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AUSTRALIAN BEE JOURNAL

UBeeO… page 18

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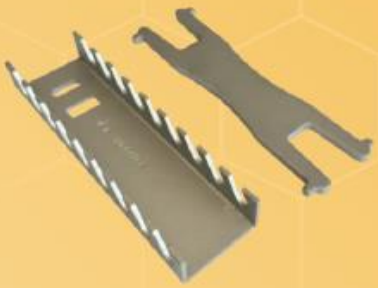

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AUSTRALIAN BEE JOURNAL

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Registration No. A8347

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Cover photo: Lindsay Callaway

Deadline for copy for the May 2024 journal is
10pm on Wednesday 1st of May 2024.

The Australian Bee Journal seeks to publish contributions dealing with all aspects of beekeeping.
Statements expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the VAA Inc or the editor.
Editor: Annette Engstrom

Contact the Editor for ads, photos, classifieds and article information

The Editor, Australian Bee Journal, P.O. Box 42 Newstead, VIC. 3462 Email: abjeditors@yahoo.com

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The Victorian Apiarists' Association Inc. (VAA)

The VAA was founded in 1892 and is the peak body for beekeeping in Victoria.
The Association advocates to federal, state, and local governments to protect and improve Victoria's honey resources and to ensure beekeepers' interests are safeguarded and promoted.
We work to secure effective legislation and encourage scientific investigation and research in all aspects of beekeeping.

Our achievements include:

- Introducing the Victorian Apiary Code of Practice allowing bees to be kept in urban areas
- Contributing to the new Apiculture on Public Lands Policy through our involvement with the Buzz Committee
- Working with Plant Health Australia which contributed to the development of the Australian Biosecurity Code of Practice.

The VAA advocates for the beekeeping industry on behalf of all beekeepers in Victoria.

Management
The VAA Board meets a minimum of six times a year.
Members of the
2023 - 2024 Board

Secretary / Treasurer
Kerrin Williams
P.O. Box 40,
California Gully, VIC. 3556
Mob: 0498 461 460
vaa@vicbeekeepers.com.au

President
John van Weeghel
0419 542 479
john.vanweeghel@bigpond.com

Vice President
Phil McPherson
0428 621 455
mchoney1@optusnet.com.au

Vice President:
Lindsay Callaway
(Bendigo Branch representative)
0429 857 835
warral@iinet.net.au

Other members:
Judy Leggett
0423 464 800
aandjleggett@bigpond.com

Ken Gell
0428 506 752
gellshoneymaryborough@gmail.com

Robert McDonald
0427 722 162
McDonald.Robert@y7mail.com

Rob Kerr
0421 078 387
robkerr62@gmail.com

Andrew Wootton
0481 392 798
andrew.wootton@gmail.com

VAA sub-committees & conveners
Contact by email is preferred
Biosecurity
Ken Gell
Finance & Insurance
Ken Gell
Education
Don Whitehead
don@walkabouthoney.com.au
Melbourne Show/fund raising
Judy Leggett
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John van Weeghel
Resources
Ken Gell
Services
John van Weeghel
Commercial beekeeping
Phil McPherson
Recreational beekeeping
John van Weeghel

All beekeepers and interested groups are welcome to join the VAA.
Membership benefits include:

- The VAA's monthly magazine *Australian Bee Journal* (ABJ) including one free classified ad per year
- Access to the members' only section of the VAA website vicbeekeepers.com.au
- Discounts for beekeeping services and products, including insurance
- Borrowing rights to the extensive VAA library
- Voting rights at VAA regional group meetings and the annual VAA state conference
- Opportunity to participate in and contribute to VAA sub-committees
- Opportunity to meet and share ideas with other beekeepers at local group meetings, field days, shows and conferences
- Opportunity to contribute to advocacy to government and development of policy on beekeeping

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Up to 100 hives (1 vote): $90
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How to join

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www.vicbeekeepers.com.au
or email
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to request a membership form.

www.vicbeekeepers.com.au

President's Report

A big thank you to our Secretary, Kerrin Williams, for serving our Association for 35 years. Most members will not have known anyone else in this role or know the names of previous Secretaries. At times like this we reminisce about the good old days and the changes that have come about. When Kerrin started, she had a phone connected to a landline as the only means to communicate. Then fax machines and mobile phones became more common, followed by the internet and emails. With Covid we were forced to use Zoom and in the last 12 months the Association has moved to a shared drive. A secretary is mainly working behind the scenes but plays a pivotal role within the Association. Kerrin, thank you for your dedication to the Association.

The Recreational Conference on 9 March was a day enjoyed by all. With a total fire ban and a temperature in the high 30s, hive inspections would have been cancelled if it wasn't for one member, Peter Lewis, who offered the use of his electronic smoker. The 50% that returned the survey after the event gave the conference a near perfect score. Thank you to the many that made this day a great success.

Our Annual Conference and AGM are only about six weeks away. Registration is now available online and we have been able to keep the cost for members the same as last year. The program includes excellent topics with speakers from interstate and overseas (see page 11). With the conference in Wonthaggi, West Gippsland, it is an ideal opportunity to have an extended stay and enjoy this part of the state, being close to the coast and places like Phillip Island and Inverloch are just up the road.

The judges of the conference competitions will select an overall Grand Champion with the prize being a specially-made brass smoker donated by Redpaths. The beekeeping club that scores the highest number of points will take home the Perpetual Trophy. Come on affiliated groups, the Melbourne Section has won this trophy for the last two years and needs a challenge (see page 26 for competition details).

On 9 March a delegation of the VAA Board, AHBIC CEO Danny Le Feuvre and other invited beekeepers met with Rosa Crnov, the Chief Plant Health Officer and her team. Several issues were discussed, including the border crossing of hives for pollination and queen bees. Even though it is understood that it is part of the T2M agreement further details need to be worked out. All those involved with almond pollination will agree that this is an issue that needs to be resolved urgently. As the peak industry body, the VAA was asked to provide three nominations for the Victorian Bee Biosecurity Work Group (VBBWG). This advisory group will provide advice on the function of the Bee Biosecurity Officer (BBO) and the Victorian implementation of the T2M plan. The Board has nominated Dr. Vicky Elliott, Ken Gell and Dr. Andrew Wootton and is confident that this trio will make a great contribution to the VBBWG. We look forward to continuing to work with Agriculture Victoria for the benefit of all Victorian beekeepers.

John van Weeghel
President

VAA Recreational Beekeeping Conference

A GREAT SUCCESS

By John Kennedy

The VAA Recreational Beekeepers Conference held on Saturday March 9 was an outstanding success.

Consider these factors.

It was a sell-out event with a paid up complement of 100 persons who attended from a great variety of destinations (one party even travelling down from Albury and others from almost as far afield).

Most bee clubs or groups were well represented.

The venue, the Victorian Croquet Club in Cairnlea (a suburb north of Deer Park I need to confess I'd never heard of or travelled through before).

It was modern, roomy enough for the 100 attendees who had booked out the event, with a great outdoor break out space, and even the car parking either on site or in adjoining streets was easy.

Mike Love, a very experienced beekeeper assembled a significant display of extraction equipment from simple crushing or pressure extraction to a conventional knife and multi-frame extractor which was put to use. He also demonstrated his specialty of cutting 400 gram comb honey sections from an Ideal frame for the likely result of a significant return for the beekeeper.

And importantly everything worked, including the audio visual presentations and recording (an edited version of the day's presentations is in progress and has now been added to the VAA website for wider access).

Every guest attending also received a useful show bag of hardware items and informative flyers.

The nine persons selected for their presentations were well resourced, relevant and really outstanding.

Even the host for the day, the irrepressible Ally Driessen, provided a touch of informality and entertainment for her important role in tying the whole day together.

And the inclusive catering – the meal choices were great, extensive, easy to access and well-presented even down to the appreciated free ticket for a drink at the Club bar to conclude the day.

Some quite significant sponsors came forward in

(Continued on page 7)

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VAA Recreational Beekeeping Conference, cont'd

(Continued from page 6)

support of the day and the VAA acknowledges and appreciates their contributions.

The three hands on presentations by Mike Love on honey harvesting, John Van Weeghel on hive inspections (and yes he even found the queen!) and how to do an alcohol wash or sugar shake presented by Nikki Jones and Adam Maxwell from AgVic were all highly relevant and practical, especially for those attending who have only one or two hives, or are beekeeping beginners.

VAA President John Van Weeghel demonstrated hive openings to inspect the condition or status of the bees. He even managed to find the queen and showed how to catch, hold or mark the queen. In the background Nikki Jones and Adam Maxwel from AgVic are demonstrating sugar shakes and alcohol washes to determine the number of varroa mites present in a hive.

The format which catered for both conventional beekeepers and quite a few who have invested in or are still learning to manage or operate a Flow hive was also very relevant.

Four trade exhibitors attended and offered 10% discounts: Edmonds Honey, Bec's Bees, Kelvin Trading and The Basin Backyard with their Flow hive display, and they all did business with a captive audience.

Finally, the day demonstrated that the Victorian Apiarists' Association is truly an industry representative body that caters for and supports all aspects and levels of the noble art of beekeeping.

And the attendees voted quite resoundingly at the end of the day that they want a regular and similar presentation again.

AHBIC Newsletter Extracts

Catalysing Australia's Biosecurity (CAB)

In response to the recent varroa mite outbreak, the Catalysing Australia's Biosecurity (CAB) initiative is leading a cutting-edge partnership between the Australian Capital Territory Government, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, University of Canberra and CSIRO, to detect varroa mites – a danger to honeybees across the globe.

A new low-cost technology, BeeRight, has been shown to detect varroa mites in beehives in New Zealand and could be the solution to slowing the spread of this destructive pest. If varroa mites establish in Australia's honeybee population, pollination activities would be significantly reduced, posing an extreme risk to Australia's food security.

BeeRight technology is an Internet of Things solution that can be set up in any hive without damaging the hive or bothering the bees. The technology has the potential to monitor for:

- beehive activity
- colony strength
- queen status
- productivity
- swarming status
- hive location
- presence of disease
- when to treat hives.

Two pilot programs targeting varroa mite, and co-funded to the tune of $130,000 under the Catalysing Australia's Biosecurity (CAB) initiative, are due to begin in the coming months. The programs come as the national management group for varroa destructor, which includes governments and industries, endorsed plans to move from an eradication response to a national transition to management in February.

The ACT pilot is a collaboration between the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), CSIRO, the ACT Government and University of Canberra (UC). It will use a citizen science approach to trial Vimana Tech's BeeRight technology and use environmental DNA (eDNA) with up to 30 local backyard beekeepers/hobbyists in the ACT region.

