AUSTRALIAN BEE JOURNAL

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VAA Recreational Beekeepers Conference 2025… pp 3 & 9

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Program & Speakers

• Honey bee viruses	Emily Remnant (via zoom)
• Molecular testing for AFB	Olivia Ducommun-Dit-Verron
• Varroa update	Elizabeth Frost
• Heat treatment for varroa	Mike Allerton
• Speech-to-text record keeping	Liz Barbour
• Chemistry of Honey	Liz Barbour
• Sweet Distinction: Elevate your honey brand	Jessica Locarnini
• Winning honey competitions	Peter Adams
• Food safety & compliance	Angelique Drew
• How honeybee swarms relocate	Tino Corsetti
• Winter welfare for your bees	Stephen Davey
• Reliable Requeening	Andrew Wootton
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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.

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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 www.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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AUSTRALIAN BEE JOURNAL

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FEBRUARY 2025 - Volume 106 - No 2

Recreational Beekeepers Conference	3/9
Jamie's Mystery Tree Responses	6
VAA Vice President's Report	7
Jodie Goldsworthy AM	10
NZ Manuka Problems / Dalan Update	11
New Book On Propolis	12
New Book On Genetic Priorities	13
Bendigo Branch VAA Report	14
AHBIC: Coloss Is Live / World Bee Day	16
HiveMeet: A New VAA Initiative	17
AHBIC CEO Update	18
Overseas News	20
AHBIC Important Biosecurity Update	21
VAA Committee: Getting Things Done	22
ABC Rural News	23
Melbourne Section VAA Report	24
An Abandoned Wild Hive / BBKA Spring Convention	28
Research: Pesticide Impact	29
Research: Varroa Treatment Timing	30
Small Hive Beetle Suggestion	31
Contacts	32/33
Classifieds / Members / Index of Advertisers	34

Cover photo: Jamie Trimby. Bee gathering pollen on Callistemon.

Deadline for copy for the March 2025 journal is
10pm on Saturday 1st of March 2025.

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

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Jamie's Mystery Tree from Jan. ABJ: Responses

Hi, I could be mistaken, but I believe the tree is the yellow form of Eucalyptus platypus!
Howard P.

The tree could be a salmon gum. Just a guess!
David W.

Some nice photography work of Jamie.

I think that it is worth having a look at Swamp mallet (E.spathulata) as a starting point. Without having close up specifics.
It reminded me immediately of the front dust cover of *Eucalypts of the Western Australian Goldfields* by G.M.Chippendale. Just my first reaction.
Interesting to hear of other responses.
Rob G.

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VAA Vice President's Report

As we embark on the new year, it is important to acknowledge the resilience of our industry, especially as we continue to face challenges such as bushfires, poor productivity, and the looming threat of pests like varroa. Despite these difficulties, our beekeeping community remains steadfast and committed to ensuring the health and success of our hives.

Industry Resilience in Challenging Times

In January, we saw the aftermath and reignition of the Grampian bushfires and the dramatic Little Desert bushfire. While the immediate need for assistance by affected beekeepers with clearing sites appears minimal, the VAA Inc. remains ready to mobilise our member network should further support be required. Several members have offered assistance, and the VAA is working closely with Ag Vic and the affected beekeepers to connect resources and beekeepers when needed. The fires are a stark reminder of how vulnerable our environment and industry can be, yet we continue to demonstrate resilience in recovery.

Managed honeybees are more critical than ever to food security, both locally and globally. Currently more than 170,000 hectares have been burnt across these two areas in the west of the state, devastating resources that underpin our food security. As pollinators of many of the crops that make up our food supply, bees play an irreplaceable role in the ecosystem. As an association, we must continue to lead efforts in bee health and ensure the sustainability of our pollination services, particularly as we face increasing challenges from pests, diseases, and environmental factors.

Leadership and Upcoming Initiatives

Looking ahead, the VAA Inc. has several exciting initiatives to support beekeepers across Victoria. The Recreational Beekeeping Conference this March is a key opportunity for beekeepers to gain valuable insights on topics ranging from generating income through beekeeping to managing biosecurity risks like AFB, varroa, and honeybee viruses. The event will feature expert speakers and hands-on workshops designed to enhance beekeepers' skills and confidence.

In addition, we are actively preparing for our Annual Conference and AGM in Beechworth this June. This will be a significant gathering, with discussions on the pressing issues facing the beekeeping industry and important updates to the VAA's constitution. This event will be crucial for continuing the development of our industry and strengthening the connection among beekeepers.

We are also excited to soon launch *HiveMeet*, our new digital platform aimed at improving communication and collaboration within the beekeeping community. While this is still in its early stages, we are confident it will serve as an invaluable tool for beekeepers to connect and share knowledge.

Recognising Excellence: Jodie Goldsworthy

On behalf of all VAA Inc. members, I would like to personally congratulate Jodie Goldsworthy, co-founder and Director of Beechworth Honey, for being appointed Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in recognition of her outstanding service to the Australian and Worldwide beekeeping. Jodie's leadership and dedication to both the beekeeping profession and to the broader agricultural community have been a true inspiration. Her commitment to bee health, pollination services, and the sustainability of our industry is unparalleled. Jodie, your tireless efforts continue to shape the future of beekeeping, and we are proud to see your exceptional contributions recognised.

Research and Development

The VAA Inc. is also committed to supporting research that furthers our understanding of bee health and management. We have funded a grant for Gopika Bhasi, a PhD student at La Trobe University, who is pioneering a new, non-invasive method to detect bee pathogens through honey samples. This research will help improve our ability to monitor and manage diseases without stressing bee populations. Gopika will present her findings at the eDNA Conference in New Zealand this February, and at our Beechworth conference in June.

Looking Ahead

As we move into 2025, there is much to look forward to. The upcoming conferences, the launch of *HiveMeet*, and ongoing research efforts are just a few examples of the exciting developments within the VAA Inc. While challenges remain, our collective strength and determination ensure that we will continue to thrive and advocate for the health of our bees and our industry.

Upcoming Dates:

- Recreational Beekeeping Conference: March 29, 2025 (Sunbury)
- Annual Conference & AGM: June 11-13, 2025 (Beechworth)

Warm regards,
Lindsay Callaway
Vice President, VAA Inc.

Photo: Lindsay Callaway

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2025 Recreational Beekeeping Conference

See You in Sunbury

The VAA's Recreational and Education Subcommittees are excited to invite recreational beekeepers to our second annual conference to be held on Saturday 29th March in Sunbury. The venue for the event is the Hume Global Learning Centre. The conference is building on the success of our 2024 event where 93% of participants indicated that the conference last year met or exceeded their expectations and was good value for money. Our 2024 conference feedback also indicated that participants appreciated a mix of topics that appealed to both novice beekeepers and beekeepers with more experience.

There are three themes to this year's conference: Beekeeping Basics, Biosecurity and Honey Quality.

Beekeeping Basics

Within this theme, we have speakers on a range of topics including reliable requeening, winter pack down strategies, how to generate income from your beekeeping hobby as well as how to ensure you are compliant with food safety regulations if you decide to start selling your honey. We'll also present an innovative technology that will allow beekeepers to make speech-to-text notes during their hive inspections.

Biosecurity

No beekeeping conference would be complete, these days, without a session on varroa. We'll be looking at the current state of the incursion in Australia as well as presenting an innovative heat-treatment device for dealing with varroa infestations. Thankfully, varroa has not become endemic across the state this season so we are including other fascinating biosecurity topics including an overview of the viruses that affect honey bees and some current research on American Foul Brood.

Honey Quality

Australian beekeepers produce some of the world's most unique honey due to our reliance on massive eucalypt and other native tree flowering. We've invited a globally recognised leader in honey testing and classification to speak on the chemistry of honey. We have Australia's only honey sommelier speaking on how to elevate your honey brand and another speaker on strategies and techniques for winning entries in your next honey competition.

Trade Stalls & More!

In addition to this amazing program of speakers, we have some of our state's best beekeeping supply businesses attending with trade stalls so you can stock up on everything from frames to foundation and hives to honey-processing equipment. The event is catered with morning and afternoon tea and a delicious lunch. For those of you who want to make this a weekend of beekeeping expertise, the Transition to Management team is holding a full day varroa workshop at the same venue on Sunday, 30th March.

