search for unregistered apiaries has become an obsession for those associated with controlling AFB. Much of the concern obviously relates to apiaries being the source of funding.

However, the present funding does not treat all beekeepers fairly. Those running very large hive apiaries on honeydew, etc., pay the same charge as someone who can only operate a few hives, perhaps because prevailing winds reduce the flight range or because neighbours object if hive numbers are too great. I trust the coming conference will endeavour to change the funding to be more in line with hive numbers.

The frequent movement of hives related to pollination or moving to new honey sources will often result in a beekeeper failing to register a site, even if thinking the apiary is registered. To then cancel a DECA is not a reasonable response. As long as no disease is present, obviously the DECA holder is doing things correctly.

It is a sensible step to have a team of auditors checking hives for disease, resembling that of past days, but it is necessary to teach the auditors some beekeeping common sense. For instance, when inspecting large apiaries as we used to do in Canterbury, it can only be done in cool conditions or during a honey flow. Otherwise, an opened hive can be robbed out soon after and if AFB were present, the disease situation would snowball.

I remember on one occasion we looked at two hives in a honeydew apiary that had 50 hives on it. As we finished the second hive, a few bees were nosing around so we decided to stop, but then thought we would look at one more hive, keeping the honey covered as we did it. Going past the apiary an hour or so later, we found the hive had been completely robbed out.

- Gary Jeffery

I read Peter Molan's article on the relationship of NPA and MG levels with great interest and it took quite a lot to digest.

While he made his point of view quite clear and while there is some further adjusting to the numbers, perhaps he has unintentionally offered a solution to the problem. Both the MG and the NPA levels should be shown on the label selling 'active' manuka honey. The public would then understand what they are buying and also the relationship between MG and NPA.

I'm a bit puzzled why you can't call manuka honey active when there is a proven testing method to measure its activity. After all, manuka honey is being used medically and would have been tested for its activity.

The other issue that Peter Molan referred to in an earlier article was about all the kanuka honey that is out there. In reality, a lot of kanuka is mixed in with manuka as it often grows in the same areas and often flowering overlaps. [Editor's note: if you are referring to Peter Molan's letter to the editor 'Honey from kanuka' in the March journal, this letter was written with tongue in cheek.]

I'm not quite sure why the Ministry for Primary Industries is so intent on differentiating between manuka and kanuka. It would be reasonable to say that the only real difference between manuka and kanuka is that kanuka doesn't have NPA. In most other respects they are very similar and no other commercially traded honeys are anything like manuka and kanuka. They are a similar honey type and if manuka and kanuka had a similar botanical name, we wouldn't be having this discussion.

In reality, the whole issue of honey standards came about by people (mostly overseas) selling manuka honey that clearly wasn't. There are now a number of methods that can be used to determine if a honey is manuka or not and while it's not black and white, these methods are available to regulators to use, which would easily identify fraudulent practices.

- Colin McLean

continued...

CLARIFICATION OF STATISTICS PRESENTED IN THE APRIL JOURNAL

I read with great interest the information contained in the April issue of *The BeeKeeper*.

As a relative newcomer to the industry, reading and learning form an important part in improving and gaining experience as a beekeeper.

I have read both

1. AFB PMP Report presented by Rex Baynes (AFB PMP Manager)
2. American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan, assuming it may be presented by the same Management Agency. *[It is: Editor.]*

Could I ask for clarification on the contradictory numbers in both reports, please:

Page 22, Table 2: Beekeeper, apiary and hive numbers 2000–2015.

2015 (Feb) states 5,396 registered beekeepers with 546,837 hives total.

Page 34: If the totals are added up from each table relating to beekeepers and hive numbers, the figures are:

Beekeepers 10,633 with total hives 1,131,216

By my calculation, the totals contained in the report on page 22 are less than half of the totals presented in the statistics of apiaries per district on page 34.

This is quite confusing and leads one to believe there is something wrong with the data sharing in the industry.

Thank you in advance.

- Jan Olsen
Silverhope Apiaries

[Editor's note: after checking withASUREQuality Ltd and the AFB PMP Management Agency, it appears that you have added the figures in the summary table to the figures from the individual beekeeper categories (e.g., 0–5 hive beekeepers, 6–10 hive beekeepers, 11–50 hive beekeepers, etc.). This has resulted in the double counting of every beekeeper, apiary and hive. The table at the bottom right is a summary of all of the other tables.]