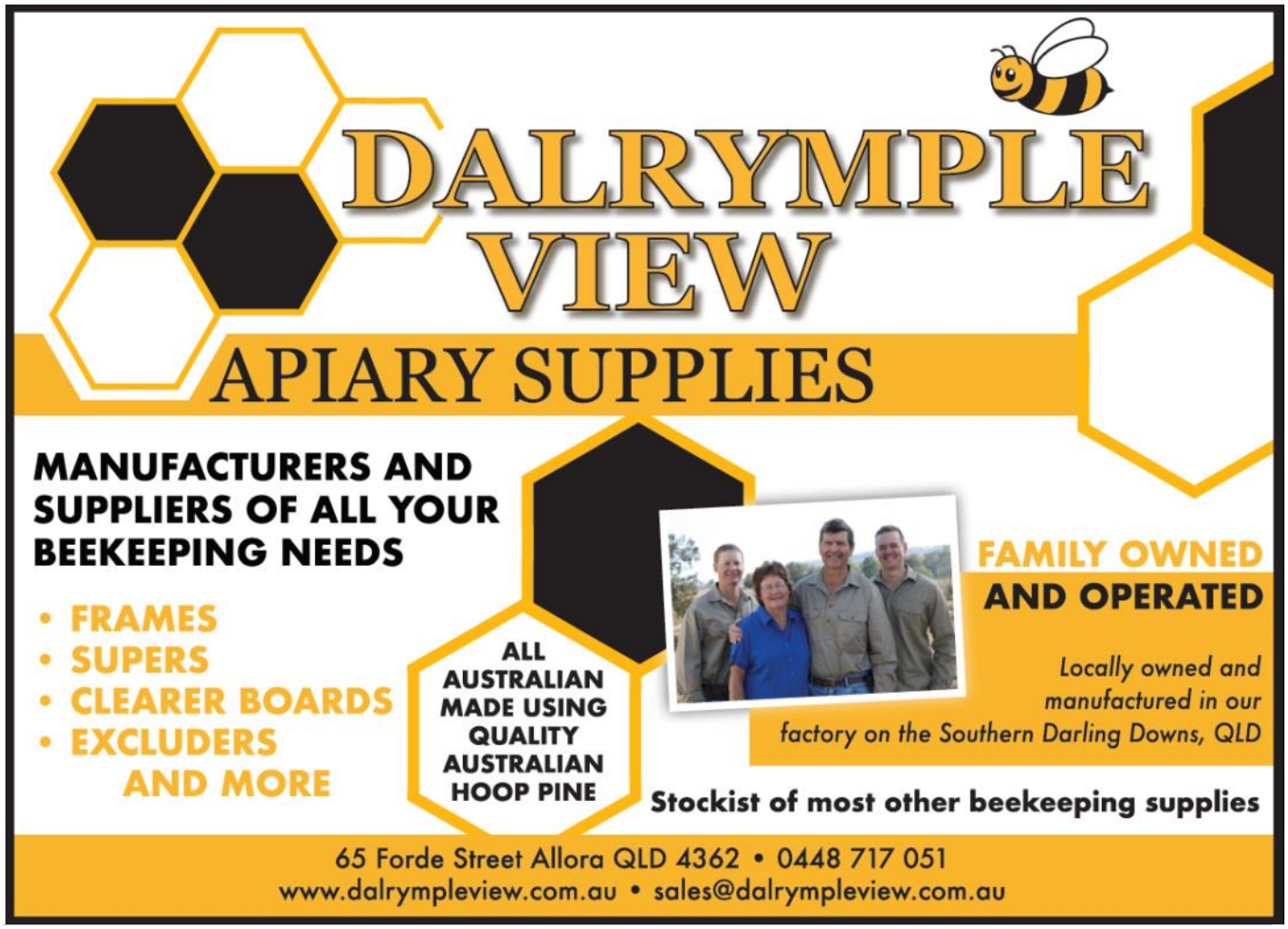
The NSW pilot is a collaboration between DAFF, CSIRO, Queensland's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and UC. It will also use the BeeRight technology and eDNA on known hives infected with varroa mite in NSW. There will also be a citizen science component like the ACT approach.

First Assistant Secretary of Biosecurity Strategy and Reform, Bronwen Jaggers, said the pilots provided a unique opportunity to test the technology and how it could best be used in urban and peri-urban areas. For more information email innovationpilots@aff.gov.au.

Bee Pest Blitz

Bee Pest Blitz is an initiative throughout April annually, it is a national campaign to increase awareness of the importance of bee biosecurity and encourage bee-

(Continued on page 9)



AHBIC Newsletter Extracts, cont'd

(Continued from page 8)

keepers to inspect their hives for high priority exotic pests. This national month-long call-to-action campaign encourages beekeepers to conduct surveillance during the month of April. The Bee Pest Blitz website **beepestblitz.com.au** is **live** and contains resources to assist beekeepers to conduct alcohol washes on their hives and report their findings.

Bee Pest Blitz will be supported by Bee Biosecurity Officers (BBOs) in each state, and engagement and networking with the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (NBPSP).

By participating in the Bee Pest Blitz month, Australian beekeepers will fulfill their bee biosecurity obligations and one of the two inspection requirements under the Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice.

UKRAINIAN BEEKEEPING UPDATE

By John Kennedy

Sadly, the beekeeping activity in Ukraine has been disrupted by the Russian military event that commenced in February 2022 and is ongoing. This is unfortunate since the country has a history of beekeeping dating back to medieval times. Before the incursion the country was judged to have 700,000 active beekeepers or about 1.5 % of the then population. Moreover, Ukraine was judged as the largest honey producer in Europe. It has its own unique style of beekeeping using single box hives with much deeper and many more frame sizes, and was the original innovator in tree hives, although currently Langstroth hives are predominant.

The country is also judged to have been a leader in apicultural aspects of using propolis, bee venom and other unique hive and bee outputs as health products. Even in the war environment it seems to have been a leader in promoting sleeping with (or above) beehives as important therapy for its fighters returning from the war fronts. But with lots of hives and lives decimated by the military battle, the USA appears to have reduced its annual imported intake of Ukrainian honey by more than 50% (in turn introducing more imports from Asia as a replacement only to find a significant amount is counterfeit or adulterated honey by a variety of other syrup and additive mixes!)

There is now a really up to date (made in 2024), and approximately one hour long video on Ukrainian beekeeping available on line from the Extension service of Penn State University in the USA. If you search the internet under the title of 'Ukrainian beekeeping' it should come up readily under the Penn State University banner. It is truly informative on many dimensions about the Brotherhood of Ukrainian Beekeepers and also Women Beekeepers of Ukraine groups. Recommended watching!

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2024 VAA Conference

Dear Members

VAA Inc. 123rd Annual Conference 2024
Wonthaggi, June 4th 5th and 6th

The good news is that our planning committee has been working hard, meeting weekly and getting things organised since late January. A fascinating program is established with many world class speakers in the line up and our valued sponsors are booked.

There are a variety of accommodation options available in the area. We will be keeping you informed of the keynote speakers and topics covered as we progress towards the conference, now less than 2 months away by the time you read this.

There are limited sponsorship and trade stall opportunities left, so anyone who would like to secure a sponsorship or trade stall please contact me on 0429 857 835 or lindsay@warralmaldon.com.au. The conference is being held in Gippsland with a variety of natural attractions like nowhere else in Victoria. Unspoilt beaches and pristine rainforest will make for a great holiday destination.

Registration is now live and we would really like you to be there! It promises to be a well balanced program that will interest all beekeepers. All roads waggle to Wonthaggi, it will be great to catch up with your mates, make some new beekeeping friends and do some business.

We are pleased to announce that Ian and Robyn Cane will be our hosts for the conference. It will be great to honour them for all their hard work for Victorian beekeepers over many decades.

There is still much to do, assuring you our best efforts, we have attached our first flyer (see opposite page) for your information.

Lindsay Callaway
VAA Inc Conference Planning Committee

AND NOW TEQUILA HONEY
By John Kennedy
Beeble, the Wiltshire UK based honey producer has launched another drink to its value adding honey and spirits range.
After Honey Whisky and Honey Trinidadian Rum comes Honey Tequila, which it says is its Wiltshire honey with Tequila sourced from the Agave fields of Jalisco, Mexico.
Packaged in a quite attractive shot style glass of 50 cl Beeble is quoting 35 pounds sterling, plus shipping costs for this latest headache starter.

Victorian Apiarists' Association Inc.

Annual Conference & AGM

Wonthaggi, 4th, 5th & 6th June 2024

Beekeeping with Varroa, "a new frontier"

Program Highlights

Symposium: Varroa – sharing the science

Kaira Wagoner PhD, Optera LLC:

UBeeO™

Cameron Jack PhD, University of Florida:

Integrated Pest Management

Zachary Lamas PhD, University of Maryland:

Why Don't We Sample Drones?

Symposium: Honey – confirming the quality

Liz Barbour PhD, Y-Trace Pty Ltd:

Marketing, Chemistry and Traceability

Sharon Purchase PhD, University of WA:

Business and Logistics of the Honey Library

Panel Discussion:

Quality Standards in Honey

Plus: *Ag Vic, AHBIC, Pollination, AgriFutures updates and much more!!*

Tickets:	Members $290 (early bird $245) Non-members $320 (early bird $270), single day rates available
Register:	https://www.vicbeekeepers.com.au/event-5664664
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Organising Committee:	Lindsay Callaway, Joe Borg, Rob Kerr, Matt Petersen, John van Weeghel, Andrew Wootton
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POLLEN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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Recreational Conference Presentations

NINE TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS OF GREAT MERIT

By John Kennedy

Here are some summaries of the nine technical presentation delivered at the VAA Recreational Beekeepers Conference on Saturday 9 March

Vin Anderson – a long experienced, 30 or so years of beekeeping as a pollinator, honey producer and educator who keeps about 100 hives had the topic of "The Four Seasons of Beekeeping".

With a graphic chart he noted the lengths of sunlight in the day which here vary from 9.35 to a maximum of 14.45 hours, and the vital importance of hive development with the seasons.

Vin presented his key dates which with some potential seasonal or location differences will be relevant to all Victoria beekeepers.

For Vin his season begins around the Spring Equinox – say July 7 when the season and hives get going.

This leads to the period of key hive expansion, thus honey production, which may conclude about the Christmas to early January peak.

Then there is the annual winter hive shutdown date, which for him is around Anzac Day, a useful benchmark.

Vin also noted the importance of queen rearing at an appropriate time for inclusion into the hive.

He stressed the importance of beekeepers having and recording their own optimum dates for hive management and other considerations like weather or local conditions which may impact these key dates.

VAA President John Van Weeghel - was the next speaker with the topic of feeding bees.