Early bird pricing is in effect. Enrol soon before spaces fill up. If you are a member of one of our many affiliate clubs around the state, check with your club's leadership team for special registration fees.

You can enrol at
https://vicbeekeepers.com.au/event-5936461

The Australian Bee Journal welcomes contributions and photos from readers and members. Please send any letters, articles or photos to abjeditors@yahoo.com

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Jodie Goldsworthy, AM

JODIE GOLDSWORTHY, AM
MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

By John Kennedy

It is always extremely pleasing to see a significant member of the Australian beekeeping community officially recognized, in this case in this year's Australia Day Awards.

Jodie Goldsworthy was the recipient of the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) Award in "recognition for significant service to Australia's primary industries – specifically the honey bee and pollination sector".

The VAA board and team is delighted to recognise Jodie's award and extends its pleasure at this official recognition of a career devoted to beekeeping and its attendant pursuits.

Jodie is of course the co-founder, with her husband Steve, of the thriving and prominent public business of Beechworth Honey.

Jodie has always had a deep love of nature and a passion for the world of bees and beekeeping.

Her life and career has been one of persistence, tenacity. collaboration and ambition.

She has always advocated for change, driven global challenges to protect bees and beekeepers, shaped industry policies and advocacy and been building always for the future.

Along the way the Beechworth Honey business has grown to be one of the most recognised Australian "brand names" and commercial success stories.

The company has its thoroughly impressive headquarters store in Beechworth township, another retail site in the City of Melbourne, and according to industry mail is on the verge of opening another retail store in Healesville, the prominent tourism and visitor centre for the thriving Yarra Valley wine industry.

Photos supplied by Beechworth Honey

NZ Seeking To Overcome Manuka Problems

By John Kennedy

The Manuka honey industry in New Zealand is seeking to overcome a series of problems caused by over production of Manuka honey and various problems related to it.

Hive numbers are said to be down 34.5% with the large honey surplus and weaker consumer demand tipping the scales the wrong way. Even an adverse summer last year is thought to have led to a 45% decrease in honey production caused by heavy rains.

There is also a case that rejection of varroa strips, and a reversal of the bee's responses is also causing hive numbers to decline due to lower response to varroa mite infestation. There is said to be several hundred tonnes of lower grade Manuka in bulk honey stores in the country.

While significant sales (like $NZ500 for a jar in Harrods in London for a premium Manuka are trumpeted) the reality is much different.

Last year the beekeeping industry formed Apiculture New Zealand to combine the Agriculture Department, the representative industry bodies, honey exporters, commercial beekeepers and other industry bodies on the premise that there is a shared belief that the industry is stronger together.

This move was galvanised by the holding of "Thriving Together: Future Proofing the New Zealand Apiculture Sector" with the related one day Conference held in June last year.

The proceedings and notes from the Conference are still accessible by a web search, and although fairly long, it is worthy of a watch.

The conference also included a presentation from the NZ wine industry, and although only one percent of world wine production, it performs ahead of its weight using the Brand NZ banner as its difference.

Some of the problems of Manuka were raised at the conference.

One speaker raised the issue of the path to market in the UK where Manuka suffers from a high degree of loss due to theft. There is a limited number of premium supermarkets or quality food provedors who stock the high priced product.

And usually, it is displayed behind security-like screens or protective shelving as single bottles.

When the retailers decided to present the product behind empty facsimile jars even these were stolen.

The product was also judged as unsuitable to the mainstream supermarkets like Tesco and others because it usually requires some sales support to garner the sales, and the mainstream popular UK supermarkets are seeking to reduce their in-store staff and have a preference for self-operated check outs.

Apiculture New Zealand has come up with a promotion 'Move Over Manuka' – with five other delicious native and premium honeys to enjoy.

Those presented are Pohutukawa honey, Tawari, Kamahi, Hanuka and Rata, and they say increasing the profile of more native honeys would benefit the apiculture industry, build resilience into beekeeping businesses, diversify exports over time and help maintain ecological diversity – which is important to NZ's local fauna.

The Apiculture Conference Report of only 20 pages can be downloaded at https://apinz.org.nz/

Another interesting view on beekeepers' problems is presented by a NZ Herald video featuring a veteran beekeeper who said the industry simply has too many beehives (although they have reportedly declined from over 800,000 to about 600,000 and there is too much competition for productive sites and overcrowding of numbers.

DALAN UPDATES ON VACCINES FOR BEES

By John Kennedy

Dalan Animal Health, the very innovative US developer of vaccines for bees, in its latest newsletter (January 2025) has provided an update on its work. It prefaces its remarks with a warning that notes that "we are focusing on building a strong foundation… for an industry where innovation can be scarce, keeping an open mind to new technology is more important than ever… and our mission is to advance bee health and sustainable beekeeping… we continue to champion practices that ensure a thriving future for bees and beekeepers alike."

Dalan participated in the recent NAHBE where it says its representatives hosted an engaging discussion on the association of DWV (Deformed Wing Virus) and mite load, sharing new research on the relationship between the two and how Dalan's new vaccine can play a role in the survival of infected colonies."

It notes that a recent edition of Forbes (the US business magazine) "takes a look into the beekeeping industry, featuring the story of Dalan, its origins, the hurdles facing honeybee vaccine adoption and the future possibilities for this technology".

It notes that two unlikely species, shrimps and honeybees, share more in common than you might think, "providing an opportunity to share similar technology across both species".

"Building on the development of our honeybee vaccine we've expanded into shrimp farming – a critical industry that like beekeeping, is plagued by significant losses from pests and diseases."

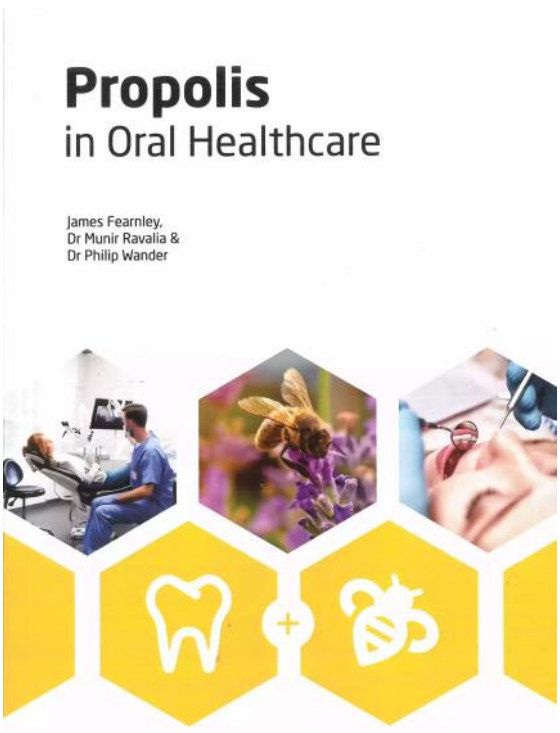
The Forbes article is available online and on Dalan's website (www.dalananimalhealth.com) but is protected by a pay for view demand in US dollars, although fairly nominal.

However, the company also offers a podcast by two of its experts on bee vaccines available on a relatively new podcast site Bee Love Beekeeping which is a Mann Like offshoot. In searching for the Dalan story recorded only last December I found quite a wealth of other topical beekeeping podcasts on the Bee Love Beekeeping YouTube site of relevant interest also. It's worth your review.

New Book *Propolis In Oral Health Care*

By John Kennedy

PROPOLIS IN ORAL HEALTH CARE
This is a new release from Northern Bee Books (see www.northernbeebooks.co.uk for $A pricing and postage).



The book is a softback of 110 pages with three eminent authors, all of a medical or research bent.

Propolis is one of the mysteries of the beehive.

It can be difficult to collect in quantity and thus difficult to commercialise, though it has all sorts of potentially therapeutic purposes of nominally high value.

The authors note that 'propolis is effectively the bee colony's "external immune defence mechanism".

"Honey bees collect resin from trees and plants and transform it in the hive adding wax to create propolis, an astonishingly versatile material which both provides structural support and a clinically sterile environment inside the hive.