INDUSTRY FUNDING

When talk of a levy comes along it brings up all sorts of responses. Everything that happened in the past seems to come into play.

There seems to be a lot of merit in having an organisation funded by commercial beekeepers only. Just where a hobbyist becomes a commercial beekeeper is debatable, but more realistically it's what happens to their honey.

If funding is based only on producers, it's never going to be enough to run an organisation, and is likely (in my view) to be voted against.

An industry organisation governed by honey packers and beekeepers is a new dynamic. I say new because the environment we now live in is different from 10 or 40 years ago. The relationships have changed between buyer and seller, as producer and packer, the market has changed and the selling environment has changed. In a sense both producers and packers probably need to work together for their own future prosperity.

So, would producers be prepared to pay a levy per kilo on honey in a drum? Would packers be prepared to pay a levy per kilo on what they pack? Has anyone asked them? How much, you might ask? I guess the numbers are out there so an estimate shouldn't be too hard: one cent on 10,000 tonne equals \$120,000. If both producers and packers are paying, then you double your money.

One of my biggest concerns is about how much it could cost to achieve this, and who will pay for it?

A recent wool levy referendum cost nearly \$500,000 and was voted against by farmers (not surprisingly).

The industry needs a simple model with balanced representation and equitable funding: anything less is likely to fail.

- Colin McLean

EPA CHIEF EXECUTIVE RESIGNS

On Friday 10 April, the Environmental Protection Agency's Chief Executive Rob Forlong announced his resignation. Rob has been Chief Executive of the EPA since its inception in 2011, and its predecessor the Environmental Risk Management Authority.

Rob will leave the EPA at the end of June 2015 and take up his new role as Chief Executive of Whangarei District Council in early July.

James Palmer has been appointed acting Chief Executive of the EPA, taking up his appointment from mid-June until commencement of the new CEO.

SHORT STORY

RIDING WITH LADY LUCK

By James Corson, Gowanleagold Ltd

We lost Barry one evening on a night shift of bees from Opotiki down to the King Country. Barry had been riding shotgun with me on Stella for most of the bee season. We had come up from Canterbury in the late spring, loaded with gear for bees that we had high hopes for out in the manuka scrubland of the East Cape.

Barry and I were gypsies, living a life on the road as migratory keepers of bees, moving hives and gear to the flows as they kicked in. After several lean years down in the clover fields of Canterbury, we had decided to try our luck further north in the manuka country. We had heard that the East Cape was loaded with scrub and unlike the clover of the plains, stock had no great like for nibbling on the flower. There is nothing more depressing than moving a truckload of bees into a paddock white with clover, only to go back the following week and find a mob of hoggets had been moved in and the flower was all but gone.

We called it The Wild East. East of Opotiki the road winds along the coast, dipping and diving through bluffs and bays and hills covered with pines and scrub. By some strange form of serendipity we had met a man some months earlier who held mana and sway up the coast. A real-life Manuka Baron who had contacts with men who held blocks of land that needed bees to forage on their flower and produce the much sought-after medical honey. We had heard tell of how it was worth megabucks and decided it was worth a crack.

The bees went up ahead of us in a convoy of chiller bee trains. No sooner had they left that the word went out on the bush telegraph and the local beemen were red-hot on the phone with calls telling us to bugger off. Undeterred, we carried on. We paused at a hunting shop in Whakatane to check out their range of security cameras and buckshot for the pump action. In hindsight, we should have stocked up on both. But that's a different story.

Our tame Manuka Baron found us safe sites to unload the bees and start the slow and steady work of building the bees. As the weeks went by, we brought in reinforcement beekeepers from down south to help the A Team as the workload started to pick up pace. We were splitting bees to make up winter losses and



New Zealand Manuka Bee Boys blowing honey out on the East Cape.
Photos provided by James Corson.

increases, moving bees into choice little patches of native to feed on the rewarewa and privet, and always groaning about the weather. It was endlessly cold. Not a South Island cold, but a chill wind off the ocean that gave little opportunity for plants to yield nectar. Even the natives were grumbling. But when the sun came out and the wind dropped all of a sudden, we were shaking nectar from the brood and the bees were dancing. And then it came in cold again and we were ringing my newfound mate Sugar Stewart for another two pallets of his syrup.