He is a hobby beekeeper operating about 60 hives, and he reviewed the timing of feeding together with the range of choices of what to feed from dry sugar to sugar blocks to sugar syrup. He then added the choice of pollen supplements.

The how to feed choices are multiple, from top feeding to frame feeders, jars or plastic containers to plastic bags as a container for sugar syrup.

John stressed the importance of having a forward feeding plan and guidance from a mentor in terms of making the right choice of method.

Dr Andrew Wooton - who is a USA designated Master Beekeeper, had the brief of" Splitting Hives".

He considered the topics of a Walkaway Split to a Flyback Split and the practical benefits of each graphically presented by execution diagrams.

Andrew Johnson - who is Australia's only authorised reseller of the Flow Hive, and operates The Basin Beehive business, recounted his experiences in dealing with prospective or current owners of this plastic device. With his engineering background he is able to see problems and how to resolve them and has built a major knowledge base.

He stressed most of the problems occur not from the bees but the beekeeper, and indicated there are for and against critics of this unique extraction system but the targets were not the bees, but mostly beekeepers.

He indicated that there is now good information for practitioners on the best way to operate their flow hives and said Flow Hive beekeepers should not expect a honey harvest in their first year, and there are times when the flow frames should be removed.

Another issue is tea tree honey which is nor suitable to the frames.

Professor Madeline Beekman - one of the day's highlights was the pre-lunch presentation from Professor Madeline Beekman from the University of Sydney, on varroa from Basic Biology to Virus Vector.

The history of the mite from its recognition in 1904 to the 1980s when it jumped from apis cerana to apis mellifera was detailed, along with its island jumping experience in Hawaii and New Zealand.

The fact that our current mite version does not carry the Deformed Wing Virus pathogens was seen as a positive.

She also recounted the experience of Dr Tom Seeley as outlined in his original book *Following the Bees*.

Admitting that she is an optimist, Dr Beekman expressed a view that despite the immediate experiences to be overcome with the arrival of the mite, she was confident that breeding developments like VSH bees could provide for some relief in the years ahead.

A debate later in the day raised the varroa experiences in places like Cuba and South Africa where the hive numbers have rebuilt after detection and heavy losses and the incidence appears to have been overcome recently.

AgVic staffers Nikki Jones and Adam Maxwell - the after lunch sessions resumed with a session on Integrated Pest Management and varroa treatments delivered by AgVic staffers Nikki Jones and Adam Maxwell, who noted the extensive resources and effort that has been applied to eradication in NSW since the first detection in September in 2022 then to the T2M (Transmission to Management) declared on 13 February 2024.

The importance of all beekeepers being involved in the outcomes, monitoring their hives, staying informed on developments and keeping their own records was stressed.

Dr Travis Beddoe - attention then turned to the presentation by Dr Travis Beddoe from La Ttrobe University and his pioneering work on developing the LAMP test for American and European Foul Brood, and the prospect that the technique will likely be presented as a commercial product. The support provided to the project by Agrifutures was also noted.

Don Muir - the day's final presentation was delivered by Don Muir, a leader in honey testing via the creation of the Australian Honey Library and B-Trace.

Don emphasised that their roles were to "show Australian honeys as a fine food regardless of its provenance".

All the honeys submitted by producers for the Library have tested to the highest CODEX standard to

(Continued on page 14)

Recreational Conference Presentations, cont'd

(Continued from page 13)

date.

He noted that the testing of a $3.50 a kilo imported honey recently had shown that it contained no pollen or nectar.

Beekeepers are encouraged to subscribe for a B-Trace honey label that shows their honey is a tested quality honey as a help to obtaining a premium price for their product.

VAA Vice-President Lindsay Callaway, Dr Travis Beddoe and Professor Beekman - The day concluded with a robust question and answer session provided by a three member panel including VAA Vice-President Lindsay Callaway, Dr Travis Beddoe and Professor Beekman.

Lindsay Callaway whose Warral Honey business at Maldon operates 4500 hives and 1500 nucleus in hives in support indicated that having just returned from a New Zealand trip he was "cautiously optimistic" about the outlook for the Australian beekeeping industry.

A formal edited video of the nine technical presentations has been edited into an informative and useful format and is available for VAA members to view on the association website.

A sad end for a bee, but the spider was happy

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AHBIC Newsletter Extracts

AHBIC March Newsletter
Chair's Report

AHBIC continues to work hard for our industry through lobbying and meeting with ministers. One overlooked area is the numbers of meetings AHBIC attends to ensure positive outcomes for our industry and our levy monies. Meetings with PHA, DAFF, AgriFutures and DFAT to name a few. These meetings are time consuming over the course of a year. Add all the varroa related meetings and briefings since June 2022 and I am proud of AHBIC achievements outside the varroa area with limited resources.

Industry owes a huge thank you to our CEO – Danny for his diligence, work ethos and professionalism that made sure all these important events were attended and had valuable input from our industry. I also thank the member bodies and the executive for their time at meetings to provide guidance to the CEO throughout this challenging period.

I cannot stress enough the huge achievement it was to secure the Transition to Management plan for varroa over two years. A two year Transition to Management time frame has NOT been achieved for any other biosecurity response – and there have been quite a few. This was achieved by a lot of networking and lobbying by mainly Danny, but also Bianca Giggins. A HUGE thank you to you both.

Congress

A recent members meeting agreed for AHBIC to conduct a congress in 2026. AHBIC is in the process of forming a congress organizing committee.

Levies

AHBIC continues to lobby against the 10% increase in our honey levy for the Border Biosecurity Levy that the Australian Government recently announced. AHBIC have joined most Agricultural industries in lobbying against this new tax.

Honey levies

Honey levies will be a point of discussion at all member body AGM/conferences this year. Our industry is required to pay back our share of the varroa response. Member bodies at an AHBIC members meeting have agreed to increase our honey levy by 1c/kg until the debt is paid off. Part of the formal process to increase the levy and repay the monies includes consultation with industry. The first part of this wide consultation will be at member body AGM/conferences.

To that end all beekeepers should be supporting their state conferences to get the latest information on varroa AND have a say on the proposed levy increase.

Stephen Targett

CEO's Update

Since the February newsletter AHBIC has been focused on biosecurity issues. Working hard towards establishing the transition to management program, contributing to the WA red dwarf honey bee response and

(Continued on page 16)

AHBIC Newsletter Extracts, cont'd

(Continued from page 15)

acting as ILO in the Brisbane Asian honey bee response.

Despite biosecurity consuming most of our time we have been progressing other critical industry issues.

Honey Markets

Imported Honey Subcommittee

This committee has met to discuss what can be done about this issue and provided a list of tasks for AHBIC to complete. We have gathered nearly 40 imported honey samples from shelves across Australia and we are preparing them to be tested. AHBIC has met with specialty international trade lawyers to discuss imported products and what can be done from a countervailing perspective. In addition to this internal activity, we have also met with the Australian Federal Agricultural Department to lobby for more comprehensive testing and provided insight into the imported honey testing project.

There is still work to be done on this issue and we are progressing as fast as possible with the resources we have.

Opening Export Opportunities

We have now officially gained access to export markets in Vietnam for Australian honey. Whilst some honey was being exported to Vietnam it was through the unofficial 'grey' channels that offer little protection to Aussie exporters. Formalising this export pathway gives both exporters and importers greater confidence and hopefully we will see increased volumes of Aussie honey going to Vietnam.

This took a lot of work from AHBIC working with AusTrade and the Vietnam authorities to agree to specific import conditions. We are still working on Indonesia and Morocco to formalise their entry conditions. Australia is now exporting the lowest amounts of honey since the 1960's, contributing to some of the current over supply within our own country.

National Honey Standards Committee

AHBIC is chairing the International Standards Organisation working group for honey bee products. This group has been meeting regularly to assess and provide comment on the international proposed standards and progress the Australian standards. A standard for Royal Jelly has been circulated for public comment and will be soon presented to the AHBIC member bodies for endorsement. We expect this to be the first in a series of standards for industry to consider.

Biosecurity

NSW Varroa Response

Final agreement was reached in early February to the national transition to management plan. This long-awaited agreement enables training to be rolled out and extension officers to be recruited. We expect to start seeing training opportunities across NSW with the other jurisdictions to follow soon.

The roll out of the training will be over the next 12 months so I encourage all beekeepers to attend a train-

(Continued on page 17)

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AHBIC Newsletter Extracts, cont'd

(Continued from page 16)

ing workshop whilst they are free. There will also be a continual flow of additional resources for beekeepers throughout the transition to management plan.

WA Red Dwarf Honey Bee Detection

There are now 26 colonies detected on the Burrup peninsula in the north of WA, all within a 2km radius. There are 11 absconded nests found, indicating potential swarming activity. All colonies have had Euvarroa present, but no Euvarroa has been found on European honey bees to date. All colonies destroyed have also tested negative for exotic viruses.

Varro Jacobsoni in Brisbane

This new detection in Brisbane was the result of a single mite being found in a European sentinel hive at the port. The response has now found a single Asian Honey Bee colony in close proximity to the original sentinel hives. Testing has confirmed v. jacobsoni present in the Asian colony and further surveillance of European colonies including the remaining sentinel hives has failed to find any further v. jacobsoni in those hives. This hopefully indicates that the original single mite detection was a result of drift/transfer and not host shifting as originally feared.

Further surveillance around the port and within a 10km radius will be conducted to ensure the area is free of both Asian Honey Bees and v. jacobsoni.

Biosecurity Friends of Parliament

Our Chair will be travelling to Canberra to attend the Parliamentary friends of Biosecurity at Parliament house hosted by television celebrity Costa Georgiadis. This will be a great opportunity for AHBIC to network with members of parliament and ministers to further lobby for better outcomes for our industry.

The Month Ahead

Another senate inquiry has been announced for the Biosecurity Protection Levy and AHBIC will be providing a submission opposing the new tax. AHBIC will leverage the strength of numbers in the growing group of collective voices from primary industries in opposition to the new tax.

We are hopeful to make good progress on a few of the projects in the transition to management plan that AHBIC is responsible for including the coordination of the extension officers nationally, updating the CoP and establishing a Coloss survey for industry.

Towards the end of the month AHBIC will participate in a some AgriFutures events including the R&D forum in Canberra and the levied industry forum in Sydney. These are great opportunities for AHBIC to further our industry messaging but also to network with like-minded industries at the levied industry forum and the many researchers working in the varroa space.

Regards
Danny LeFeuvre

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UBeeO

The National Honey Bee Genetic Improvement Program (Plan Bee) is focused on improving the most important honey bee traits for beekeepers and pollination dependent industries. This has involved assessing a broad range of traits including pest and disease resistance, brood pattern, population, honey production, aggression and hygienic behaviour.