They add "it has been used by man as a medicine since Egyptian times."

The preface here adds "recent research indicates that bees know exactly what chemicals to collect to deal with the dominant environmental challenges they face in their area. The same challenges which human being face in the same environment.

The three sections in the book look at the opportunities for propolis in oral health, the treatment of specific diseases and the uses in dentistry, including a summary of uses in oral health and medicine over the last 25 years is covered.

If you think you see an opportunity in turning your hives' propolis to a commercial product or market opportunity this book seems a great primer.

VAA Recreational Conference - Sat 29th March 2025

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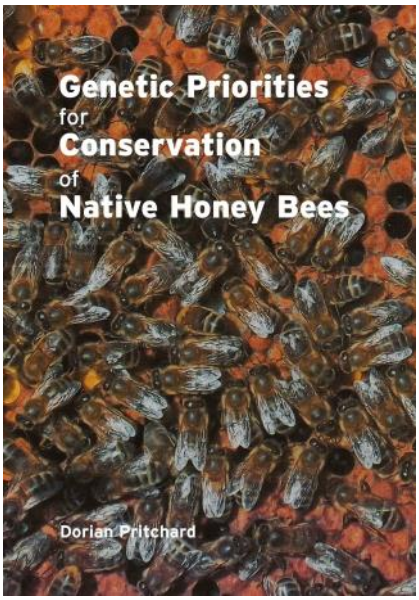
Genetic Priorities For Conservation Of Native Honey Bees

By John Kennedy

New Bee Book
GENETIC PRIORITIES for CONSERVATION OF NATIVE HONEY BEES



This is a heavyweight book (595 grams) authored by Donan Pritchard, who, the foreword states, has been a beekeeper in the UK since the 1970's, and a lecturer in genetics at the University of Newcastle on Tyne, and previously co-wrote a standard text *Medical Genetics at a Glance*.

Historically, he co-wrote *The Honey Bees of the UK* with Beowolf Cooper.

He edited the BIBBA magazine, has been a media commentator defending native bees, and also won the Joseph Stark Award for services to native honeybee conservation.

He has prepared numerous technical papers, with scientific reports published in many places and countries.

Donan has also held high roles with BIBBA and SICAMM (The European dark bee association) - he is thus a highly qualified geneticist and beekeeper.

He portends that "many commercial beekeepers and queen breeders, in their quest for even greater honey production, have taken the uniformity of their bees to even greater lengths by importing queens from distant areas, and also treating prophylactically for varroa and other diseases.

It says at the other extreme, conservationist proponents of 'let alone' or 'natural' or 'Darwinian' beekeeping have also become more evident.

His genetic experience and many years of practical beekeeping enable him to steer firmly a sustainable, and yet productive, course within this field with scientific authority.

Pritchard comes down firmly on the side of keeping only local bees which are adapted to their prevailing climate and environment, while conserving natural variation, and recommends beekeepers to allow all native colonies to reproduce without restraint, allowing nature to make her own choice of survivors.'

The topic is addressed by nine major chapters or sections, and a Conclusion, so it's one for the beekeeping purists.

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www.northernbeebooks.co.uk

Bendigo Branch Report

By Jamie Trimby

Early February sees Victoria extremely dry with forecasts indicating warmer weather ahead, no news for commercial and rural beekeepers, however the larger suburban areas are now experiencing a significant decline in foraging sources.

The larger towns maintain multiple pollen sources in lesser quantities, valuable nectar early in the day in small supply with the odd fortunate flow from non-local eucalypts.

Bendigo Branch meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month, from February to November, at the Quality Lakeside Hotel, 286 Napier Street, Bendigo from 6pm with the meeting commencing at 7pm. The Executive are planning Sunday activities typically towards the end of every second month.

In lieu of positive news of local flows or preparations for major seasonal changes I contemplated how I could provide something of value to recreational beekeepers.

The actions I am conducting during dearth conditions in summer may provide an idea or something to check for yourself.

I regularly monitor bee traffic in and out of each hive to observe if the traffic is proportionate to the hives population that I judge them to be in, in comparison to nearby hives.

In the evening bearding is also a handy indicator following hot days and the warmer nights. Bearding is when bees congregate on the front and sides of the hive to reduce the population within the hive to allow fanning for air movement to control the internal temperature and evaporate nectar.

Conducting hive inspections predominantly on weekends or after work can require some inspections in less than ideal conditions for the bees, due to my own hectic schedule. When in a rush it is beneficial to have all the equipment I need for the inspection I am about to perform, plus additional equipment, as when in a hurry Murphy's law increases.

Being a recreational beekeeper I have become aware when I am too rushed, or not mentally focused on the hive inspection the bees can tell.

I have found it worth the time to stop before inspecting the first hive and take a few deep breaths to commence the inspection in a calm manner. I do not know the science or the explanation behind it, but when I am rushed, anxious, or stressed from some previous activity I've noticed a correlation in the bees' demeanor with a greater probability of being defensive.

Next I consider my intention before opening a hive, what is my purpose of the inspection?

During peak summer I am focused on a basic brood inspection for any signs of disease, presence of a queen by sighting eggs, larvae or the queen. Before I get to the brood I check either the outside or second depending on space and bridging comb for carbohydrates initially in the form of honey and nectar

Photo top: Honey and nectar
Photo bottom: Nectar

Incidentally I like to use a swarm collection box (a five frame Nuc that is an extra 50mm deep, additional space below the frames) to place one or two frames I remove during a hive inspection, rather than lean the frames against the hive.

Whilst checking brood frames for any signs of disease and checking a laying queen is present, during summer I look to see if the larvae has much royal jelly surrounding it.

In Photo 3, (see next page) there is a reasonable amount of royal jelly surrounding the larvae. When a hive is very short on food the royal jelly will be very difficult to see, 1mm or less surrounding the larvae or just a hint of moisture under the larvae, in that situation I would be feed the hive with 1:1 sugar-water as soon as possible.

Bees raised on scarce royal jelly will likely be smaller, and less capable of foraging further and restricted in carrying capacity compared to bees raised on plentiful

(Continued on page 15)

VAA Recreational Conference Sat 29th March 2025

Bendigo Branch Report, cont'd

(Continued from page 14)

royal jelly.

No. 3

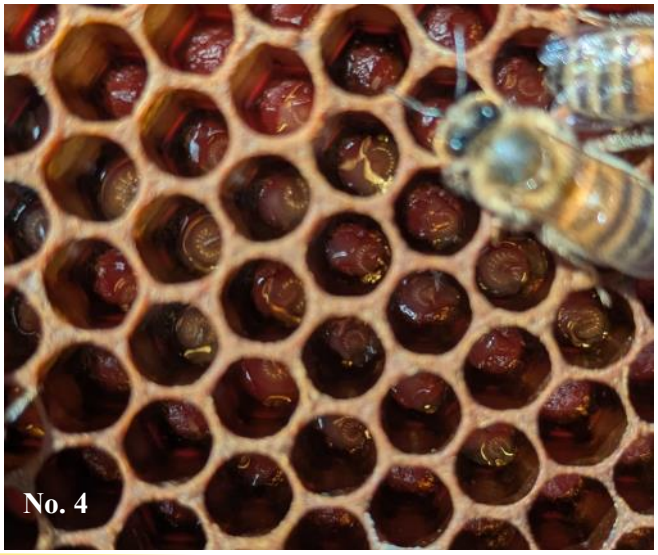
The next photo (number 4) has a very good amount of royal jelly for a stationary hive in summer with royal jelly covering the majority of the base of the cell, some cells appear to be swimming in royal jelly. To understand the food condition of my bees during summer I like to monitor the amount of the milky jelly surrounding the larvae.

I think the bees favour nectar for feeding larvae over honey, as it takes less processing by the bees in creating royal jelly, please let me know if this is incorrect.

When lightly smoking a hive I observe 80 to 90 percent of the bees gorging go for nectar over honey when both are in ample supply.

I hope I have provided food for thought, and your bees have plenty of food for raising brood.

Happy Beekeeping,
Jamie Trimby



No. 4

Photo: Jamie Trimby
Ribwort Plantain
Plantago lanceolata

AHBIC Newsletter Extract

2024 Australian Colony Loss Survey
COLOSS is live!

The 2024 Australian Colony Loss Survey is now open!

