

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.



P. O. BOX 18, HASTINGS. 73 674

2nd October, 1945.

The District Supervisor,
Horticulture Division,
Department of Agriculture,
PALMERSTON NORTH.

IMPORTATION OF QUEEN BEES.

Adverting to memorandum from Director, Horticulture Division of September 14th minuted on to me by you 20th ultimo.

As in the past years importation of Italian Queen Bees have been made by Queen Bee Breeders and others in this country, these bees have been obtained from different sources, giving us a variety of strains scattered throughout the country.

Commercial Queen Bee breeders and apiarists have from time to time interchanged queen bees with each other, with the result we have now built up a strain of bees that have been acclimatised to our conditions.

The bees produced and sold by these breeders are mainly of a high standard and giving good returns.

From my observations and in my opinion it is a better policy to concentrate on the strains in now in this country which are proving efficient and satisfactory, than to continually import fresh strains and upset the balance of the strain that beekeepers by careful selection have obtained.

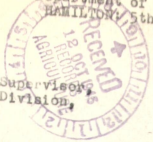
The question of keeping our stocks of Italian bees pure, is improving each season, as more and more beekeepers are queening their hives from Italian Bees purchased from reliable Queen Bee Breeders.

D. J. Robinson
APIARY INSTRUCTOR

THE DIRECTOR,
HORTICULTURE DIVISION,
WELLINGTON.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION
Your memo 73/6/45 of 14/10/45 advised
PALMERSTON NORTH.
B. G. Gooding
10 5

Mr. Dineen
Seen 25. Newgate 1945
W.H. 27/10/45

Department of Agriculture,
HAMILTON, 5th October, 1945



The District Supervisor,
Horticulture Division,
AUCKLAND.

Importation of Queen Bees.

In reply to your memorandum 9/3 of the 21st. ultimo, re the above, I wish to advise that I have not heard any of the beekeepers in the Hamilton District express a desire to try out a new imported strain of bee. Many pay considerable attention to the raising of young queens each season, and benefiting from past experience are quite prepared to breed from the best colonies in their own apiaries. Fresh strains have been tried out at various times, but in very few cases has the imported stock proved any better than the local strain.

I consider that there is a very definite need, at the present time, for a general improvement in the stock in existence in many apiaries. Fortunately there are several beekeepers who have consistently requeened their hives from the most promising stock in their various apiaries with the result that a strain of Italian bee is now in existence that is thoroughly acclimatised to local conditions. Queens reared from these strains would show definite results, whereas progeny from imported queens may not give the desired improvement.

Over the last few years there has been a phenomenal demand for queens, brought about no doubt, by the added interest in beekeeping and shortage of labour in commercial outfits. Several have endeavoured to satisfy this demand by the disposal of queens that are definitely not a credit to the breeder, or the Italian strain so much in favour in most districts. I feel that should an analysis be made of the demand for imported queens, it will be found that in many instances imported queens are desired for the main purpose of boosting up a sales business on the supposed virtues of the new strain irrespective of a possible set back to the industry, by the distribution of queens that are not suitable for New Zealand conditions.

Beekeepers have always had difficulty in securing pure mating for their Italian strain queens because of the apparent activity of drones from a black strain. This position would become considerably aggravated should further strains such as Carniolans or Cypriotes be allowed to be imported and become established in this country. It has so far not been shown these strains to be better than the Italian strain for a general purpose bee.

Mr. J. Tuck, a returned serviceman, who has worked for Messrs. Okey & Williams, of Te Anau, and W. Wilson of Stonehouse has some interesting comments to make on beekeeping in Egypt, and Italy. He was not at all impressed with beekeeping methods in either of these countries, but in Italy he was very impressed with the type of bee there. He said they appeared to be active workers, and were extremely easy to handle. Further work in Italy he considered the strain improved.

In conclusion I consider that at the present time there are beekeepers with a suitable Italian strain for local conditions and that the wholesale importation of new strains could have a very detrimental effect on the industry. Nevertheless, it would be wise to investigate the possibility that perhaps a more suitable strain of Italian bees is in existence in other countries with similar climatic conditions to N.Z., and could with benefit be introduced here.

Director, Horticulture Division, Wellington.

C.R. Paterson

For information and in reply to your memo of this date from file 757/43.
10/10/45
Director, Horticulture Division, Wellington.

District Supervisor, Hamilton.

Handwritten notes on the left margin: "Mr. J. Tuck", "Director, Horticulture Division", "10/10/45", "757/43".

Department of Agriculture,
C.P.O., Box 2201,
AUCKLAND, N.Z. 29th October, 1945.

The District Supervisor,
Horticulture Division,
AUCKLAND.

Importation of Queen Bees.

In reply to the Director's memorandum of 14.9.45 on file 73/6/4 relative to the above and requesting the personal opinions and results of observations by Apiary Instructors, I have to advise that I am in favour of controlled importation from overseas of new blood. Unrestricted importation by domestic beekeepers would be harmful to the industry and could justifiably be prohibited. Importations by commercial queen-breeders is an entirely different matter. Provided certain Regulations are complied with, breeders of live-stock may import new breeding lines and commercial queen breeders should be given similar opportunities. In the hands of competent breeders the progeny of imported stock could by co-operation with reliable beekeepers be thoroughly tested. If the bees do not attain the desired standard the line could be discontinued.