November came and almost went. Barry and I began to wonder if the Bay of Plenty would ever live up to its name as we were still good mates with Sugar Stewart. Where was the early flower and the pre-season honey pouring in? The natives said it was still too cold.

Barry was a man of few words. Not much comfort in times of stress, but we persevered. We watched and listened as every night the great migration started to rumble up the coast. Truckload after truckload of bees and boxes, exhaust brakes blasting and burping at three in the morning as they roared past our camp, bound for the mother lode.

We took that as a sign. If the locals were doing it, it must be time, brother. We fired up Stella's 500-horse Detroit, lit her up like a pirate ship and set to on the night shift, moving bees to secret spots, ready for the day shift to swing in and start stacking on the honey boxes. We watched as the locals put on two honey boxes. Being new to the area and naïve, we put an extra one on for luck. Barry had always maintained that he was riding with Lady Luck. I went with him on that one.



'Mr June'.

continued...



APIARY MANAGER

Gowanleagold Ltd operates a bee business out of Opotiki in the Bay of Plenty, targeting the production of medical-grade manuka honey.

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And then one morning our friendly Manuka Baron rang to say he was sending a man called Pete around. "Pete's got a chopper," he said. "He's gonna show you around the Cape."

We met Pete in a paddock way up the back of beyond. Under the roar of the rotors of the Hughes 500, he stuck his face close to mine and mouthed "got any earmuffs Buddy ... ?"

"Nope."

I climbed in anyway and we went for a look-see, scooting up river valleys and over ridges. There was scrub for miles ... holy mother lode.

"I can drop some pallets in there for you if you like ..."

And so we did. We dropped hundreds of them into little clearings amongst the scrub, way off from the road and in the middle of no man's land. We flew them out of road heads and airstrips, even straight off the back of the truck where the situation was a bit too dodgy.

It was a blast.

By Christmas, Barry, the crew and I were bugged. The bees were on site and the weather was crap. Barry decided to spend Christmas with Stella while I went home to check on the family. It was a short affair. Three days after the festival, the Manuka Baron rang to say he had more sites down in the King Country that were coming into flower. Did we have any unemployed beehives to cover it?

All of a sudden the Bay of Plenty was living up to its name. The pohutukawa was in flower and miserable little nucleus hives had exploded into single brood box powerhouses. We loaded them out of the Eastern Bay and headed out for New Year's Eve at the Stag Park truck stop. Gypsies once more.

I never saw Barry again after that night. He was riding shotgun in his favourite place on New Year's Eve, screwed up onto the sun visor of Stella with a self-tapper that must have worked its way loose. In the darkness of the night we climbed up onto the plateau country out of Murapara. Stella's turbo



Reece Valpy up on the cape with some heavy bees to fly out of the secret spot!

whistled as she powered up the hill. There was a soft thud as he hit the wing mirror. It was dark and he was gone. We'd done over 10,000 kms together and he'd sat up there like a guardian angel.

I phoned home and gave them the bad news.

"It's all right, Dad," said young Shey. "We'll get another Buzzy Bee for you next time we're at McDonald's."



The National Beekeepers
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NBA MANAGEMENT TEAM

New products available

We have two new products available for sale on the NBA website.

The 'Love Our Kiwi Bees' tea towel makes a great gift, and it should be very popular at the conference and during Bee Aware Month.

The *Queen Bee* book has already been selling well, and is a helpful guide to the biology, rearing and breeding of queen bees.

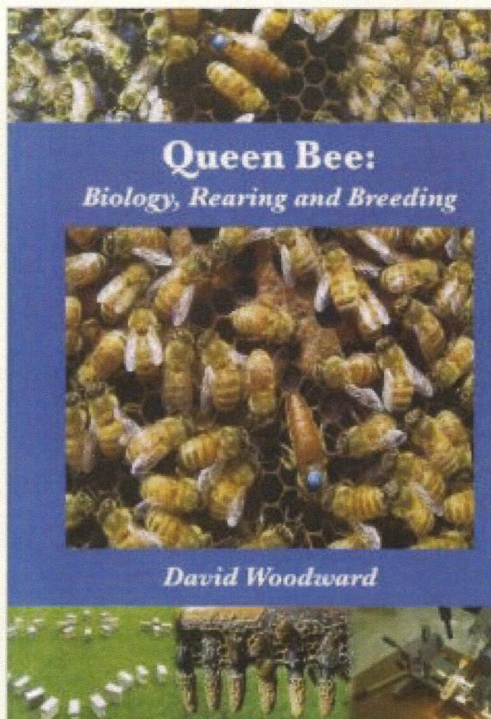
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BRANCH REPORTS