All beekeepers in Australia are invited to participate. The Australian COLOSS need beekeepers from across Australia, even those in areas that don't have varroa yet, to complete the survey so we can get the best possible information about its impacts and the other factors that affect colony health in Australia. The survey will also provide crucial insights into the impacts varroa is having, what management strategies are working and how much it is costing. The survey should take 7-15 minutes to complete online and is open until 10 March 2025. Please complete the survey as soon as possible!

What can COLOSS do for Aussie Beekeeping:

- The 2024 Australian Colony Loss Survey asks about colony losses over the 2023-24 beekeeping season and is for every beekeeping operation in Australia, large or small, whether they lost 0% or 100% of hives.
- It's vital that beekeepers from across the country take the survey, even those in areas that don't have varroa yet. We want to hear about all issues contributing to colony losses in Australia, varroa-related and otherwise
- This survey will provide vital information about the impacts varroa is having, what treatments/ management practices are working, and how much it is costing.

The survey will provide crucial information for how to manage varroa going forward and inform policies around bee health, which will be of immense benefit to the Australian honeybee industry. But we can't do it without help from beekeepers!

How to Participate:

- The survey will take 7-15 minutes to complete online and is open until 10 March 2025. Beekeepers can take the survey any time up until that date.

The survey is completely voluntary and all responses will be kept anonymous.

Mark your calendars, World Bee Day will be celebrated on Tuesday, 20 May with this year's theme, Bee inspired by nature to nourish us all. World Bee Day celebrates hard-working pollinators and this year's theme acknowledges the broad impact bees have on food security, biodiversity, innovation, design, art and so much more.
There are plenty of ways to participate. You could host a Great Bee Morning Tea, plant some pollinator-friendly trees, organise a bee-themed workshop or wear yellow to your local markets. Whatever you choose, be sure to register your World Bee Day event on the website to raise awareness and encourage people to participate in the festivities.
From the Wheen Bee Foundation newsletter

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HiveMeet - A New VAA Initiative

As we buckle up for varroa's onslaught, VAA is launching an exciting new program to help beekeepers build resilience through shared experience. We'll be holding live streaming meetings over the Internet, with expert commentators and especially, audience interaction on a regular monthly schedule.

The VAA has already established a very successful YouTube channel for distributing recordings of our conference presentations. Now building on this achievement, we have road tested live streaming using the same platform and developed what we are confident is a compelling format. A keynote presentation will be complemented by questions and comments from the audience. In addition, we propose to have brief update communications from the VAA's Board and Subcommittees enabling feedback and exploration of current issues affecting beekeeping and beekeepers.

As highlighted, managing varroa will have a strong emphasis. Our first presentation will feature case studies from the front line in NSW.

Save the date, Thursday March 6th at 8pm!

Andrew Wootton
on behalf of the VAA Education Committee

2024 VAA Board Nomination Procedure

Nominations for the position of Board member from Regional Associations and each Branch of the VAA are now being called for.
Nominations must be received by the VAA Returning Officer by 28 February 2025 at returning_officer@vicbeekeepers.com.au
As per the Victorian Apiarists Association Inc. Constitution May 2022
Types of Board membership and size of Board
D.4. (1) The Board consists of nine members:
(a) one member of the VAA appointed by each Regional Association.
(b) one member of the VAA appointed by each Branch.
(c) such number of generally elected Board members as will bring the total number of Board members for that year to nine.
(2) A regional association cannot exercise its right to appoint a Board member unless at the annual census date
(a) It has a minimum of 25 members who are also members of the VAA; or
(b) 75 per cent of its total membership are members of the VAA.
Board members must be able to communicate electronically.

AHBIC CEO Update

January 2025

Over the last month the AHBIC team have taken some much-needed time off to re-energise for the year ahead, so activities have temporarily slowed. Having said that we have been taking advantage of a few, dare I say, quieter weeks to work hard behind the scenes to get a lot of administrative work done. We have finalised the draft of the AHBIC 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan and circulated it to member bodies for consultation and developed a number of internal policies to ensure AHBIC is protected when employing staff and contractors, which is just some of the less outwards facing work required of the organisation.

Australia Day Honours List

A big congratulations to Jodie Goldsworthy who was appointed Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her services to primary industries and, in particular, beekeeping, pollination services and food security. We congratulate Jodie and thank her for contribution to our industry over many years.

ACT border regulations

In late December the ACT government announced the removal of all emergency regulations related to varroa border controls. This will make it much easier for beekeepers to transit through the territory in search of honey flows.

Detections on the NSW/QLD border

A new detection of varroa in hives across three apiaries at Boggabilla (near Goondiwindi) has gone live on the DPIRD NSW varroa heat map. This is the closest detection to the QLD border to date. QLD Biosecurity have a number of sentinel hives installed along the border with some very close to the new detection. QLD Biosecurity will continue to monitor the sentinel hives looking for natural movement across the border. No further detections have been found outside of NSW.

Biosecurity responses (outside of NSW varroa!)

The Red Dwarf Honey Bee response continues in northern WA with an additional colony found about 2km from the original IP but still on the peninsula. The colony was found after a number of forager observation in the area. Inclement weather has halted surveillance at the moment, but activities will resume once the weather passes.

A new detection of Asian Honey Bees has been found at the port of Townsville. This is in addition to the previously reported colonies found in-land at Townsville which were deemed to be part of the existing Cairns population. This new detection is not genetically related to the Cairns population and is considered to be new incursion. Testing for mites and virus have all come back negative and the colony has been destroyed. A communication push is in place in the Townsville area include targeting port workers to assist in detecting any other colonies. Biosecurity Queensland are confident there is just the single colony and they caught it relatively early but elevated surveillance

(Continued on page 19)

AHBIC CEO Update, cont'd

(Continued from page 18)

activities in the area will continue.

National Hive Numbers

Our annual hive registration survey was conducted over the last two months and have come in with some interesting results. Overall, the national hive count has dropped by 5% to 823,291 hives (previously 866,497). This has been influenced by a 13% drop in NSW and 10% drop in SA. The overall hive numbers have been supported by significant increase in Tasmania (likely due to new requirements to register hives coming into effect).

NSW and SA have seen a drop in registered commercial beekeepers by 17% and 18% respectively. This may reflect the very tough season in SA and the impact of varroa in NSW. The previous exponential growth in the popularity of recreational beekeeping has now stabilised with only a small increase in recreational beekeepers joining the industry (4%) over the last 12 months.

Apimondia honey show

In December Apimondia issued a statement that honey will not be a category at the Global Apimondia conference in Copenhagen, September 2025. In the very brief statement Apimondia said "The lessons learned from Canada 2019 and Chile 2023 were that adequate testing was impossible if we are to award winning honey at the Congress". They described this move as "necessitated by the inability to have honey fully tested for adulteration and make awards at the Congress".

This has made global news, and it is yet to be seen if it aids in the fight against adulteration or pushes consumers away from honey to alternatives. We will continue to monitor statements from Apimondia to see if anything can be used and implemented in Australia.

The Month Ahead

Over the next month the meetings start to ramp up again. The first steering committee for the Wheen Bee Foundation National Pollination Strategy will be held end of January, Almond industry pollination committee meeting, Evoke AG and Berry Quest all happening in February.

We are working on having a Federal Department of Agriculture honey bee workshop in early March in conjunction with an AHBIC board meeting. The purpose of the workshop is to improve the practical understanding of the decision makers and policy writers in Canberra. We hope this will raise awareness of our industry and build lasting relationships with the department.

Danny LeFeuvre
CEO

VAA Recreational Conference Sat 29th March 2025
See pages 3 and 9

Overseas News

By John Kennedy

Beekeeping in seriously cold climates

Success in beekeeping is really about learning from a mentor or another experienced beekeeper. If you have an interest in achieving results in (seriously) cold climates then Etienne Tardiff is your man. He is a successful beekeeper in the Yukon, where the temperature range is from minus 30 degrees C to plus 20 degrees C, but he notes the coldest can be minus 48 degrees C to the warmest of 33 degrees C in a season.