When traits are combined with parentage or genotypic data, assessment can be made about the heritability of these traits and potentially queens can be selected to meet a certain need. Naturally, beekeepers are now greatly concerned about the impact of Varroa mite, and genetic improvement has a role to play.

As part of the way that Plan Bee is supporting the industry, lead researcher Dr Nadine Chapman from University of Sydney is assisting in assessing the role a synthetic compound known as UBeeO could have in measuring response to unhealthy brood odour (UBO).

UBeeO triggers hygienic behaviour and could help select for Varroa resistance. The data collected during the testing will be included in a larger data set that is informing the genetic analysis being carried out by Plan Bee. This work has the potential to perhaps help breeders select queens that are more likely to cope with Varroa.

UBeeO testing in Australia

Testing of UBeeO in Australia is part of the Bee Genetics Varroa Resistance breeding project, being led by queen bee breeder and Australian Queen Bee Breeders Association committee member, Corinne Jordan. Plan Bee's involvement in UBeeO has been via the same route as for other traits. Breeders get in touch to discuss the traits they want to assess and ask for assistance.

Dr Chapman went out to assist in testing approximately 100 colonies for their UBeeO response. The following week, the colonies were assessed for other traits and sampled for genetic testing by another Plan Bee team member, Emily Noordyke, from NSW DPI. The aim of the project is to prove breeding for Varroa resistance is possible and sustainable. It will help beekeepers in areas still unaffected by Varroa prepare.

Unhealthy brood odour

UBeeO has been developed by a group from the United States and examines bees' response to unhealthy brood odour (UBO). This odour can occur due to being infested with Varroa, viral infection, or other brood disease.

UBeeO, made up of chemicals found in unhealthy brood, is sprayed onto a known area of capped brood and two hours later the number of uncapped cells are counted. Colonies with greater than 60% of the cells uncapped are considered hygienic. These colonies may then be able to maintain the mite population below three mites per 100 bees and survive without treatment.

Response to the test has been linked with low Varroa infestation level, high Varroa removal, overwintering in colonies not treated for Varroa, and traditional freeze killed brood (FKB) hygienic behaviour tests.

United States researcher, Dr Kaira Wagoner, from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, has led the team which developed UBeeO spray.

UBeeO results

Corinne Jordan secured early access to the UBeeO spray – an expensive exercise which has been funded by collaborating with other queen breeders, honey producers and private donations.

In 2023, Ms Jordan and Dr Chapman undertook tests of the UBeeO spray at Goldfields Honey in Central West NSW. "We spray tested 100 colonies there with the UBeeO spray looking for high responders," Ms Jordan said. "In Australia so far, we have found that we don't really have high responders. We're lucky if we get into what's known as the medium range which is around 40% to 60%.

"Goldfields Honey had one in that range, and they also had some good responses in the low range.

"There are potential tools that are available to us now that Varroa has been declared endemic. However, UBeeO is an efficient selection tool and the only one that we could use when we don't have Varroa because it essentially mimics a Varroa infection in the brood cells. The issue with breeding for Varroa has always been, how can you do it when you don't have Varroa? Other methods were to use hygienic testing methods like the liquid nitrogen freeze killed brood (FKB) test but they're not as effective as the UBeeO test."

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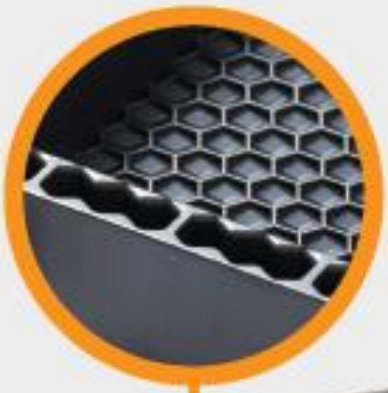
BETTER BEETLE MANAGEMENT



OUTER FRAME CELLS

Allows bees to access cells and chase out the beetle leaving them nowhere to hide, as well as store honey

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Produce drones on demand with easily identifiable green colour

UNIQUE SAW TOOTH DESIGN

Provides extra stability and prevents frame from slipping during extraction

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- Full Depth Drone Comb Plastic Frame
- WSP Depth Plastic Frame and Foundation
- Ideal Depth Plastic Frame and Foundation
- Ideal Cut Comb Plastic Frame
- Full Depth, WSP and Ideal Timber Frames
- Full Depth, WSP and Ideal Plastic Foundation
- Assembled Timber Frames with Plastic Foundation
- Assembled Wired Timber Frame
- Assembled Timber Frame with Plastic Foundation
- Assembled Wired Frame

Bee Bits: Products

By John Kennedy

BEE SNUG HIVE COVER

Oregon USA based, timber beehive builder Bee Built, has released its new Bee Snug Langstroth bee hive cover in both eight and ten frame sized variants, that it claims is the result of years of product testing, material sourcing, research, and industrial design.

It says, exploration of non-traditional hive designs such as the Warre hive and its quilt box, natural tree cavities, and discussions with and admiration for the work of Dr Tom Seeley, has led us down a long road that gives a perfect balance between a bee centric design and sustainable local manufacturing.

The Bee Snug design is claimed to be winter warm and summer cool, innovative, waterproof and watertight, with superior temperature retention.

It combines anodised copper sheeting with a vented, durable western red cedar frame design.

A 43% reduction in temperature retention is claimed.

According to an impressive video presentation available at the website www.beebuilt.com it retails the Bee Snug hive cover at $US149 each!

INTEGRATED VACUUM BACK-PACK FOR BEE REMOVALS

Swarm season will soon be upon us, and many beekeepers and bee removal contractors are aware of vacuum devices for "harvesting or collecting" bee swarms or hives, often from the most unconventional places.

Many beekeepers will have experimented with or built vacuum removal systems based around the cannibalised use of a household vacuum cleaner.

This is where a Texas beekeeping company and specialist vacuum removal builder comes into play.

Allmybees.com offers a special back pack version of a vacuum removal aid which is only ten pounds in weight.

It is powered by its own rechargeable lithium-iron battery pack which it says has a working life of eight to ten hours between charges.

It comes with a simple clip-on remote controller to adjust the vacuum force and its speed to suit the prevailing conditions.

Importantly it is sturdily designed, and built from largely plastic materials, and has a flexible corrugated suction hose with a choice of two extractor points.

The manufacturer claims that it is set up with two screens so that the collected swarm can possibly be left within the container of the vacuum extractor for a day or so, even under warm temperature conditions, while their new home is located.

Another innovation is that it is designed not to clog up if a mass of bees and comb is removed.

The company is a volume manufacturer of backpack vacuum collection devices and I have seen them advertised around the $US 500 mark per unit.

They claim on their website that this is the ideal product choice for a beekeeper who does only one difficult swam or hive extraction per season, or for a specialist contractor whose does three or four swarm extractions per day!

At the website www.allmybees.com is a video production tutorial as well as a demonstration of a vacuum extraction.

THORNE'S BUCKET BLANKET

With multiple retail store outlets and a century of trading, E H Thorne is the UK's largest retailer of bee goods, equipment and hardware.

Thorne's continue to come up with new product releases.

The latest is a Bucket Blanket designed to wrap around a 30 pound honey bucket or a 20 kilo honey tank.

Thorne's say that the blanket will liquefy a full bucket of granulated honey in 24 hours at 50 degrees C.

It comes with a digital controller to adjust the temperature plus it has Velcro straps enabling it to be securely wrapped around the chosen container, and it will fit a honey tank with a valve.

The power cable can be disconnected, and the blanket is washable.

Thorne's is quoting 84 pounds sterling for the Bucket Blanket which is designed for the UK domestic market.

INEXPENSIVE HIVE BEETLE TAP

Here's an interesting and inexpensive hive beetle trap which a NSW beekeeper has posted on an industry website. I've tried it and it works.

First you need to acquire a reasonably heavy duty cardboard box – it's the type that my hive supplier ships flat box hives in to me.

It must have a double corrugation in the cardboard sheet - in effect a double layer construction.

Then you cut the cardboard into about one inch, or 15cm strips with a very sharp knife or a Stanley knife, so that the corrugations are not burred.

The strips should be the full depth or length of your hive and one is inserted into the hive opening.

The beetles find the corrugation hollows in the cardboard an ideal breeding and living space away from your bees.

About a weekly or ten day removal of the strip from your hive will show that a host of beetles have taken up residence in the cardboard strip.

The NSW beekeeper who demonstrates this application lays down a sheet of tin in front of the hive and dispatches the beetles from within the strip, where he quickly crushes them to death.

Another solution is to put the laden cardboard strip directly into your smoker and light it for the final cremation of the strip and its beetle contents.

I've lost track of the original demonstration the beekeeper provided, so I apologise for not giving him a credit for his solution.

But if you want to avoid buying commercial plastic beetle traps and the inconvenience with filling them with vegetable oil and safely ingressing and egressing the trap in your hive, this process is a practical alternative.

VAA Emails To Members

14th March

As the VAA Returning Officer I am writing to notify you of the members that have been Appointed Representatives of the VAA Board that will take office at the upcoming AGM in June.

Melbourne Section - John Van Weeghel
Bendigo Branch - Lindsay Callaway
This now leaves seven positions on the Board to fill.

Kind regards,
Angelique Perry

******

3rd April 2024

As the VAA Returning Officer I am writing to request a call for nominations to fill the positions of generally elected Board members. There are 7 of these positions to fill. Nominations are to be received at the registered address of the VAA no later than April 10th 2024.

The nominated members on the Board for the 2024 AGM are - Melbourne Section - John Van Weeghel, Bendigo Branch - Lindsay Callaway

To assist you with the guidelines please read below.

Excerpt from VAA Constitution
Generally elected Board Member process

D. 8 (a) The Returning Officer must, not less than 8 weeks before the AGM, advise the members that nominations are called for generally elected Board member positions.

(b) Nominations must be received at the registered address of the Association - not less than 5 weeks before the AGM.

Nomination for election as Generally Elected Board Member

D. 9 (a) A nomination for an elected Board member position must be signed by the proposer, who must be an ordinary member of the Association. The candidate must also provide a signed consent to the nomination. This may be on a separate document to be received at the registered address by the same date as for the nomination.

(b) All ordinary members of the association are eligible to stand for election for these positions and to vote in the election.