There are a number of good strains of bees at present in the Dominion but their successful development has been retarded by lack of co-operation between breeder and producer. There are strains of bees that are better adapted for section honey than extracted honey production and each type should be developed along the lines for which it is best suited. Locality plays an important part in the performance of bees. Strains that may prove comparative failures in some districts may be found to be excellent performers elsewhere. Queens cannot be judged beyond a certain point on their appearance. It is only by their actual work in various localities that they can be truly judged.

The demand for queens has increased very considerably of recent years and many commercial beekeepers appear to now prefer to buy their queens and devote the whole of their time to honey production. It is also reasonable to expect that a specialist in queen-rearing would achieve better results than a honey producer.

In this district I know of three beekeepers who would be prepared to purchase 2,000 queens annually if they were available. Two queens imported by Mr. W. Jennings of Canterbury from Jay Smith of Florida, U.S.A., produced queens which proved to be well suited to New Zealand climatic conditions. I have seen ample evidence of their value as honey producers. A Northland beekeeper purchased two breeders from this stock and reports an overall increase from his hives of a super per colony. Mr. W. Marden of Auckland whose queens enjoy an excellent reputation also founded his present stock on a Jay Smith queen imported in 1935. On the other hand, I have seen Australian queens that were worthless and whose progeny eventually succumbed to a virus disease that has little effect on bees bred from New Zealand standard queens.

Great difficulty is experienced in the Auckland District in obtaining pure matings. The great majority of queens produced here and sold as pure Italian are not purely mated.

I have been approached by three beekeepers, two of whom sell large numbers of queens, wishing to import fresh stock. As these breeders are unable to fill more than half their annual orders, their desire to introduce new blood into their apiaries cannot be attributed to other than a genuine desire to bring about an improvement in their stocks.

Whilst I am definitely opposed to the importation of queens of any other race than the Italian, I hope the door will not be entirely closed to approved stock of the Italian race.

The Director,
Horticulture Division,
WELLINGTON.

For your information and in

Apiary Instructor.

DW/MLP

9/5/33



P.O. Box 112,
PALMERSTON NORTH.
7th November, 1945.

District Supervisor,
Dept. of Agriculture,
PALMERSTON NORTH.

Importation of Italian Queen Bees.

Your minute 20.9.45 on copy of letter 14th Sept. 1945, from The General Secretary, National Beekeepers Association of N.Z.

My observations lead me to the conclusion that we may not gain much by importing fresh stocks of Italian queens into New Zealand.

The purity of the present stocks of Italian bees seems to have been well maintained. However, the Italian bee does not seem to be ideally suited to the dull cloudy conditions experienced in this district especially during the Spring and early summer months. On the inland, high country, good strains of hybrids are capable of maintaining themselves during the winter and spring months, when a little nectar and pollen is yielded by many native trees and plants much better than light coloured Italians. To offset this in districts where the main crop is secured from clover which only yields under favourable weather conditions, the Italians will usually then outclass the hybrids or blacks.

In Taranaki, where pure strains of docile Italians have been bred for years, it appears that they are too delicate for the Spring climate and while blacks or hybrids in the same locality will get out and gather nectar and pollen, the Italians require much heavier feeding.

Some commercial men are going to try out some of the Caucasians for the inland high country.

If this race of bees proved to be superior to the Italians for some districts no doubt the question of importing some of them could perhaps be looked into but at the present time, it does not appear that the strain of Italian bees has deteriorated neither do the results prove that the qualities of the strain has greatly improved.

R. H. Johnson

AGRICULTURIST.

THE
AGRICULTURE DIVISION,
WELLINGTON
THE HIVE INSPECTION
Your memo 6/11/45
of the 14th Sept. last
R. H. Johnson
9 11 45
Printed file 126/45

W. G. G.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.



53/6/4

IMPORTATION OF QUEEN BEES.

The apiaries of Otago and Southland are mainly stocked with the usual races of bees found in New Zealand that is Italians, Blacks, and cross breeds of these two races.

Although Caucasians and Carniolans have been introduced into this area in the past and traces of these two races continue to show up mixed with the more common strains of Italians, Blacks and Hybrids, there appears to be no attempts at present to raise either of these breeds in this area.

Italian is, of course, the predominant breed and some excellent strains are available.

Beekeepers generally prefer the leather coloured or darker strains of Italian. In fact, the trend at the present time is to breed an Italian bee so dark that it has really a touch of the black in it. Many beekeepers claim that this is the most suitable strain for our conditions, being harder, and is active in colder temperatures than the lighter coloured breeds of Italian. My own observations support this view to a large extent, but think that a good all round strain can be found in the leather coloured Italians without breeding into the Black as some apirists are inclined to do.