He runs eight hives raised from nukes and splits at an elevation of 760 metres, using Paradise polystyrene hives, and his goal is to run ten hives and two to four nukes.

Etienne has three bee yards with up to three hives in each and undertakes hive monitoring for hive weight and internal temperature and humidity. His local area is a mixed forest of spruce, pine, aspen and willows with a few open native meadows with prairie wildflowers, hence his honey is branded Yukon Wildflower.

He sees Yukon beekeeping as currently totalling 100 to 150 hives with a much larger potential since local farmers of haskap (a honeysuckle berry) and other berries are interested in pollination sources, and there is also honey production from honey dew.

The interesting aspect is that Etienne provides substantial continuing education about his own operations and the beekeeping potential of the Yukon, North West Territories and Alaska.

He has a substantial resource of information available from his website (www.northof60beekeeping.com) plus several video and Facebook presentations.

If his information and apparent success interest you he has about 500 worldwide subscribers to his quite regular updates.

The just released National Agricultural Statistics Service report for the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) has released its calculation of pollination costs for a range of important crops.

It finds that the cost to pollinate California's gigantic almond crop fell by 4% in 2024 with the average cost per colony for almonds falling from $US188 to $US181. Moreover, the average price per acre increased from $US201 to $US305 per acre for the same period. The USDA says that the total value of pollination provided in the two principal almond areas of California was $US353 million, down 1% of the assessed figure for 2023.

It also assessed the pollination costs for a range of other agricultural enterprises.

For the Cranberry industry it assessed the pollination costs per colony as 7% down on the previous year at $US88.8 per colony with the total value of pollination provided being $US18.5 million.

For blueberries the cost per colony fell 2% to $US 68 equal to a cost per acre of $US133 and with a total value to the industry of $US6.34 million.

Watermelons had the highest cost per colony with the figure up 22% to $US59.6 per colony and equal to a value for pollination of almost $US5 million.

The USDA says that the apple industry had a slight fall in cost per colony at $US58.1 with a total for pollination value exceeding $US30 million.

The total report can be reviewed at www.usda.librarycornell.edu/

The latest North American Honey Bee Expo held in Louisville Kentucky from January 2-4 has been judged an outstanding success by the organisers, exhibitors, speakers, and members of the public who attended.

Although, some of the comments on line from smaller scale hobby beekeepers say it was too expensive (at circa $US239 for a three day ticket, and that food prices and car parking on or adjacent to the giant Louisville Convention centre site were "too expansive".

A number of new beekeeping product introductions were scheduled for release at NAHBE, with some vendor reports saying they were all sold out either to visitors or for delivery after the show.

There are a number of Facebook reports available, from exhibitors in particular, from a web search. One of the best is an almost three hour Facebook report including interviews with and product descriptions (mostly in vendor alphabetical order) produced by prominent US beekeeping commentator Frederick Dunn.

Another useful resource, particularly if you are in search of new products, is the listing of exhibitors and their websites which remains currently on the show website www.nahbeexpo.com

Representation as exhibitors from this part of the world was fairly limited, although the Flow Hive, Alliance Woodware from New Zealand and Hornsby Beekeeping Supplies are all listed as participants.

Lorob Bees, a Baltimore, USA based, family owned company, which claims to have the "world's first battery powered oxalic acid vaporiser on the market" was an exhibitor at the recent Expo.

Lorob Bees offers a range of related equipment and says its aim is to provide "beekeepers with innovative, affordable, and high quality tools that make a real difference." It adds it "has a deep passion for beekeeping, community and progress".

Its lead product appears to be the Instantvap Lite oxalic Acid Vaporiser which is explained in detail on the company website (www.lorobbees.com). It is described as designed to deliver high performance at a more accessible price point and this model is crafted for beekeepers managing smaller apiaries (it says ideal for up to 20 colonies) while maintain the reliability of Lorob's Original and Compact models. The website quotes a purchase cost of $US349.

They say it has a number of key features including durable construction in stainless, aluminium and brass. Plus advanced temperature regulation with deep discharge protection for prolonged battery life. This model also has LED light for easy monitoring during use and a smaller heating chamber requiring 30-60 seconds for a ten milligram dose treatment.

Important Biosecurity Update

Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) & Apis florea Dampier WA

5th February 2025

DWV has been confirmed on a sample of Red Dwarf Honey Bee (RDHB) (Apis florea).

The sample was collected as part of Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's (DPIRD) eradication response, ongoing since mid-2023 on the Burrup Peninsula near the Port of Dampier in WA's north. Samples of the red dwarf honey bee colonies had been tested previously for DWV using the national diagnostic protocol, but did not detect any exotic viruses.

DWV has since been confirmed in low concentrations when an historic sample (collected in August 2023) was retested by DPIRD using a slightly different diagnostic assay for bee viruses. The sample has since been confirmed through secondary testing using the original assay by CSIRO.

DPIRD is increasing surveillance and will commence testing for the presence of the virus in managed and wild European honey bees within and around the Burrup Peninsula, including the City of Karratha.

Quarantine Area for WA Pilbara

An existing Quarantine Area, prohibiting the movement of bees, hives and associated equipment from the area remains in place for the Burrup Peninsula. This will help stop the risk of spread of Red Dwarf Honey Bee and will assist with containment of the virus risk while additional surveillance and testing is completed.

Red Dwarf Honey Bee (RDHB) – Apis florea

Red dwarf honey bee is a known vector for numerous exotic bee pests. It is native to South Asia and parts of South East Asia and has spread to the Middle East and Africa. To date, 41 red dwarf honey bee colonies and one swarm of red dwarf honey bees have been located and destroyed within the Quarantine Area.

Reports of unusual bees or colonies on the Burrup Peninsula should be made immediately to DPIRD's Pest and Disease Information Service on 9368 3080, email padis@dpird.wa.gov.au or via the MyPestGuide Reporter app.

Beekeepers: All States & Territories

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/

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

The deadline for the March Bee Journal is 10pm on Saturday 1st of March

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VAA Committees - Getting Things Done!

After last month's discussion about being on the VAA Board, here is a gentler introduction to contributing to the VAA aims and objectives. Join a VAA Committee.

The VAA Board is the overarching strategy and monitoring body for the VAA: the direction setting, vision sharing, progress checking and authorisation body. But no horse was built by a committee. And authorisation is not enough for something to appear.

The Board sets up sub-committees which we call VAA Committees to deliver events or products or pursue a particular role. As such, they are a great way to get into doing something useful for the VAA if you are concerned that the Board is a big first step.

Role

Committees primarily have one of two roles: 1) Project - make something specific happen, 2) Monitoring - make sure that only what we want to happen is actually happening. Some Committees will be all Project or all Monitoring, but others will have a "watch and act" brief to monitor things and, where necessary, take action.

The Royal Melbourne Show Committee and the Conference Committee are probably Project committees. They have to make things happen and in both these cases, the deadline is not negotiable!

The Finance and Risk Committee is a Monitoring committee as it is usually tasked with monitoring and reporting to the Board when things are not in accord with policy. The Board then decides what action to take.

The Constitution Committee, Resources Committee and the Education Committee have a combination job. Keep an eye on what is happening and decide if it is in the interests of the VAA and if necessary take action to rectify weaknesses or pursue opportunities. For example: propose a particular modification to the constitution, advise the Board to write to a particular minister, or run particular types of training courses.

Scale

The Board and its committees have a different scale of operation. The Board meets bimonthly and covers longer term issues. It sets up a program and expects reports on progress, problems, etc. All Board members are required (by legislation) to independently understand and assess the material brought to the Board.

The Project Committee meets frequently during the required period of activity. The committee members are encouraged to divide and conquer the work rather than all be across everything. The focus is on getting up a detailed plan and then getting things done as quickly/efficiently as possible.

The Monitoring committee is about collecting the required information and making the assessment that the VAA is doing what it should do, that the VAA has the required policies, processes and evidence, and that the monitored activity is only doing what it should (and not something else!)

Committee structure

Committee members are needed for their skills in the particular scope of work. Usually, knowledge of beekeeping is secondary to some other skill that the member brings. There are lots of beekeepers, but not necessarily a lot of beekeepers who are also managers or digital artists or wordsmiths out there.