Excerpt from By-Laws Supporting VAA Constitution Nominations

13. The nomination may be accompanied by a statement, not exceeding 250 words, in support of the candidate's nomination, intended to be provided to voters if an election occurs, and prepare either by the candidate or the proposer.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards
Angelique Perry
VAA Returning Officer

Doug Heckathorn: Broad-leaf Privet (noxious weed)

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2.2L, 5L Pails

10L, 15L, 20L Pails

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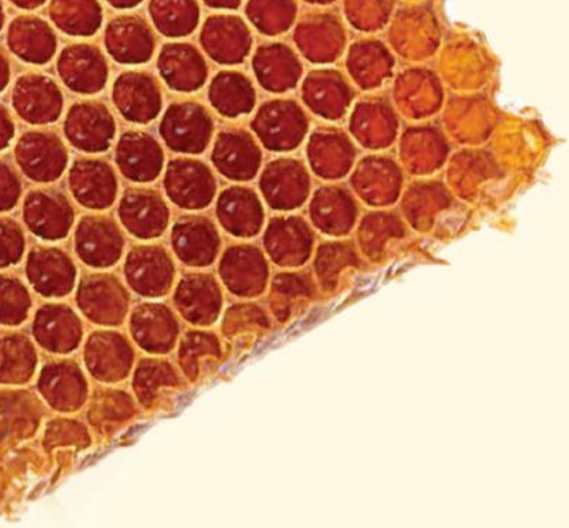
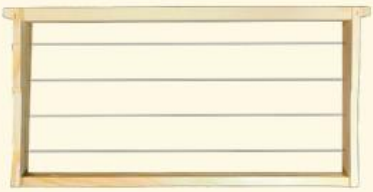


Bee Frames - Wood and Plastic



Wood Frame Full Depth
Assembled With Wire

Wood Frame Full Depth
With Plastic Foundation
(Not waxed)

Plastic Frame Full Depth

Plastic Beehive

Plastic Beehive with 10 Frames

Material: food grade polypropylene

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1 x Entrance reducer

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The 2024 Annual Conference competitions.

It is time to start getting your entries ready!

The Victorian Apiarists' Association Annual Conference Honey Competition has been in existence for over 110 years.

The Honey Competition is always a highlight of the Annual Conference.

Liquid honey

- **Native Flora Honey**
- **Yellow Box Honey**
- **Introduced Flora Honey**
- **Garden Honey**
- **Dark Honey**
- **Candied Honey**
- **Creamed Honey**

Honey is to be in a standard 500gm (375ml) round glass jar, with a white/gold 63mm lid, labelled with honey type and no wax. Jars to be filled halfway between lid rim and top.

Honey Liquid will be judged on Colour (25 Points), Density (25 Points), Flavour (25 Points), General Appearance (15 Points) and Aroma (10 Points). TOTAL 100

Honey Candied or Creamed will be judged on Evenness of Grain (30 Points), Flavour (30 Points), Firmness (30 Points) and Colour (10 Points). TOTAL 100

To help the judging please label the honey flavour on the bottom of the jar (small label)

Honey Comb and Bees Wax

- **Sealed Frame (full depth)**
- **Honey Comb Section**
- **Bees wax - Best commercial block**
- **Beeswax Block (approx. 1kg)**
- **Decorative Bees Wax**

Frame and Comb Honey will be judged on Fullness (30 Points), Colour of Capping's (30 Points), Evenness (20 Points) and General Appearance (20 Points). TOTAL 100

All pure bees wax items to have a clean neat appearance, no cracks or sediment.

Wax will be judged on Colour (25 Points), Clearness (25 Points), Tenacity (20 Points), General Appearance (20 Points) and Aroma (10 Points). TOTAL 100

2024 Annual Conference Competitions, cont'd

Honey Beverage.

All beverages must be exhibited in screw top clear colourless glass wine bottles without lettering, fluting or ornamentation of any kind.

Mead will be judged on Colour and Condition (15 Points), Bouquet (35 Points) and Flavour (50 Points). TOTAL 100

Pollen Competition

Pollen must be cleaned and dried in a clear 500gm glass jar.

Pollen will be judged on Taste (25 Points), Hardness (20 Points), Cleanliness (25 Points) and General Appearance (30 Points). TOTAL100

Photo Contest

- **Photography – History**
- **Photography - Native Flora**
- **Photography – Apiary (now on its own)**
- **Photography - Equipment (now on its own)**
- **Photography - Introduced Flora**
- **Photography - Portrait of a honey bee**

Please note: All entries to be submitted by 1.30pm on Wednesday 5th June, 2024

THORNE HAND MADE IN THE UK EMPIRE SMOKERS
By John Kennedy

Have you ever wondered how a traditional smoker is manufactured? E H Thorne, the multi branch and leading U.K family owned supplier of an extensive range of bee goods, has outlined the process in an update.
The company says it's the only manufacturer of smokers in the UK and one of only a few in Europe.
Their offer is a choice of Empire models in stainless steel, copper and galvanised steel with a choice in each of two models, a standard or a large size, and each with or without a protective heat guard.
Thorne's say that individual parts are stamped out by power presses and then assembled using flywheels or hand tools.
"All seams are pressed, moulded or hand bent into place – amazingly there is only one small spot weld on the entire smoker" they say. Even the bellows are hand made in Scotland.
To demonstrate its smoker making processes Thorne's has a short video, duration eight minutes. which emphasises the hand made UK origins.
And in case you are interested in an Empire Smoker Thorne's quote prices from 49 pounds sterling for a standard size in galvanised steel up to 75 pounds sterling for a large version in stainless steel.
For more information or to watch the video see www.thorne.co.uk

USDA Agricultural Research

USDA Researchers Use an Edible Blue-Green Algae to Protect Honey Bees Against Viruses

BATON ROUGE, La., March 19, 2024 – Scientists at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Agricultural Research Service (ARS) developed an edible antiviral treatment that can be used to protect honey bees against Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) and other viruses, according to a recent study published in *Sustainable Agriculture*.

Honey bees are important agricultural pollinators. However viruses, including DWV, are linked to the deaths of millions of colonies worldwide. DWV, like other viruses, is most often spread by Varroa mites who carry the disease inside them and infect bee colonies. Infection typically causes deformity and death in bees, especially in the pupae and brood. These colony losses devastate beekeeping industries and pose a major risk to agriculture and the global food supply.

While there are medicines for other bee diseases and parasites, there is currently no treatment available to help beekeepers reduce viruses in their colonies. Nearly all colonies have DWV and can often be infected with multiple viruses at any given time. Effective antiviral treatments could help to improve colony health and survival as well as crop pollination efficiency.

"We found that engineered algae diets suppressed DWV infection and improved survival in honey bees," said Vincent Ricigliano, research scientist at the ARS Honey Bee Laboratory in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. "When mixed into bee food, the engineered algae boost the bee's immune system to fight off the targeted virus."

According to Ricigliano, blue-green algae is the "bee's knees" of bee food additives. Ricigliano and other ARS researchers previously studied blue-green microscopic algae, also known as microalgae, as a potential food source for honey bees. The algae showed promise since it has a nutritional profile that resembles pollen and is scalable to the level of commercial beekeeping.

"In addition to the nutritional benefits and immune-boosting effects, engineered algae strains have the potential to protect bees against a wide variety of pathogens," said Ricigliano.

Blue-green algae grow via photosynthesis and can remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, making it an ecologically friendly approach to improve the health of honey bees.

"This technology represents a potential new class of treatments for honey bees that is highly sustainable and scalable," said Ricigliano.

"It can be added directly to supplemental feed without additional processing and easily integrated into beekeepers' existing management practices. However, there are regulatory considerations that must be addressed before these applications can be fully realized."

The researchers filed a patent application for the technology and plan to use variations of it to target additional bee viruses and other pathogens in future studies.

AHBIC Industry Update Apis cerana

Important Industry Update 3
Varroa jacobsoni & Apis cerana;
Port of Brisbane
12th March 2024

Apis cerana Nest Located

As of 12th March 2024, Biosecurity Queensland have confirmed a single nest of Asian Honey Bee; Apis cerana has been located within the Port of Brisbane. The nest has been destroyed, and bee samples have been sent for testing for parasitic mites and exotic bee viruses (slow bee paralysis virus, deformed wing virus, acute bee paralysis virus and Apis mellifera rhabdovirus). The test results will be communicated when completed.

Biosecurity Queensland in conjunction with the Queensland bee industry and the Australian Government, are continuing surveillance in the Port of Brisbane and surrounding area for Asian honey bee and varroa mite. At this time, only one mite and one nest has been found.

Be on the lookout for Asian Honey bees and report any suspect sightings to
Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

Movement restrictions in place: QLD

A 10km radius Movement Control Order is in place to assist in preventing the risk of spread of Varroa jacobsoni, beekeepers are not permitted to move any bee (living or dead), a swarm, nest or hive of bees, apiary equipment, or apiary products within the Control Area. For detailed information beekeepers should refer to the Movement Control Order: varroa-mite-carriers-movement-control-order.pdf (publications.qld.gov.au) In short beekeepers in the movement control area must notify Biosecurity Queensland without delay about:

1. the presence of varroa mite
2. if you suspect the presence of varroa mite
3. any hive movements into or out of the localities in the previous 90 days
4. any bees bought or sold in the last 90 days.

AHBIC encourages QLD beekeepers to be registered and stay up to date through Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website: Varroa mite alert | Business Queensland or https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/industries/bees/varroa-mit

AHBIC reminds beekeepers that in Queensland, varroa mite (both V. destructor and V. jacobsoni) is listed as prohibited matter under the Biosecurity Act 2014. Queensland beekeepers should continue monitoring hives for varroa mite, report their hive check results on the Bee 123 form and immediately report any unexpected hive deaths, deformed bees, bees with parasites, poor brood patterns and dead brood to
Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

Beekeepers: All States & Territories

Importantly, all beekeepers should remember that the state of Queensland remains a biosecurity zone and any movements of Varroa mite carriers into Queensland require an approved permit through: https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/biosecurity/policy-legislation-regulation/biosecurity-instrumentpermit

Continue exotic mite monitoring regularly in your hives, to learn more about alcohol washing check out the nationally agreed resource Bee Pest Blitz:
https://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/beepestblitz/

Important Industry Update 2
Varroa jacobsoni; Port of Brisbane
6th March 2024

Apis cerana Presence Confirmed

As of 5th March 2024, Biosecurity Queensland have confirmed the presence of the Asian Honey Bee; Apis cerana and multiple European honey bee nests within the Port of Brisbane. Of the Apis cerana bees at the Port of Brisbane, genetic testing has confirmed absence of exotic honey bee viruses and determined that this is a new incursion of Asian honey bee not linked to the Asian honey bee populations in the Cairns region.

Delimiting Surveillance

Active surveillance by Biosecurity Queensland and beekeepers from the Queensland Beekeepers Association continues within the Port of Brisbane area and within the 10km Movement Control Zone.