This dark Italian bee is in reality Hybrid and not being a fixed strain is difficult to hold and breed even, as it seems inclined to throw back to the Black and it is necessary to continually recross with a really pure Italian to hold the desired standard.

Should this trend towards darker bees go to the extreme the position will need to be watched to ensure that enough of the original Italian strain is maintained for this recrossing process which appears necessary to perpetuate the many desirable traits of the lighter coloured Italians.

At the present time there appears to be ample stocks of good Italians in Otago and Southland to maintain this balance and it does not seem at all necessary to import stocks from other countries.

S. 1230

J. W. Foulke

Apiary Instructor.

DIRECTOR,
Horticulture Division,

For your information. *Just Report of Sept. 1945.*
Report of the Apiary Inspector. Christchurch used to forward it as per no receipt.

District Inspector
Horticulture Division
DUNEDIN
W. O. Smith

Date 2/11/45

W. O. Smith

13/11/45

the District Supervisor,
Horticulture Division,
P.O. Box 889,
DUNEDIN. C.I.



Department of Agriculture,
P.O. Box 1319,
CHRISTCHURCH.
11th. December, 1945. Ag. 83
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IMPORTATION OF QUEEN BEES.

Reference your 52/7/6 of the 25th. September, 1945 regarding the above.

Commercial beekeepers in the Canterbury area specialise in the Italian bees and this race predominates the bee population in this district. Owing to the absence of re-queening or systematic queen rearing activity in some of the semi-commercial and domestic apiaries, about 25% of the bee population are hybrids displaying varying degrees of Italian blood in their breeding. All the other races, such as Cyprian and Camiolen etc., with the exception of the Caucasian, have been either destroyed or else assimilated by the existing so-called Italian strains.

Only two commercial producers in the Christchurch areas specialise in the Caucasian race and following close observations with this type of bee, I am of the opinion that the best features in the Caucasian in no way excel similar attributes displayed by Italians, while on the other hand the Caucasians have numerous undesirable characteristics which are not displayed by pure Italian bees.

Standard of Quality.

The Italian strains in general use are admirably suited to Canterbury beekeeping conditions, and are superior to the original and later pure strains imported from overseas. This circumstance is explained by the fact that commercial producers over a long period of years have evolved a strain of Italian bee - due to breeding by selection together with intensive and systematic requeening of colonies - which is capable of securing maximum honey crops with a minimum of management. In the Canterbury district, where nectar secretion is governed by very erratic climatic influences and variable soil types, it is important to utilise bees that can re-act favourably to manipulative management, and for this purpose the majority of commercial producers concentrate on the Italian strains. This area is now an extensive small seed producing area and most of the pollination service given to farmers by the beekeepers is by way of Italian bees which in every respect are very satisfactory pollinating agents. Italian bees have been maintained in the area over the years, and in the majority of efficiently managed apiaries the standard strain has been perpetuated without having recourse to the importation of Italians from overseas although in some instances the introduction of queens from other local Italian breeders have been utilised from time to time.

Deterioration of Stocks.

I am of the opinion that the Italian stock at present being utilised will not deteriorate when new stocks from overseas are no available. On the contrary, I consider that the present quality the "New Zealand" Italian will further improve without such importations so long as breeding is arranged on a selection basis and systematic requeening of commercial apiaries is practiced.

My reasons for this contention are:-

I am aware of commercial beekeepers who have maintained distinct strains of Italian bees for over fifteen years without introducing any new blood to their apiaries. Cross mating of the strains results in prolific queens whose bees are excellent workers and when being handled are very steady and mild tempered. The strains concerned, due to breeder selection, are improving in quality each year, and are ideally suited to conditions where bees are difficult to manage on account of the absence of nectar from the end of one clover flow to the commencement of the next season's clover flow.

2. Invariably beekeepers are reluctant to sell their best breeders and for this reason the best breeding queens are seldom imported from overseas.

Also breeders in America, from which country most of our Italian blood has been imported, have now developed a bee from a swarming strain which is suitable for the package bee trade. Such bees must necessarily be very prolific if satisfactory yields are to be obtained in the short period available to build up a suitable field bee population in each colony. The use of, or the assimilation of this type of American Italian into Canterbury apiaries - where local conditions do not necessitate such a rapid building up process - would result in severe swarming difficulties. Thus for this reason, among others, the utilisation of queens imported from overseas for breeding purposes can only detract rather than improve our present breeding stocks.

A further reason for the non-importation of bees and queens from overseas is the fact that during the last few years while the embargo has been in operation, the quality of the bees in the average apiary has not deteriorated, while on the other hand no new bee diseases have been apparent. A permanent embargo on the importation of all bees would assist to counteract the possible introduction of various bee diseases from overseas that at present do not exist in New Zealand.

I am of the opinion that the interests of commercial producers can be best served with the establishment of a permanent embargo on the importation of all bees into New Zealand from all overseas sources.

DIRECTOR,
Horticulture Division.

For your information. *Jan 19/19/1914*
& reference by name of *Styler* a copy of report for the Apiary Instructor.
John Smellie
Chief Inspector