FROM THE COLONIES

Waikato Branch

It is definitely autumnal weather now: chillier nights, but still gorgeous blue, clear, sunny days. The bees are still pootling away collecting nectar and pollen and seem pretty happy. Packaging bees have nearly finished, strips are in and beekeepers here are feeding those hives that need a boost.

Others are finishing the last of their extraction—it has been a mission this year for some to even get into an extraction plant as the demand is exceeding options up this way.

The giant willow aphid (*Tuberolachnus salignus*) has also caused problems in the extraction plants, jamming up the gear. Someone suggested this horrible hard honey could be the 'new' thing. Apparently willow has salicylic acid in it (this is what is in aspirin), so maybe we could promote willow honey as the natural way to dull pain. Who knows? Hangover cure honey, anyone?

Wasps have started to show their faces but are not in the near-plague quantities as last year. With the colder nights, hopefully they won't get any worse.

And the conference organising is going well. There's an amazing amount of work to do, but it will be well worth it. Don't forget to register!

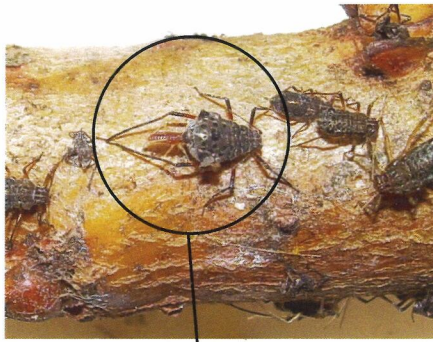
www.apicultureconference.co.nz

- Barbara Cahalane

Hawke's Bay Branch

We've had just enough rain to make the grass grow and nice autumnal weather has made most of the farmers happy. Hives are generally in good order and there seems to be little varroa damage this year. Wasps, unfortunately, are a different story and there are already some hive losses.

Some hives have been doing poorly on willow honeydew, while others have been doing all right on this source. Many of the trees that were heavily infected last year are now sick or dying and the giant willow aphid is a major problem.



A mature aptera (wingless) giant willow aphid adult giving birth. Note that the nymph was born feet first! According to John McLean of the NBA Research Committee, both the aptera and alate (winged) forms of the giant willow aphid "produce a honeydew which bees collect in late summer that crystallises in the comb as a complex sugar called melezitose. The bees can't digest it. In addition, it remains granular and blocks filters when beekeepers try to extract it even when heated. I had one frame that I scraped off and heated to 75°C and still the melezitose sugar crystals remained intact."

Photo: John McLean.

- John Berry, Branch President

Nelson Branch

As I type this, the forecast is for snow next week, indicating that May could be considerably chillier than April. That won't be surprising as April overall was quite mild, 1.4°C higher than average. It was also damp, with rain being recorded on 14 days, nine of those in succession. Definitely made those pre-winter checks on bees a little trickier.

The Nelson Branch held its AGM recently. Murray and Nicky Elwood were reappointed as Branch President and Secretary, respectively. Hans Claus will remain as Treasurer and I continue as Scribe. Emmanuel Kelly was elected as Vice President.

That's about the key news; hopefully the cooler weather will make those last few pesky wasps disappear.

- Jason Smith

Canterbury Branch

Hello. I'm Noel from Geraldine, South Canterbury, the new writer for Canterbury.

Firstly, I would like to thank Brian Lancaster for his contribution as President of the Canterbury

Branch and also for his insightful comments on the bee industry matters in this column.

Canterbury has been in the grips of a drought since June 2014, which was the last time any significant rainfall occurred until April 2015. We have started May with some really balmy weather, unusual for this time of the year.

Honey production generally is way below average. Some areas nearer the foothills have produced reasonable crops. Our spring and autumn dandelion flows weren't as good as previous years, with the result that honey was seemingly lighter than usual. The bees did get up to a box of honey, and in some cases more than that, before the pastures dried off early.