Surveillance involves alcohol washing, drone uncapping (where possible), drone ballooning, floral sweeping and additional miticide strips and mats, being performed by authorised officers. To date, no further mites have been found through this active surveillance.

You can reach out to AHBIC via:
Varroa Coordinator
Bianca Giggins
0402 467 780
bianca@honeybee.org.au

17th Asian Apiculture Association Conference and AAA Apitherapy Forum 2024
Bee experts and enthusiasts from across Asia will gather to discuss and see the latest discoveries and technologies from across the region. With an expectation of up to 400 delegates, sponsors, and bee enthusiasts, this event is not to be missed. Visit the website: 17th AAA Conference 2024 aaaconferenceperth.com.au
2024 Conference will be on June 12 -14, at the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Wednesday: AAA international Apitherapy Forum, Thursday: AAA Conference – Bee Biology and Breeding
Friday: AAA Conference – Bee Husbandry

Bee Bits: USA News

By John Kennedy

BEE BUILT OFFERS LIMITED RUN 2024 WARRE HIVES

The Warre hive or The Peoples Hive, designed by Abbe Emile Warre over 70 years ago, receives relatively little interest from local beekeepers.

Abbe Warre created the hive by trial and error as he conceived it as the best hive for bees and beekeepers alike.

Now a US hive manufacturer Bee Built has released what it calls the 2024 Model Warre Hive.

They note they are seeking to keep the spirit of experimentation alive by "taking advantage of new technologies and the insights of beekeepers who have used Warre (and other) hives over the past several decades to keep improving the design".

Bee Built says a good hive begins with good wood.

Hence, they use quality sustainably sourced Western Red Cedar from close to their workshop in Oregon, largely taken from wind-fallen trees.

They say this material is beautiful, long lasting when coated with a couple of coats of 100% Tung Oil, or it can be painted.

Their design comes with a 100% waterproof composite aluminium roof panel in a peaked design for water runoff, which is also reversible.

The hive also includes 100% natural hemp insulation for the quilt box, and has a new base design so that it is stable and sits up off the ground.

In addition, it has "an attractive and elegant new design style to the landing board so that it reflects its artisanal style".

Based on the illustration provided this hive appears to have three boxes.

There are viewing windows to each box with fitted Lexan panels so that the industry of the bees can be observed without disturbance or risk of breaking propolis or comb.

They add our "2024 Model Warre Hive is not just a home for your bees, it's a commitment to sustainable, satisfying beekeeping with a hive that is hand made in a limited run for the season".

For the record, Bee Built ships only to the continental USA and Canada and quotes a price of $US837 for current orders for the 2024 Model Warre Hive.

For more information including a couple of interesting video presentations see www.beebuilt.com

DALAN AB UPDATES

Honey bee vaccine developer, Dalan Animal Health of Georgia USA, has released an informative March newsletter with a number of topics of interest to beekeepers.

First up is some information on blueberry pollination, where the pollen produced by blueberry flowers is heavy and optimum pollination is achieved by visitation from both feral and honey bees.

Dalan will be holding a weekly webinar during March and April on its honey bee vaccine and the benefits of selecting inoculated queens and nucs to give a better understanding of honeybee immunity.

There is also an interview with Tim Ferris, a former New Zealand beekeeper now working in a Pennsylvania beekeeping operation with a special interest in a sterilization technique for beehives exposed to diseases including American Foul Brood, with the use of gamma radiation.

The newsletter notes that AFB spores are present in 50% of all the beehives in Canada and the USA hence the importance of using AFB inoculated queens.

For more information or to sign up for Dalan's regular updates see www.dalananimalhealth.com

KIRK WEBSTER ON TREATMENT FREE BEEKEEPING

Kirk Webster runs Champlain Valley Bees & Queens in Middlebury, Vermont in the USA.

He is described as a writer, educator and visionary.

It is said his life's work is focused on promoting connections to nature and complex ecological relationships in an ever increasing industrial world.

The knowledge he has acquired has become the backbone of many small beekeeping operations.

He runs on his own a 300 colony apiary for honey production, he produces around 400 nucs and sells an additional 400 to 500 treatment free nucs of bees of Russian heritages that have been overwintered in Vermont.

His bees and queens are highly sought after with a waiting list, due to their ability to survive both varroa and the adverse local weather conditions of his north eastern USA location.

He is mainly a honey producer from stationary locations, and the apiary is his only source of income.

Kirk uses the natural practices active in nature to maintain his hives without treatment for mites and other pests or pathogens; and his apiary has been treatment free since 2002.

Kirk makes much of his own equipment including pressed wax foundation from his bees as clean, recycled wax.

He seems to be just the type of beekeeper that we local exponents can and should be learning from.

I was interested to see that during March he was speaking at a function in Weston, Connecticut organised by the Backyard Beekeepers Association, and I have been in contact with them to see if Kirk's presentation was recorded or can be accessed electronically.

His talk carried the title of "Twenty Years of Commercial Beekeeping Without Treatment Of Any Kind".

At deadline I am awaiting a response.

But for starters he maintains his own website at www.kirkwebster.com

He holds a somewhat organic approach, operates a small farming lifestyle, and recorded on his website are numerous writings which can be accessed as teaching or talking points.

VAA Conference - 4th to 6th June 2024 - Wonthaggi Workmen's Club

EPA on Varroa Treatments, USA

By John Kennedy

Beekeepers around the world continue to suffer substantial losses due to Varroa mites and the diseases they vector.

This has led to the US Environment Protection Agency (EPA) clarifying what pesticide products and their active ingredients are registered under FIFRA (the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act).

It is an offence in the USA to use registered pesticides in a manner that is not in accord with labelling conditions.

The EPA notes that it has registered 16 pesticide products in which about ten active ingredients are used for varroa mite controls.

On the listed products it has conducted comprehensive evaluations and determined the products that will not cause effects to human health or the environment.

It says "using unregistered pesticides could result in a violation of the FFDCA, if there are residues in the honey or other edible bee products (e.g. honeycomb, pollen) that are not covered by a tolerance or exemption under the FFDCA (Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act). Adding "the sale of adulterated honey is a violation of the FFDCA".

Beekeepers are reminded that it may pose a risk to use unregistered products which have not been evaluated for their potential harm to people and the environment.

The EPA adds that it has been made aware that beekeepers are using substances (e.g., oxalic acid, formic acid and thymol) to control varroa mites in beehives, adding although EPA understands that the substances being used, in the formulation in which they are being purchased, are not registered pesticides, the substances themselves are active ingredients in separately registered pesticide products.

The EPA then details its registration list of approved products and their active ingredients that are thus pesticide products approved for use in bee hives against the varroa mite.

All these products have been tested by the EPA and evaluated for their potential risks to human health and the environment, and determined that they will not cause unreasonable adverse effects when used according to the label instructions.

There is a comprehensive discussion and outline of the registration practices listed in the March 2024 edition of the US Bee Culture monthly journal.

It is worth review and action by local beekeepers of all sizes.

UK AWAKE TO ASIAN HORNETS

By John Kennedy

The Asian Hornet (*vespa valentina, or its European cousin vespa cabro or the giant Asian hornet vespa mandarina*) is an emerging threat to beekeepers in the UK with increased sightings.

It has recently been spotted in north western USA, and arrived in Europe in 2004 in the south west of France and is gradually entering its neighbours Spain, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland.

It's a major predator of honey bees and it's said to be able to virtually eat a hive of bees in about two minutes.

UK beekeepers are being reminded of installing traps where the pest has been sighted in recent times.

Leading local bee goods retailer Thorne's, has introduced its own Thornet Asian hornet trap which is manufactured from British cedar which it says is aesthetically pleasing, as well as being durable and is a better option than plywood traps which can quickly delaminate.

The Thornet cedar trap has a steel cover for added protection with a clear Perspex window to observe and monitor trapped hornets. It also has two stainless steel entry ports that include extruders to minimise by-catch of other insects, by allowing them to escape. It has a designated bait area where a suitable attractant is placed.

Thorne's are quoting 95 pounds sterling for their Thornet version, but alternatives are available especially to catch hornet queens and are known under the brand names Vespa Catch and Gard Apis.

The UK also has a formal reporting network for hornet sightings known as the Great Britain Non Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) as well as an Asian Hornet app. for Android and iPhones so the problem is obviously being taken seriously. There is more information available at www.thorne.co.uk

THE HOPKINS METHOD OF QUEEN RAISING

By John Kennedy

This method of raising queen bees described as "cheaper, easier to do and possibly more beneficial" dates back to 1911. Its originator Isaac Hopkins, then New Zealand's Chief Apiarist first described it but in the US another version, reported in 1912, is known as the Case Method after H L Case, although Hopkins is credited with experimenting with it and reporting his results in writing. (His 177 page account was published in the Australasian Bee Manual of that time). It has been countenanced subsequently by a number of pamphlets and articles published or printed in leading journals.

The USA's Bee Culture journal is raising it again currently with a series of "how to do it articles" over coming months with the proposition that it is "easy to produce with practically no budget". They note that new queens are quite a costly proposition in the order of $US30 (or let's say $A50 or more each) together with attendant risks of postal deliveries, the successful addition of the new queen to your colony, and their overall quality. For a small beekeeper with 10-20 hives a new queen acquisition program can be a quite costly project. Although I note that there are numerous references including a couple of video presentations available if you search the internet.

Simplkomb

NEW WAY FOR COMB HONEY
By John Kennedy

A new product released at the NAHBE (North American Honey Bee Expo) in early January is making fast strides in the USA and Canadian bee equipment market where multiple distributors have already been appointed.

It looks like 25,000 units have already been sold.

Put simply, Simplkomb (patent pending) is a new way of producing comb honey, by the bees in the hive.

In most countries comb honey in 400mm sections sells for a premium price.

Simplkomb is a plastic cassette system designed to fit inside timber frames that have an internal measurement of 17.5 inches by 5.25 inches, or basically an Ideal frame (or in North America described as a "medium frame) with a grooved top and bottom bar.

Simplkomb comprises two flat plastic sheets which are designed to snap together to form the comb.

The tab on the bottom of each sheet is fitted into the grooved bottom bar and when assembled also snaps into the groove of the top bar/

Each cassette sheet is recommended to be waxed before putting the frame into the hives.

Each sheet section provides four comb sections and when filled can be snapped off to provide the comb container.

It is claimed to be a faster, less messy way of producing comb honey sections, at a less expensive cost than alternative methods like Ross Rounds.

There is an informative video presentation on the website at www.simplkomb.com

The SimplKomb honey business also provides wax frames that produce small blocks of wax (about the size of ice-cream container sized blocks) that are ideal for waxing the SimplKomb sections.

They recommend that you use wax preferably from your own hive as it will be appealing to the bees.