The primary role is the convenor. This is the person who is responsible for driving the group to get things done: they are a manager, coordinator, quality monitor, and the link to / from the Board.

Ordinary members of the committee are usually on the committee because they have some particular expertise that is needed or because bodies are needed to do the work.

The committee convener is usually allowed to choose the ordinary members of the committee, which is quite different from each Board member being elected independently. I would, however, emphasise that the objective is to get a group with the right skills and team spirit to get the job done.

Skills

Each committee will have a most-needed set of skills. Besides the convener (manager), there usually needs to be a secretary, a treasurer may be needed to help with managing the budget of the group, often a subject matter specialist is needed, a researcher is often needed, a networker / promotional person is needed, policy / process writer may be needed, or a facilitator for running "public" meetings.

It's fair to say that committee work usually needs very specific skills and, unfortunately, pure enthusiasm will go only so far. This work is much more like working in your normal business with staff who have different roles.

Joining a VAA Committee

The VAA Committees are fairly similar from year to year so you could offer to help out with a particular activity. Note that it is not usually beekeeping knowledge that is required, so if you have other work skills that you wish to offer, there is bound to be a place for you.

I would suggest that VAA Committees usually need at least one but preferably two Board members. The rest can be anyone with the right skills.

If you like to work to a specific target and deadline, then projects are your best option. These are usually of specified time period as well, so you don't have to be worried about being trapped on the committee.

If you have a feel for gradual improvement of a group or a process and like to analyse and assess, then Committees with the monitoring role (full or combined) may be of more interest.

Whatever you decide, a VAA Committee is a good place to start getting things done.

Rob Kerr
Just Thinking

Do you have any spare copies of the Australian Bee Journal for April 2007?
We need them for the VAA journal archives.
If you can help please contact the Editor - abjeditors@yahoo.com

ABC Rural News

Beekeepers seek chemical-free methods to kill deadly varroa mite

As the world's deadliest bee pest continues its slow spread across Australia, beekeepers are seeking out chemical-free treatments.

Beekeeper Jackie Morrison is looking for an alternative to miticide strips, a chemical treatment used in hives to kill varroa mite.

She says her customers want products free of chemical residues...

Ms Morrison has travelled the world on a AgriFutures-sponsored Nuffield scholarship to research chemical-free solutions for managing varroa mite in warm climates.

… Ms Morrison said Europe had been dealing with varroa mite for 47 years.

"They've put a lot of research into better solutions," she said.

"They're trying really hard to come up with biotechnical methods for making brood breaks [removing bee larvae and pupae from a hive to prevent varroa mite reproducing] and for trapping mites.

… Ana Martin and Sven Stephan were determined to find a chemical-free way to treat their 200 hives on the NSW mid-north coast. They came across a device that works by heat-treating brood frames at a temperature that kills mites but leaves developing bee pupae unharmed.

… Commercial beekeeper Steve Fuller said he struggled to see how the heat-treating method could work in commercial-sized apiaries with large numbers of hives.

"If I was to turn around and take the brood out of one box and the brood out of another box and put it in there for two hours, where are all the bees going to go that I've got to shake off then?

"But for a small one or two or three hives in the backyard, yes it could possibly work fine."...

Crowdfunding for varroa device

The Eurobodalla Amateur Beekeepers Club, in south-east NSW, has turned to crowdfunding to raise money to purchase a chemical-free device.

… "We do have a lot of commercial beekeepers moving hives into the area, so the members of the club know that it's only a matter of time until varroa is here," she said. Ideology, cost and what they say is customer preference are some of the reasons amateur beekeepers are interested in non-chemical solutions.

"I sell my honey at the farmers markets and customers are really keen to know that there hasn't been chemical treatment in the hive where the honey comes from," Ms Clapin said.

"But the equipment is expensive and we just don't have the membership or the funds to be able to raise that sort of money."

Read the full story here

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VAA Melbourne Section Report

January had outdoor bees and wax processing. Honey stories and tasting in February. Recreational conference excitement. VAA Conference reminder. Collingwood Children's Farm update.

The VAA MS welcomes you to another year of social and educational activity at our venue in Surrey Hills, at our Apiary Open days at Collingwood Children's Farm, at our training course and other events we will advertise during the year.

January Meeting

Every audience likes a focus point

The VAA MS held its January meeting on the last Thursday in January at the regular venue in Surrey Hills. It was pleasing to have a number of new attendees added to the mix. The program of live bees and wax processing drew a very good crowd.

Mike Love provided a beefull hive for a live inspection and soapy wash varroa check. Everyone who has a hive knows what a hive "looks like", don't they? Well every hive is different and when you see someone else work a hive that is not yours, it is a new and very interesting experience.

Live bees are really interesting!

The wax processing segment included a large vat for boiling the wax off frames and a description of the process. The solar wax melter was on show as were wax presses and smaller scale wax heating methods.

Discussing wax processing at the January meeting

The last two seasons have produced more honey and hive activity than the previous three or four, so I'm hoping that there will be lots of wax produced for the VAA competition at conference in June.

February

Honey will be the emphasis in February. We invite everyone to bring along a sample(s) of their honey and to share their ideas of the floral sources and to share their honey for tasting, too. We'll provide the stirring sticks! (FYI - "stirring sticks" are what Officeworks call icy pole sticks.)

Given that honey is the key product for most of the Melbourne Section beekeepers, we hope this is a spring board to a big honey competition for the VAA MS in April, and then a big Melbourne Section entry at the VAA Conference competition in June.

Collingwood Children's Farm

The farm has had a good year so far with the first harvest planned for the fourth Sunday in February. The plan is to extract four or five boxes and then do a second extraction at end of season. The Collingwood Children's Farm Young Farmer beekeepers made their frames in September / October, wrote their names on the frames and put them into hives. We will make a

(Continued on page 25)

Red gum buds.
Photo: Peter Kaczynski

The Australian Bee Journal would love some of your original photos to use in the journal.

Please send as a jpeg image to abjeditors@yahoo.com

VAA Melbourne Section Report, cont'd

(Continued from page 24)

song and dance about these named frames being extracted as "Young Beekeeper special blend early season mostly eucalyptus tastes great honey": additional qualifications are welcome subject to label size! We are so happy that after seasonal output of zero, zero, and 20kg in recent years, there is a finally a decent amount of honey.

A range of beekeepers at the Collingwood Children's Farm

Conferences

The VAA Melbourne Section is very proud to be part of the **VAA 2025 Recreational Conference** to be held on 29th March 2025 at the new "Hume Global Learning Centre – Broadmeadows". It is a fantastic venue that caters for well over the 100 attendees at last year's conference.

The three subject areas are Basics, Biosecurity and Honey. All beekeepers are encouraged to attend gatherings and conferences as the spread of varroa will change the basics (frame management!), how we manage biosecurity (it's not just about varroa!) and honey (there may be more in your honey than you want!)

For anyone interested in how bee hives work, there is a special free public event from 1:30 to 2pm where a beehive will be opened and explained: all behind glass!

Book at the VAA website www.vicbeekeepers.com.au/events.

The **VAA 2025 Annual Conference** is on 11th to 13th of June in Beechworth, so put those dates in the diary. More details in the next months.

A Final Wrap

The VAA Library and catalogue is being updated with the audit of existing items completed in January.

The VAA MS shop is available for those things that you just need, but for which you don't want to battle Saturday morning traffic. The wax foundation that we sell is produced from rolled, member-donated wax to generate a few extra dollars for the Melbourne Section.

Thanks to our volunteer committee for running the meetings, the library service and the supper service.

Enjoy your bees

Rob Kerr, VAA Melbourne Section Secretary on behalf of the committee.

Photo: Rob Kerr. What do you mean you have to check the hives!