It is hard to tell if the clover weevil has done much damage this year because of the drought, but I don't think it has. The parasitic fly released is having an impact.

A prominent accountant recently wrote in a farming paper that costs rise about 6% a year. A gradual price increase each year instead of a big jump every so often is the best way of lifting prices; e.g., honey or pollination charges.

We had a very informative guest speaker on health and safety matters at our March meeting. It is a pity that more beekeepers don't avail themselves of the experiences and current information one can glean from other beekeepers by attending these meetings. All members are welcome so come along, second Tuesday of the month, 7.30 pm at the Hornby Working Mens Club.

- Noel Trezise



Christchurch beekeeper Stefan Florea took this photo of one of his beehives.

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- Must be confident around bees as we do not wear gloves
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- Experience in general field work, queen rearing and extraction plant required
- Must have good understanding of food and safety regulations
- Training in management of a farm/business and commercialisation would help as we are currently expanding
- Other farming skills would be a plus as we are considering diversification

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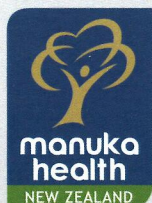
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ABOUT THE APIARY

PREPARING FOR WINTER

Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

Although it's winter, it's still warm in areas close to the coast. A number of the winter flowering species are now in flower. Most provide good pollen and nectar, which can build brood.

Banksia produces nectar and pollen for both birds and bees. You will find Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*) on the roadside berms and banks; wattle (*Paraserianthes lophantha*, *Albizia lophantha*) is flowering in waste areas (road reserves); tree lucerne (*Cytisus proliferus*) is just starting and the odd kohekohe tree (*Dysoxylum spectabile*) is flowering in the coastal bush margins. City gardens continue to produce the odd flowering bush in response to a warm May.

Inland on the Volcanic Plateau, heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) produces the last crop of the season for those who have migrated hives to this area. It just depends on the weather now as to whether the bees can access these sources.



Manuka flowered well this year in the lower North Island due to the warm conditions.



Wattle provides valuable nectar.

Effect of microclimates on honey production

It's really interesting to see how microclimates and seasonal conditions affect honey production. One small QEII covenant (a bush/manuka area that a fellow beekeeper uses) has the odd manuka bush flowering on sheltered northern slopes. I'm not talking

about just a few flowers—these bushes are going into full flower totally out of season.

Although the manuka flowered profusely in my area, this year's late flowering of the bush sources in some areas meant that a lot of the honey produced by these hives was bush honey. One of my clover sites produced quite a lot of bush honey, meaning the bees

were flying over two kilometres each way to gather nectar. Clover flowered but the hot, dry weather cut nectar production early in the day, diverting the bees onto the bush honey.

I now have inland hives that are down to just a fist size of brood in a single frame and bees starting to cluster, while on the coast, the bees in some sites occupy three supers and have three to four frames of brood. One hive I inspected had superseded queen cells. A queen needs 20°C days to mate, so what are the chances for a successful mating? As I probably would have ended up with a drone layer, I destroyed all the cells. Perhaps one way to overcome this is to split the hive to halve the population and add a nuc queen to the second half but this is winter, not spring. It must get cold soon and settle the bees down.

The only problem with hives producing brood is that although they are stimulated by the surrounding nectar and pollen sources, the bees can't bring in enough nectar to keep up with brood rearing so will chew through their honey reserves. If not supplemented by sugar feeding, these hives will likely die early in the spring from starvation.

Despite the drought conditions of summer, some queens continued brood rearing and the hives are now just about out of honey reserves, so I'll feed them to get them through to spring (although it's not much fun at this time of the year).

Robbing

Wasps have really shown their hand this autumn but robber bees can be equally as bad. In the bush reserve area described above, robbing bees from another apiary started on a swarm hive in a roof cavity of a nearby house. The robbers overwhelmed the swarm hive in a day (it was probably depleted due to varroa) before moving on to the bush hives. Any hive with a wide-open entrance was wiped out. Luckily I received a phone call suggesting that hives were swarming, so managed to save most of these hives.

Working with the owner of the bush hives, we closed down the entrances to just one bee width so the bees could better defend themselves. To discourage the robbers, I sprinkled a little formic acid at the entrance

continued...