SimplKomb is an innovation developed by Fry Family Farms, an 80 hectare farm in Minnesota that combines a range of small farming activity with beekeeping.

Although not yet appearing in the Australasian market, the SimplKomb method of producing comb honey sections is claimed to be easier, less messy and inexpensive in producing four cassettes of comb-honey per unit in timber frames with top and bottom grooved bars.
Simplkomb (patent pending) has already received strong market traction with multiple resellers appointed in both the US and Canadian beekeeping sector.

A Comeback For Creamed Honey

By John Kennedy

A new release from Beechworth Honey may signify a comeback for creamed honey.
A relatively small number of honey producers offer creamed honey to their retail market, so Beechworth's new release could signal new interest in this product type.
Beechworth says in its release announcement that its creamed product will "enable honey lovers to say hello to the smooth spreadable delights of creamed honey".
Noting that it is pure natural honey that has been slowly stirred, which over time creates a luscious smooth texture.
"Think of it as a dreamy upgrade you never knew you needed. The creamed honey is spreadable, smooth and creamy with no added sugars or artificial ingredients".
As a gift pack Beechworth has created a six by 325 gram jars presentation, attractively packaged in a carry pack, which it is offering for $50 online and a saving of $11.
I took a bit of time to investigate where the crystallised product has its origins and why it seems so relatively unpopular these days.
I was interested to find that creamed honey was apparently first developed in the 1900s as a way to transport honey from Canada to England without it turning sour.
It seems it was originally developed by Elton Dyce who worked with the Ontario Agricultural College, and he learned that controlling the crystallisation process of honey could create a smoother longer lasting form of honey with no additives or preservatives.
So, to make creamed honey you have the choice of stirring or using a starter (just like a sourdough starter) where a batch of crystallised honey has been prepared with the size of crystals desired. By adding this to the honey source the two, including the raw honey, will start to crystallise. Over a period of a couple of weeks a thick smooth honey will result.

Melbourne Section Report

In this report: Competition season approaches. We are getting into conference season, too. Pack down is imminent. The VAA AGM and the VAA MS AGM. Varroa T2M. Apiary season at the Farm.

Welcome to the VAA Melbourne Section report where the lives of beekeepers do not hang in the balance. The opportunities are, however, present and worth a read.

Competition Season

The VAA Conference includes the VAA Honey Competition (with about 25 categories) in June in Wonthaggi. Prior to this, each branch and club should hold their own competitions and their own training of competitors. The VAA MS honey competition is in May with the photography competition in April. Also in April, the MS will include training in Preparing for Competitions. We want heaps of entries sent to the VAA Honey competition: And remember that the winner of the local competition has no advantage when it gets to the VAA Competition. I love subjective (but expert) decision making!!

Conference Season

The first VAA Recreational conference was held in Cairnlea in March this year - fully booked and now planned for a beepeat next year.

The VAA state conference is at Wonthaggi, South Gippsland, from the 4th to the 6th June 2024. Other states and groups are having conferences. These are all valuable options as we head into uncharted waters with Varroa, as well as important networking and development opportunities.

Pack Down

It's that time of year, and the MS March Meeting (M3 for short!) focused on what to do as the nectar options decrease, the weather cools down and the bees prepare for a long kip. There are no two apiarists or apiaries in the same situation or able to survive on cookie cutter solutions. Keep thinking and keep trying things. Keep notes of what has happened and what you are planning and when. Compare with last year, and try to predict, within tolerances, what will happen next. Then enjoy the peace and quiet of … equipment maintenance!

The VAA AGM and the VAA MS AGM

The VAA AGM is on Wednesday the 5th of June at Wonthaggi. The New Board will be confirmed via prior elections and possibly elections at the AGM.

The Melbourne Section holds its AGM at the July meeting. The new committee will be elected from the floor of the meeting (is the usual way).

While not earth shattering, the VAA MS committee is responsible for arranging the monthly meetings and other activities for the Melbourne beekeepers. More than beekeeping abilities are required, so please put up a hand if you can help run the MS…. or the VAA for that matter.

Varroa T2M

The Melbourne Section is fully committed to support our beekeepers with information and insight regarding the transition to management now that Varroa is considered resident in Australia. There is still so much to learn about Varroa from other countries, but we are still to find out what will actually happen here. With some differences in the virus types in our Varroa infestation, we should not assume anything about how we will be affected. Stay positive and keep involved with the monthly meetings and other events as advertised. We will try to get AgVic speakers as soon as they are available.

The Collingwood Apiary

The apiary at the Collingwood Children's farm has had a mediocre season. Especially in comparison to many apiaries not far away and the 'surely obvious' benefit of being on the Yarra River. About total 20 kg of honey from numerous hives needs a good think about what might be holding the hives back. Contributions welcomed.

About half the hives have been requeened in March and new queens from the best performing hives will be raised in Spring for the rest of the hives. The common apiary issues of grass, water and safety of nearby people are being revisited.

As always, I invite you to come to the apiary on an Open Day and hive a great time with other beekeepers and other bees!

Overall, the Melbourne Section is proud to be continuing the 65 plus years of history for our branch.

See you at a hive soon.

Rob Kerr

VAA Melbourne Section Secretary

ANOTHER MITE BEE DETECTED IN NORTHWEST W.A.

By John Kennedy

Yes, another honeybee mite has arrived in Western Australia. Remember its name - it's Apis Florea or the Red Dwarf Honey Mite.

This comes courtesy of an announcement from the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and their PaDis (Pest and Disease Information Service).

Red Dwarf Honey Bees are a noted vector for numerous exotic bee pests including bee diseases, internal and external mites (Euvarroa a close relative of varroa) and other bee viruses. It has been located on the Burrup Peninsula near Karratha in WA's northwest where a quarantine area has been established. The state's beekeepers have been asked to monitor their hives for any unusual bees or nests. The bee is a social bee which lives in a colony of about 3000 insects and may impact European honey bees. They are said to migrate, swarm and abscond readily making them a threat for exotic incursions and to the Australian environment. The Red Dwarf is native to Asia and commonly found in tropical areas. It is naturally distributed from the Indian subcontinent throughout South East Asia and through the Malaysian Peninsula but before this intercept, is not known to be present in Australia.

The WA Departmental announcement can be sourced from www.agric.wa.gov.au/red dwarf honey bee

USA Commercial Beekeeping Not OK

By John Kennedy

According to a report just published in the magazine Bee Culture, a survey of several successful commercial beekeeping operations confirms that things are not OK.

The report notes that the price of North American honey is poor and that "it is very possible that Argentina, a significant honey producing country, will experience yet another default and currency devaluation, pressuring export prices. The market is uncertain".

The article details the significant cost burdens for commercial operators. One being the cost of sugar put at 1000 pounds at a cost of .50 cents per pound for a 15,000 hive commercial apiary thus $500,000 or equal to 66 pounds per colony.

Freight costs, especially for almond pollination in California, is another major factor identified saying "freight is really expensive. It is now $US3.85 for a semi load of bees over 2000 miles so that cost is $7000.

"At $5.20 a mile that's $10,400 one way, then to transfer those hives north after almond pollination that's another substantial outgoing".

The article analyses some typical profit and loss scenarios for large commercial operations based on different combinations of pollination service incomes, the sale of bees and hives of all forms, together with income from honey sales, and other factors like operating costs of staff labour, insurances and other outgoings together with the likely exposure to seasonal factors like unkind or adverse weather conditions and notes...

"Big risks include hive health, rainfall, market conditions, demand for pollination services, demand for the honey crop and the price earned from those pollination services and sale of the honey crop.

"Neither the almond pollination market nor the honey market is well informed: they are not transparent".

It notes that this year as usual there were a lot of beekeepers looking for pollination contracts and colonies were worth stealing, as beekeepers learn.

As usual, on February 1 there was an oversupply of beehive woodenware that used to house live colonies.

Then by February 15 there was a scarcity of sufficiently strong colonies to meet pollination contracts adding this has been true for most of the past 20 years,

The article counsels that it is important for US commercial beekeepers to have relationships with almond, plum, apple, cranberry, blueberry, vine crop growers and carrot seed producers as examples, and to establish relationships with reliable honey packers that will endure decades of market ups and downs.

It says the better a beekeeper understands their own operating expenses and income, the better they will understand the opportunities for financially successful commercial beekeeping.

TOM SEELEY - NEW BOOK

By John Kennedy

In the beekeeping world there are clearly best selling writers. On top of the list must be Dr Tom Seeley who has done much in recent decades to demystify bees and beekeeping. He has devoted a lifetime to the study of honey bees and their colonies, and has managed to unravel the secrets of these wondrous insects in a career spanning six decades.

And now an important new Seeley title has hit the bookshelves - *Piping Hot Bees* – subtitled *Boisterous Buzz-Runners* with the added line of *20 Mysteries of Honey Bee Behaviour Solved*.

It published by Princeton University Press and while copies are probably available elsewhere Northern Bee Books in the UK has already signified its availability. It is a hardback of 296 pages weighing 275 grams and this reseller has it available for 25 pounds sterling plus $A conversion and postage and shipping.

In their release announcement they comment "a biologist's up close account of how he (Seeley) and fellow biologists cracked long-standing puzzles about honey bee behaviour."

I love this book, he weaves illuminating personal stories with the latest science, explaining such mysteries as how worker bees function as scouts to choose a home site for the colony, furnish their home with beeswax combs, and stock it with brood and food while keeping tens of thousands of colony inhabitants warm and defended from intruders. Along the way, he shares the experiences that drew him to these studies, the small observations that led to big breakthroughs, and the sense of excitement that came with probing each mystery.

The book is richly illustrated and provides a rare look at how a singularly passionate scientist and his colleagues deciphered the pipings, shakings, and puzzling tremble dances of honey bees, and how this journey of scientific discovery continues to shape our understanding of these remarkable intelligent and vitally important insects.

Looks like Seeley's new book will be a must have for all enquiring and participating beekeepers.

SWARM SEASON – TRY A RUSSIAN SCION

By John Kennedy

It's not all that far away but the spring swarm season will soon be upon us. So, why not try a Russian Scion swarm attractant, known in the USA as a "swarm magnet". There are a couple of useful video sources with facebook videos and instructions. I've come across two - one is Whistle Ticket, and another is Woolie's Bees, so if you search these some instructions should be forthcoming on methods and construction.

One of these sites suggests that its an ideal method for collecting swarms from your own hives. Both employ an attractant, either lemon grass oil or old comb, to cause bees to collect on a Russian Scion. Another uses a plastic bucket with the lid and a pole beneath with an attractant to attract the bees. Then the collected swarm can be moved into the bucket for travel and transfer to a permanent hive.