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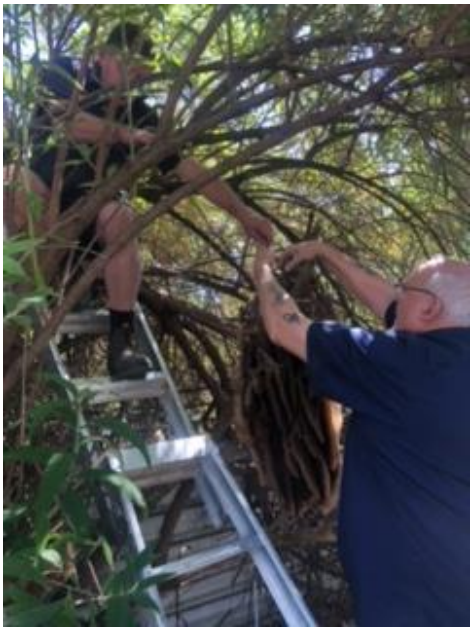
An Abandoned Wild Hive



I'm a member of the Bendigo branch, and recently removed an abandoned wild hive.

I have a friend who had a very small swarm in her front garden, and when we went to collect it she showed me the hive in the tree next door. I left a note for the neighbor who contacted me and agreed to have the hive removed. It turned out to be utterly empty with no weight (I could easily hold it with one hand), but the sheer size of it and the way it's constructed around the tree branches is fascinating.

Jo Griffiths

BBKA SPRING CONVENTION FOR OCTOBER

By John Kennedy

The British Beekeepers Association (or BBKA - founded in 1874 and thus held its 150th celebration last year) has scheduled its Spring Convention for Friday October 4 till Saturday October 6, 2025, to be held at the Harper Adams University at Telford in Shropshire, with a British and International lineup of speakers all listed at the website www.bbka.org. The event includes lectures, workshops and seminars on a range of topical beekeeping issues like genetic patterns, climate change and conservation, beeswax, global threats for honey bees, regenerative agriculture, the UK's nectar resources, propolis - and making the most of swarming, Asian hornets and pollination.

The convention is sponsored by about a dozen of the UK's leading bee goods suppliers and similar businesses. The Saturday program includes a large trade show.

The BBKA is active on many fronts and in 2024 one of its interesting events was a Honey for Heroes Competition sponsored by leading online supermarket Ocado ,and involving celebrity cook Nigella Lawson.

It championed honey produced by small scale UK beekeepers to discover and use what was judged as "outstanding British honey".

Over 50 honey entries were received and shortlisted with Nigella Lawson one of the judges.

Carol Gunn, who produces honey under the 'Scottish Honey' label was declared the winner.

Her honey which took out the two thousand pounds sterling award was described as having "a silky texture and deep, rich floral notes."

She commented she was stunned to be judged as Britain's finest small scale honey producer.

Nigella Lawson presented the award winning honey as an addition to a classic French recipe as honeyed tarte tatin.

In previous years the BBKA has made available online the speaker presentations, and is expected to do the same after this year's event.

VAA Conference and AGM
Wed 11th to Fri 13th June 2025

Research On Pesticide Impact

Pesticide impacts on bees more complex than expected
Queen Mary University of London

A new study shows distinct effects of neonicotinoid pesticide exposure in different bumble bee body parts, explaining why pesticides have diverse harmful effects and highlighting the need for more sensitive safety testing.

Researchers at Queen Mary University of London have discovered that the neonicotinoid pesticide clothianidin disrupts different parts of bumble bee bodies in strikingly different ways. The researchers' new study shows that the impacts of pesticides are far from uniform, affecting the brain, legs, and kidney-like tissues in different manners that undermine each tissue's essential functions.

Distinct impacts on different tissues

By exposing bumble bees to a field-realistic dose of clothianidin, the scientists found dramatic differences in gene activity across body tissues – 82% of gene activity changes were tissue-specific.

"Each tissue we examined was severely affected by the pesticide," explains Professor Yannick Wurm. "Seeing impacts of pesticide exposure across the body helps to explain the multi-faceted problems that exposed bees have, from impaired movement to reduced learning ability and compromised immunity."

Neonicotinoid pesticides such as clothianidin are widely used to protect crops from pests. Yet, past research has shown that even low doses can threaten the survival of beneficial insects. In this study, the researchers applied high-resolution molecular diagnostics – commonly used in biomedicine but rarely for environmental questions – to pinpoint the specific molecular pathways disrupted by pesticide exposure. For instance, while brain genes involved in ion transport were affected, the hind femur (crucial for movement) showed changes in muscle-specific genes, and the detoxification gene activities of Malpighian tubules (a functional equivalent of kidneys) decreased.

"The findings suggest that traditional pesticide risk assessments, which often overlook tissue-specific damage, do not fully capture the sub-lethal impacts on pollinators," says Dr Federico López-Osorio, a co-author of the study.

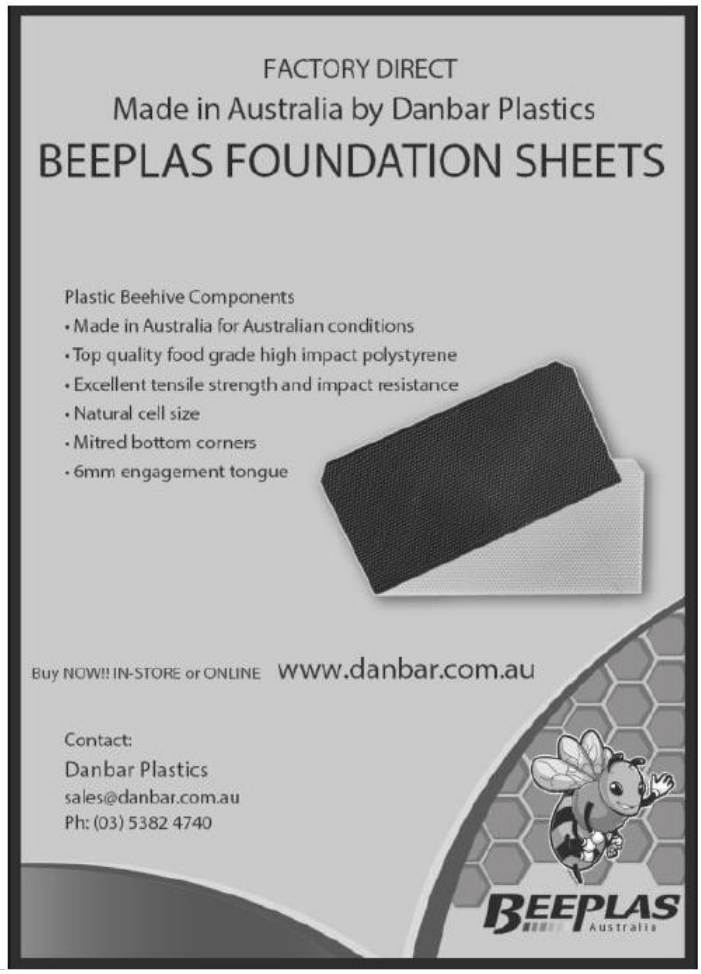
Severe tissue-specific consequences prompt call to action

The researchers emphasise that these changes, akin to patterns seen in ageing and cancer, indicate a profound threat to bee health - affecting every tissue in damaging ways.

"We apply pesticides without fully understanding their effects on beneficial insect pollinators," said lead author Dr Alicja Witwicka. "Our findings show that every tissue is compromised in ways that undermine its vital role, which is why the effects are so devastating and widespread. This research is a call to action to rethink how we assess, regulate and apply pesticides, not only to protect pollinators but the ecosystems that depend on them."

This study highlights an urgent need to reevaluate pesticide safety practices to prevent further harm to natural pollinators - species essential for producing the many fruits and nuts we eat and for maintaining biodiversity. It comes at a time when citizens and governments worldwide are increasingly concerned about biodiversity loss, setting ambitious targets for reversing declines and restoring ecosystem health.

Photo: Jamie Trimby. Duck bird box cut out.



Research On Varroa Treatment Timing

Improved treatment timing reduces honey bee losses to Varroa mites
University Of Exeter

Honey bee mortality can be significantly reduced by ensuring that treatments for the parasitic *Varroa* mite occur within specific timeframes, a new study reveals.

The mites - belonging to the species *Varroa destructor* - feed on the larvae of bees and can destroy colonies if not treated at key points to reduce or remove infestations.

But researchers have found that more than a third of beekeepers surveyed in England and Wales deviate from recommended treatment guidelines, including application windows.

Crucially, they found that beekeepers who mistimed *Varroa* mite treatments experienced exacerbated colony losses, with the effect occurring across a wide range of medications.