ERRATUM

We made an error while editing Quentin Chollet's article 'Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana*), which appeared on page 13 of the May 2015 journal. The first paragraph should have read:

The Asian honey bee (AHB) and Eastern honey bee are the common names given to all bees belonging to the species *Apis cerana* (itself a part of the genus *Apis*).

We apologise for the error.

PROOFREADER WANTED

We are looking for someone to assist with proofreading the journal. Experience not essential. Broadband is preferred, as is access to three-way calling for the occasional teleconference.

If you are interested, please ring the committee chairman, Frank Lindsay, on (04) 478 3367.

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This photograph shows the defenders as a mat of bees in front of the hive, while the robbers are trying to get in at every little opening.

to all the hives in the apiary, then we closed off any top ventilation with foam. It took more than an hour for the bees to settle down and start guarding outside the hive entrances; however, wasps continued to walk into the hives despite the guards. Even though it doesn't do any good, squashing the wasps as they emerge from the hives is very satisfying.

Locating the nests is difficult in the bush but hopefully the landowner will find and dispatch them. On inspecting the robbed-out hive in the photo, all the hive's bees were dead on the ground outside the entrance and half the honey was gone. They had been robbing for only a day! Inside another hive that had previously been robbed, the dead bees were 30 mm thick on the bottom board. A crack in the honey super had allowed access.

Generally it's a good idea to inspect all hives after the robbing season has finished to check on the health of the brood, and to ensure the hives have adequate winter stores.

"...it's a good idea to inspect all hives after the robbing season has finished..."

Dealing with queenless hives

Sometimes you will come across a hive you suspect is queenless. Signs to look out for are lack of brood, lots of pollen in the bottom super and very unhappy, roaring bees that are flapping their wings and moving around on the combs, generating a loud hum.

By contrast, a queenright hive that has finished brood rearing and is packing down won't hum loudly, and bees will remain quietly on the comb when disturbed.

Usually it's too late to purchase a new queen at this time of year, but you could use a queen from an overwintering nuc.

If you are not quite sure whether a hive is queenless, add a frame of brood with eggs and leave the hive for three to four days. A queenless hive will have started building some queen cells. Don't forget to investigate any capped cells for disease before swapping brood frames between hives.

With a spare nuc, the options are either to add a protected queen or the whole nuc to a queenless hive. If you add a nuc, protect it from older field bees, either by wrapping the nucs in a sheet of newsprint, or find the queen and hold her on the frame surface with either a push-in cage or a normal queen cage.

If you use a queen cage, cover half of the front of the cage with sellotape so the queen has somewhere to retire where the outside bees can't get at her feet. This protects the queen from the bees outside the cage that might be aggressive towards her. If they can't sting the queen, they will often chew at her feet, damaging her tarsal pads. This will cause the bees to supersede her because she doesn't leave a pheromone trail when she walks across the comb.

An alternative to using newsprint is to liberally spray air freshener over both the top bars of the nuc frames and those of the hive. This will overwhelm the bee's sensory organs, disguising the alarm pheromone and breaking down the normal chemical cohesion of the hive for an hour. This is long enough for the queen to be protected by her own bees.

If you can't obtain a queen, add a queenright hive on top of the queenless hive, isolating the different families of bees with newsprint or air freshener. This won't work if the bees are from different species; i.e., *Apis mellifera carnica* and *Apis mellifera ligustica* bees (black and yellow bees). The same thing would happen when combining black *Apis mellifera mellifera* (European black) and yellow bees, but *mellifera* bees in our feral population are now gone, killed by varroa.

If you have a queen as well as brood in frames, check that both hives are disease free before placing a couple of frames of emerging brood in the queenless hive. This boosts bee numbers

continued...

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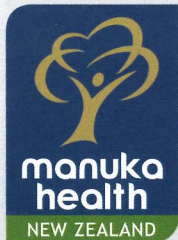


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Many thanks to all our Beekeepers new and old for their continuing support during 2015



This frame has a supersedure queen cell at the bottom, tucked in just above the bottom bar. Another frame in the super above had three new queen cells also. I took this photo in mid-May. Photos: Frank Lindsay.

and provides young bees that will support the new queen when she's introduced.