Like a lot of ideas it's one of those that you'll never know whether it works until you give it a try yourself!

New Books And Reprints

By John Kennedy

SNELGROVE ON QUEEN INTRODUCTION

A number of informative, important and educational beekeeping textbooks are reaching the reprint stage.

L.E Snelgrove's *The Introduction of Queen Bees* is one of the most important texts, which he authored in 1940.

He said in his original introduction that his intention was to write an account of the new methods of Queen Introduction that he had devised.

Snelgrove noted that apart from two very small brochures, one by Raynor in 1884, and another by Keen in 1938, there was no book in the English language as far as he could ascertain or in any foreign language, that was specifically devoted to the important subject of Queen Introduction.

Now Northern Bee Books has released a reprint of the most recent 2008 reprint of Snelgrove's book.

It is a paperback of 208 pages weighing 250 grams which they (www.northernbeebooks.co.uk) are retailing at 16 pounds sterling, plus $A conversion and postage.

This edition of Snelgrove on Queen Introduction is a work in 12 chapters plus an appendix and index.

To summarise there are chapters on the brief history, the importance of, the conditions affecting, and fertile workers in relation to queen introduction.

He also discusses Queen cages, travelling and introducing them, the 'Snelgrove One Hour Method' and others, the introduction of virgin queens and requeening by queen cell.

Snelgrove comments in his original preface that "at the end of the book, I have given a summary of the more important methods of queen introduction with an estimate of the value of each in practice.

"This summary is for the convenience of the busy beekeeper who may wish to select and employ a particular method in a hurry.

"It should be used after only after a perusal of the full descriptions in the text".

He concludes "I venture to hope that the book will prove to be of practical value to the average beekeeper and of interest to the scientific student and teacher of beekeeping, that it will be regarded as filling a void in beekeeping literature".

NEW BOOK – LOCAL QUEENS ARE BEST

Here's a new book which should create plenty of interest at many levels of beekeeping.

It comes from the irrepressible Northern Bee Books (www.northernbeebooks.co.uk) and it carries the title *Local Queens Are Best* – subtitled *How to simply rear your own*.

It is authored by Bruce Henderson Smith, and is a 72 page paperback, with an asking price of 12 pounds 95 sterling plus conversion and postage locally.

In the introduction is a quote "say queen rearing to most beekeepers and they will probably run a mile.

"This book aims to demystify the mysteries of simple queen rearing on a small scale, which can be used by any beekeeper with a few years of experience and a small number of hives".

The book takes a practical approach with the theory and a how to do it chapter including the equipment requirements, a timetable and an appendix with plenty of photographs and a list of references and other sources of information.

The book notes that it may take a couple of attempts and may require good fortune regarding the weather, and it may result in a few more queens than you personally need, but there are always neighbouring beekeepers that will be grateful for your excess.

The publishers' note says it is richly illustrated with a first-hand commentary of what to look for and they highly recommend it for any beekeeper, even with modest experience, who wishes to improve their stock.

GA Jackson: A busy girl making the most of the early days of Autumn

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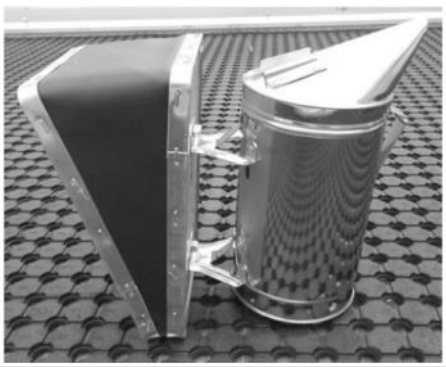

Contacts

VAA Resources Management Comm.

Chairman: Ken Gell,
Mob: 0428 506 752
gellshoneymaryborough@gmail.com
Secretary:
Angela Enbom
0400 261 233
angela_enbom@yahoo.com

Regional Managers
Central region:
Millie Enbom-Goad
Ph: 0400 083 582
millie_enbomgoad@yahoo.com.au

North East region:
Andrew McCallum
Mob: 0448 577 780
rawhoneyvic@gmail.com

Sunraysia region:
Ron Robinson,
Ph: 03 5024 1068
honeybee711@bigpond.com

Port Phillip region:
Ashley Smith
Mob: 0419 155 857
lakesidehoney@outlook.com

Gippsland region:
Ian Cane, Mob: 0428 516 325
iancane@bigpond.com.au

Western region:
Daryl Hobbs
0427 340 197

Agriculture Victoria:

Agriculture Victoria: Apiary team
Website: Honey bees | Livestock and animals | Agriculture Victoria
Website:
www.agricultre.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/honey-bees
To report a suspect exotic please call: Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881
For enquiries and endemic disease notification please use:
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Email honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au.
The Varroa project team can also be contacted at the above email.

For enquiries related to permits and movement restrictions:
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For beekeeper registration please log onto BeeMAX
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or call the Bee Registration Helpline 1800 356 761

Current Apiary Officers

Nikki Jones
Biosecurity Manager Apiary
1 Taylor Street, Epsom,
Victoria, Australia 3551
Mob: 0428 617 071
Email: honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au

Karla Williams
Biosecurity Officer Apiary
1 McKoy Street, Wodonga,
Victoria, 3690
Mob: 0417 121 987
Email: honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au

Adam Maxwell,
Biosecurity Officer Apiary
475-485 Mickleham Road,
Attwood, Victoria, 3049
Mob: 0428 893 595
Email: honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au

Karyn Di Florio
Bee Biosecurity Officer
Email: honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au

If you can't reach an Officer and need to talk to someone urgently, please call the Customer Service Centre: Ph: 136 186

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP):

BAIRNSDALE:
Tracey West 03 5152 0422
BALLARAT:
Jennifer Bromley 0448 389 270
BENDIGO:
Melissa Dole 0436 615 569
Melissa.Dole@delwp.vic.gov.au
GEELONG
Linda Laurie 03 5233 5519
HEYWOOD
Jacki Hayward 03 5527 0444
HORSHAM:
Jess Dickerson 0437 913 538
MILDURA:
Dan Cadmore 03 5051 4349
SEYMOUR:
Kathryn Hamono 03 5735 4300
WODONGA:
Lloyd Beaty 02 6043 7936

Other contacts

Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC):
CEO: Danny Le Feuvre
Mob: 0402 467 780
AHBIC@Honeybee.org.au
PO Box 42, Jamison Centre,
Macquarie ACT 2614
www.honeybee.org.au

Crop Pollination Association
Stephen Targett,
Ph 0428 649 321

Honey Bee Research & Development committee (HBRDC)
Annie Stoddart
Program Coordinator Research
02 69236918
Annie.stoddart@agrifutures.com.au

VFF State Beekeeping Branch:
Secretary: Gail Rochelmeyer
Mob: 0408 592 091

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The Australian Bee Journal welcomes contributions from beekeepers and others for inclusion in the journal. Please send your original bee and honey related photos, articles, handy hints, anecdotes, club activities etc to abjeditors@yahoo.com

Photo: Geoff Jackson

Contacts

VAA Inc Regional Groups

Bendigo Branch:
Carol Maunder,
Ph: 03 5446 7911
secretarybendigobranch-vaa@gmail.com
General Information Q&A Meetings - *1st Wed. each month (except Jan & Dec)*
Dinner at 6.00pm *(optional)*
Meeting at 7.00 pm.
Lakeside Hotel, Bendigo.
Executive Committee Meeting: 3rd Wed month as required.
Venue: As notified.
Please register to attend all Meetings

Melbourne Section:
Secretary, Rob Kerr
Ph: 0421 078 387
Vaamelbournesection@hotmail.com
www.vicbeekeepers.com.au/Melbourne-Section
Information/ Education Meetings: from 7:30 pm the last Thursday of each month except December
Location: Church of Christ,
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Sunraysia Branch:
Trevor Monson,
Ph: 03 5024 8674.
monsonshoney@bigpond.com

VAA Inc. Library Trust
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Affiliated Organisations

Central Victorian Apiarists' Association Inc (CVAA Inc.):
Millie Enbom-Goad
Ph: 0400 083 582
cvaa_inc@outlook.com

Gippsland Apiarists' Association Inc. (GAA Inc.):
Sue Harding,
Mob: 0408 343 779
hardstein@bigpond.com

North Eastern Apiarists' Association Inc. (NEAA Inc.):
Secretary: Moss McCallum
secretary.neaa@gmail.com

"J" Beekeeping Club Inc.
35 Duncan's Lane, Diggers Rest
Meet on the 2nd Wednesday each month at 7pm

Southside Beekeepers Club:
Secretary: Ted Cottle
Ph: 0428 429 547
ted@southsidebeekeepers.com.au
7.30pm on the 4th Wed each month at Monterey Secondary College,
21 Silvertop St, Frankston North

Geelong Beekeepers Club
Pres: Stephen Fridey
Ph: 0401 897 579
info@geelongbeekeepersclub.org.au
Meetings third Friday of the month at Belmont Masonic Centre,
25 Regent Street, Belmont

Latrobe Valley Beekeepers Assoc.
President: Sean-Paul Smith
E: LatrobeValleyBees@gmail.com
Meets 7-9pm first Tuesday each month, Old Moe Netball Courts, 99 Savages Rd. Moe
P.O. Box 323 Newborough 3825
Mob: 0466 041 199

Woodend Bee-Friendly Society
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E: wbfs@mrsg.org.au

South Gippsland Beekeepers Inc. Secretary: Anna Jones
Mob: 0411 770 062
secretary@sgbeekeepers.org.au
Web:http://www.southgippslandbeekeepers.org.au/
Meetings: second Thursday of the month at St Peters Anglican Church Hall, Cnr McCartin St. & Bruce St., Leongatha

Melbourne Beekeepers Club Inc:
Web:melbournebeekeepersclub.org.au
E: secretary@melbournebeekeepersclub.org.au

Northwestern Bee Club Inc.
President: Roger Mitchell
Mob. 0407 427 431
northwesternbeeclub@gmail.com
Web: https://www.nwbee.club/

Mornington Peninsula Beekeepers Association :
P.O. Box 186, Mornington, 3931
Ph: 0401 965 558
E: admin@mpba.org.au
Monthly MPBA Club Meeting - 4th Wednesday of every month at 7pm Mornington Park Pavilion, 9 Flinders Drive, Mornington

Moonee Valley Beekeepers Club Inc. (MVBC Inc.)
Secretary: Paul Kucera
mvbeekeepersclub@gmail.com
Meets at 7pm every 2nd Tuesday of the month at Maribyrnong Park Bowls Club, 195 Holmes Rd, Moonee Ponds, VIC 3039

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Ph: 0427 552 001
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