



Ministry of
Agriculture
& Fisheries

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

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July 8 1982

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Dear Sir

BEEKEEPING EDUCATION

Throughout New Zealand there are 5578 beekeepers owning 238 097 colonies of bees. MAF statistics as at May 1981 - 5124 beekeepers own 28 173 colonies (1-50) and 454 beekeepers operate 209 924 colonies (50 plus).

In the Tauranga Apiary District the 1982 statistics show an increase of 12% and 20% increase in number of registered beekeepers and beehives and there is good reason to believe that this growth will be sustained for three to five years. Nationally growth rate is 3%.

The Tauranga Apiary District extends from Coromandel Peninsula, Bay of Plenty, Poverty Bay as far south as Wairoa.

A major reason for the growth is the burgeoning growth of the horticulture industry in the region, with similar patterns being identified in Waikato, Auckland, Northland, Hawkes Bay and to a lesser extent Taranaki and Manawatu. The potential for significant development in the South Island has also been identified, particularly in Nelson, Marlborough and the South Island tussock grasslands regions. For further information see the two DFC reports, Industry Profile 19, Beekeeping & Kiwifruit Pollination.

Products derived from beekeeping - honey, pollen, bees (queen bees) equipment, contribute little to the overall economy of New Zealand (approximately 15 million), however, products harvested as a result of honey bee visitation to flowering plants contribute significantly to the nation's health and economy; eg clovers and other legumes (nitrogen - grass, meat, wool), horticulture, kiwifruit, pip and stone fruits, berryfruits and most vegetables are dependant or benefit from honey bee visitations for fruit set.

It has been widely documented and accepted by many experts that for every dollar earned from the sale of honey and beeswax, \$100 is contributed to the national purse.

The beekeeping industry in New Zealand is entirely dependant on MAF Apicultural Advisory Officers for technical advice and other requirements. There are AAOs stationed in Auckland (2), Hamilton, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Nelson, Christchurch, Oamaru, Gore (vacant).

There are no educational facilities for prospective beekeepers other than training provided by some employers. There is only one formal qualification available, the National Diploma of Apiculture, a correspondence course of three years offered by the Royal NZ Institute of Horticulture. It is interesting to note that since the NDA was launched (20 odd years) that only three persons have completed the full syllabus and two others have fulfilled the requirements and just carried out the thesis. All are past or present employees of MAF. Between 1970 and 1981 to my knowledge, approximately 25 persons started working at the NDA, three succeeded

The National Beekeepers Association does have an excellent library, available to NBA members. The NBA does organise field days in some areas, usually in conjunction with MAF, but does not offer any other training although some years ago a cadet scheme was mooted. This failed through lack of beekeeper support. Proposers of any formal training of educational facility should be aware there is a reluctance by established beekeepers to assist as most are aware that aspiring beekeepers could be future competitors for sites in existing (traditional) beekeeping areas and for markets. This view is not shared by progressive beekeepers nor MAF apiculturists who take the view that well trained beekeepers are required throughout the industry to provide a skilled labour force, to protect and guarantee the future of the industry, to provide a good pollination service to an expanding agriculture and horticulture industry.

MAF does provide a limited mass educational programme for beekeepers throughout New Zealand at Community Colleges (mainly for beginners) in areas where such facilities are available and where AAOs wish to provide for this group of people. Specific short courses are offered at the Farm Training Institutes, Flock House (Bulls) and Telford (Balclutha). Seminars, field days and discussion groups are organised but usually these cater for the needs of established beekeepers.

AAOs also have a regulatory role and are responsible for the control of serious bee diseases in their respective regions. Much of this work is delegated but nevertheless does take up a considerable amount of time. Further, in the Tauranga region there are two Restricted Beekeeping Zones, the Coromandel and Eastern Bay of Plenty. These are zones where honey toxic to humans may be produced and strict controls are required to ensure no toxic honey is produced and sold for human consumption.

The highly specialised nature of beekeeping, the requirements of individual beekeepers and the need to liaise with other agriculture and horticulture groups does mean that in many instances the needs

of the industry as a whole cannot be met by MAF apiculturists and all too often it is the emerging commercial beekeeper or beginner that does not receive the expert advice needed, especially at the very start of their chosen career.

For many years AAOs have attempted to generate interest with a number of institutes to provide a comprehensive course for beekeepers to impart some of the skills necessary if they are to achieve success.

The number of persons who would be prepared to take on such a course would be relatively small in comparison to say farming and horticulture. I would estimate in the Bay of Plenty that 5-8 students annually would be all that could be expected. However, this number could be doubled if made available to persons from other regions.

The formation of a beekeeping unit would cater for a growing number of beginners and currently two courses for these people in the Bay of Plenty are over-subscribed.

There is a great need also for block courses offering specialist subjects related to beekeeping; eg bees and horticulture/agriculture, introduction for orchardists etc, carpentry, business management, botany, food processing, marketing (export) etc.

... I have attached for your information syllabus National Diploma in Beekeeping (United Kingdom), proposed/revised syllabus National Diploma Beekeeping (RNZIH), syllabus for beginning with bees (MAF), DFC reports, Industry Profile 19 and Kiwifruit Pollination, background to proposal for beekeeping unit at Telford Farm Training Institute.

The role of the college would be:

1. An introduction to beekeeping; role of honey bee in agriculture and horticulture.
2. A sound theoretical knowledge of the honey bee; eg life cycle, biology in relation to practice, management practices, aspects of commercial beekeeping, processing, marketing etc.
3. Provide students with skills and practical knowledge required when running a business; eg bookkeeping, administration, legal, commercial practices, financial etc.
4. Provide practical skills in basic carpentry, mechanics, metal work etc.
5. Introduction to horticulture/agriculture.
6. Introduce students doing horticulture/agriculture to beekeeping and its role in these fields.

7. Block courses for tertiary students of apiculture. Specialist courses for apiarists in conjunction with MAF.

Yours faithfully

T G Bryant
Apicultural Advisory Officer