About a week later, most of the bees in the two brood frames will have emerged. Kill any queen cells produced (it's unlikely with only emerging brood, but check anyway). Take a push-in cage, quickly immerse the queen in water so she can't fly and put her under the push-in frame with the last of the emerging brood.

Leave her there for six to nine days: if you do it any sooner, the field bees from the queenless hive may kill the new queen. Once she has been there a week, the ovaries of the workers will have started to shrink under the influence of the queen's pheromones and she will be accepted.

Generally I don't play with queenless hives as they take too much of your time and quite often the outcome can't be predicted, so it's better to shake the bees in front of a strong hive. Field bees will go back to where their hive was and drift to another, while young bees will enter the hive they are put in front of.

Unite weak hives together (or perhaps simply put them on top of each other, as I suggested last month with nuc hives) so they share

their warmth. Going by the 80/20 rule, you tend to spend 80 percent of your time on 20 percent of your hives; i.e., the ones that just didn't build and or didn't produce enough to feed themselves due to swarming, nosema and/or viruses. Deformed wing virus (DWV) is transmitted by varroa mites and can persist in the bees long after the varroa has been treated. Putting a strong hive on top of a weak hive to unite them can be detrimental to the strong hive, as you could be transferring viruses to a hive that is relatively virus free. It's better to unite two weak hives so that the combined hive has a good chance of making it through the winter.

Any dead hives left in the field this summer have quickly been occupied with wax moth. It can completely destroy a hive, especially if greater wax moth moves in. In what seems no time at all, wax moth will convert your brood combs to just a mass of silk webbing and pupating wax moth larvae. Keep your honey supers free of wax moth.

Things to do this month

Render down cappings and old combs. Check stored frames for wax moth. Make up new equipment for the coming season. Have on

hand a box of new foundation frames for each hive to reduce the toxins, spores (nosema, chalkbrood and AFB) and viruses in your brood frames.

Check the effectiveness of your mite treatments. The odd hive has not responded to strip treatments as well as expected. If you see bees dead in brood cells with their tongues extended, it is a sign of varroa.

Re-evaluate apiary sites for winter access and make sure they are well away from streams (the May flooding in the lower North Island is a case in point).

Plant pollen and nectar sources for spring and autumn. Consider working with the farmers to plant long-term sources. A single willow can support the development of an apiary when it's 30 years old. A group of camellias provides both colour and food for bees in the autumn. (Learn more about this at conference.)

Conference has a new, longer format this year but the cost still provides value for money, as well as allowing time to network. One idea or tip can pay dividends for years. How can you not take the opportunity to educate yourself from the experience of experts?

SHUTTERBUGS



I received an e-mail asking what koromiko looked like. White is the most common. Here is an example of the blue variety. Photo: Frank Lindsay.

WE WANT YOUR PHOTOS!

The Publications Committee welcomes photos for the journal. Pop a camera in the truck and snap away when you find something interesting. Please provide a caption and the name of the photographer so we can credit them.

If you're thinking big (such as a potential front cover photo, which we always need), these need to be as large as possible (3MB or larger if possible), in portrait format (vertical rather than horizontal), and ideally 300 dpi (dots per square inch). Regular digital photos are only 72 dpi, so are not suitable for the front cover.

Email them to editor@nba.org.nz

Waikato hobbyist beekeeper Cecilia van Velsen shared this photo of a queen bee on honeycomb at her top-bar hive. Photo: J. F. C. van Velsen.



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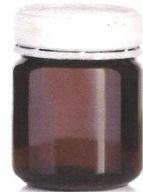
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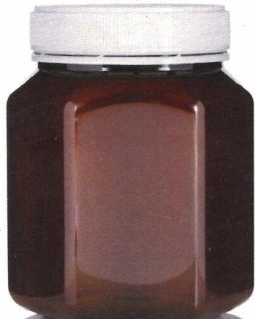
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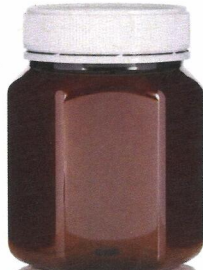
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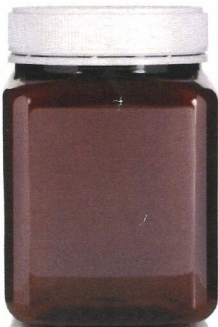
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