"The main finding here was that a major cause of honeybee mortality could, in theory, be quite easy to reduce," said Dr Thomas O'Shea-Wheller, lead author of the study, from the University of Exeter.

"We talk a lot about honey bee colony losses in terms of novel diseases and emerging threats, but this is actually something that's been under our nose the whole time."

The researchers used the National Bee Unit's Bee-Base - a register of beekeepers across England and Wales - to analyse data from 4,339 beekeepers across 37 counties, encompassing a total of 18,700 colonies from 2016 to 2020.

They looked at the range of *Varroa* treatments that beekeepers were using, how they were applying those treatments, and what influence this had on colony survival and honey yield.

They found that colony losses were predicted not just by the type of *Varroa* treatment that a beekeeper used, but also by their level of adherence to the recommended treatment regimen.

"Although beekeepers are frequently treating for *Varroa*, a considerable proportion are missing key time points and thus experiencing higher losses than expected," said Dr O'Shea-Wheller.

Explaining why timing is so important in administering *Varroa* treatments, Dr O'Shea-Wheller said: "Mite numbers build up across the season in a kind of exponential curve. You have to target this at key junctures in order to achieve effective control.

"If you miss these, and apply a treatment too early or too late, then it will fail to properly suppress the mite population and growth will continue unchecked. Missing the recommended treatment window is, I think, the largest cause of poor prognostic outcomes and associated colony mortality."

Dr O'Shea-Wheller warned that deviating from recommended *Varroa* treatment guidelines could also lead to the mites developing increased resistance.

"*Varroa* has been the primary cause of honey bee mortality for some years, and it seems that we're in a sort of arms race as the mites become increasingly resistant to acaricides. Like with antibiotics, it's important to use *Varroa* treatments precisely as directed, because mistiming, overdosing, or underdosing can all increase the chances of the mites developing resistance."

The paper, published in the journal *Entomologia Generalis*, is entitled: "A large-scale study of *Varroa destructor* treatment adherence in apiculture".

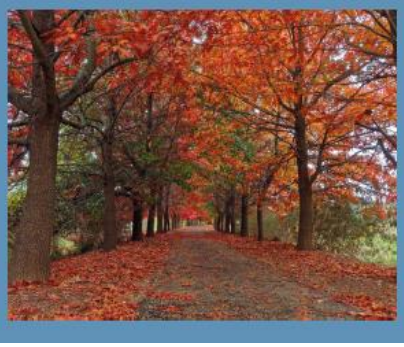
Photo: Jamie Trimby

Small Hive Beetle Suggestion

Photos: Jim Strugnell - I have discovered that if I use flocked vinyl floor covering for hive mats, the bees can walk over the flocking but the small hive beetles are trapped by it.

VAA Annual Conference & AGM
SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday 11th June - Friday 13th June 2025
Grand Oaks Resort, Beechworth, Victoria



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Western region:
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Agriculture Victoria:
Agriculture Victoria: Apiary team
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The Varroa project team can also be contacted at the above email.
For enquiries related to permits and movement restrictions:
Email honeybee.permits @agriculture.vic.gov.au

For beekeeper registration please log onto BeeMAX
www.bees.agriculture.vic.gov.au
or call the Bee Registration Helpline 1800 356 761

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

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Geelong, Otway District –
Linda Laurie, Ph: 0408 419 759, E:
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Horsham – Jess Dickerson, Ph: 0437 913 538,
E: pub-licland.grampians@deeca.vic.gov.au
(Note: Jess is on maternity leave until March 2025, but emails will automatically be forwarded to the Manager)

Hume
E: landad-min.hume@deeca.vic.gov.au
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Loddon Mallee
Justin Hoy (primary contact) –
Ph:0459 336 836
Daniel Cadmore (secondary contact) – Ph: 0418 715 831

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E: custom-er.service@deeca.vic.gov.au

Statewide Transaction Centre
(Seymour based)
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ahbic@honeybee.org.au
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Ph 0488 434 498
Secretary: Janet Clyde
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Ph 0417 494 867

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Program Coordinator Research
02 69236918
Annie.stoddart@agrifutures.com.au

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Mob: 0408 592 091

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Contacts

VAA Inc Regional Groups

Bendigo Branch:
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bbvaasecretary@gnail.com
Chair: Jamie Trimby
bbvaachair@gmail.com
Treasurer: Carol Maunder
bbvaatreasurer@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:
Chair: A/Prof James Doery
Deputy Chairperson: Mike Love
Secretary, Rob Kerr
Ph: 0421 078 387
Treasurer: Janet Conos
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,
1 The Avenue, Surry Hills.

Sunraysia Branch:
Naomi Forbes-Wilson
Ph: 0407 243 313
billabonghoney@yahoo.com

VAA Inc. Library Trust
Secretary: Russell Goodman,
Ph 03 9735 3836

Affiliated Organisations

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cvaa_inc@outlook.com

Gippsland Apiarists' Association Inc. (GAA Inc.):
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0413 136 878
Secretary: Neil Barraclough:
neilbarra2@outlook.com
0429 888 706
Treasurer: Sean Paul Smith:
kaledprime@gmail.com
0466 041 199

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

"J" Beekeepers Club Inc.
Meets on the second Wednesday of every month (Except January) at the Goonawarra Community Centre, 20 Dornoch Drive, Sunbury, VIC 3429

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
President: Nathan Whitford
0403 807 224
Vice President: Stephen Fridey
info@geelongbeekeepersclub.org.au
Meetings third Friday of month at Belmont Masonic Centre,
25 Regent Street, Belmont

Latrobe Valley Beekeepers Assoc.
President: Sean-Paul Smith
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
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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 7:30pm on the second Tuesday of each month (except January) in the hall at
195 Holmes Rd,
Moonee Ponds, VIC 3039

WerriBeeks Inc.
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Secretary: Helen Morland
Treasurer: Debbie Conway
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CONDOLENCES

VALE Michael Fitzpatrick
Bendigo Branch sadly informs you of the sad recent passing of one of our older long standing members, Michael Fitzpatrick, (87 years) who has been unable to attend meetings since mid-2019, due to ill health, Prior to that Michael was an active respected Bendigo Branch member. Our deepest sympathy to his wife, Patricia, and family. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

NEW MEMBERS

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John Oakley
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Index of Advertisers

AIR CTI	6
Aust. Queen Bee Exporters	21
Becs Beehive	19
Beeplas Australia	29
Clayton Plastics	26/27
Covey Queens	9
Dalrymple View	15
Denmar Apiaries	12
Goldfield Honey	8
JBee Equipment	21
Lyson	18
Kelvin Trading	Inside front
Prestige Stainless	16
Redpaths Beekeeping Supplies	23
Stafford Engineering - EzyLoader	Back
Steritech	13
Whirrakee Honey	34
Whirrakee Woodware	10

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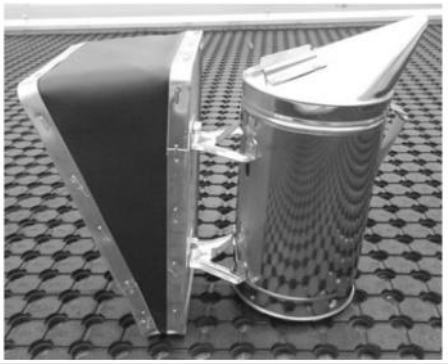

VICTORIAN APIARISTS' ASSOCIATION INC
RECREATIONAL

Recreational Beekeeping Conference

Better Beekeeping Basics to Biosecurity

Hume Global Learning Centre
Sunbury Victoria

Saturday 29th March 2025

Program & Speakers

• Honey bee viruses	Emily Remnant (via zoom)
• Molecular testing for AFB	Olivia Ducommun-Dit-Verron
• Varroa update	Elizabeth Frost
• Heat treatment for varroa	Mike Allerton
• Speech-to-text record keeping	Liz Barbour
• Chemistry of Honey	Liz Barbour
• Sweet Distinction: Elevate your honey brand	Jessica Locarnini
• Winning honey competitions	Peter Adams
• Food safety & compliance	Angelique Drew
• How honeybee swarms relocate	Tino Corsetti
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