AUSTRALIAN BEE JOURNAL

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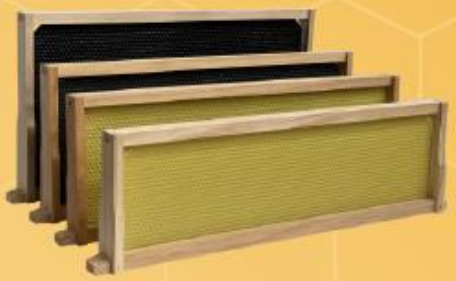

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AUSTRALIAN BEE JOURNAL

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Registration No. A8347

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Statements expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the VAA Inc or the editor.
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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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Membership benefits include:

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- Access to the members' only section of the VAA website www.vicbeekeepers.com.au
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- 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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President's Report

Hello beekeepers,

I'm delighted to begin this month's report with some great news. The VAA has received confirmation that both grant applications we submitted in April have been successful:

* HBCIDF 25.01 - Prescription to restore Box Ironbark Forests for Bee Health. This project is to develop a silviculture prescription for healthy Box Ironbark forest to improve honey bee health.
* HBCIDF 25.02 - VAA EDCOMM - Varroa IPM Education Program. This project is to support Victorian Beekeepers to build the skills and knowledge to manage varroa and other biosecurity risks through the acute phase of varroa and into the years to come.

The immediate next steps are to sign the grant agreements with the department, issue a press release announcing the grants, and organise a kick-off meeting for the Box Ironbark working group and the EdComm group. As there are Resources Subcommittee members involved in that project, they will also provide updates at upcoming Resources meetings. We'll share ongoing updates on both projects through the ABJ, our bulletins, social media, and the VAA website.

These wins, like so much of what we achieve, are only possible because of the dedication of our volunteers and members, who are driving outcomes and moving our industry forward. Thank you to everyone who puts in the time and energy to make progress for Victorian Apiculture.

Resources and Bee Sites

Our Resources Committee has been working hard to address a backlog of industry concerns around bee sites and public land access. These issues are not a quick fix, but important first steps have been taken to build structured engagement with DEECA. Over the next 12 months we will focus on four key themes: planned burns, public land access, communication, and a strategic industry needs assessment.

Policy and Advocacy

We've been active in advocacy, supporting recommendations to AgVic on hive movement conditions and writing in support of a fee waiver for public apiary sites. The Board also endorsed a contribution to the CVAA AGM through our Commercial Subcommittee. Ben Moore has stepped into the Commercial Subcommittee Chair role and is progressing new initiatives, including exploring beekeeper wellbeing and peer-support roles in partnership with AgVic.

Strategic Planning

To ensure the VAA continues to deliver for members, the Board has resolved to undertake a strategic planning process later this year, guided by an external consultant. This will help shape a clear 3-year roadmap for our work and advocacy. We have a full day booked for late October, I am looking forward to presenting you

(Continued on page 6)

President's Report, cont'd

(Continued from page 5)

with this plan and working with the board and volunteers to deliver.

Melbourne Royal Show

Preparations are well underway for our presence at the Melbourne Royal Show. This is one of our biggest opportunities to connect with the public and showcase our industry. We welcome volunteers to join us in promoting beekeeping and talking to the community about the vital role bees play in pollination and food security. Please reach out if you can assist. This year we have some significant donations from our VAA members; more thanks and recognition will follow as we champion our industry and draw much needed funds into our VAA.

Bendigo Field Day

We're also looking forward to supporting our friends at the Bendigo Branch with their annual Field Day at Harcourt on 12 October. This is the largest gathering of beekeepers in Victoria and always a highlight of the beekeeping calendar. It is something that I personally grew up with and looked forward to each year. It's an excellent opportunity for learning, connection, and community, I encourage as many of you as possible to attend.

Looking Ahead

Alongside these initiatives, our Board and subcommittees are working on biosecurity, drought resilience, affiliate support, and government engagement. Together we are building a stronger, more resilient, and respected beekeeping industry in Victoria.

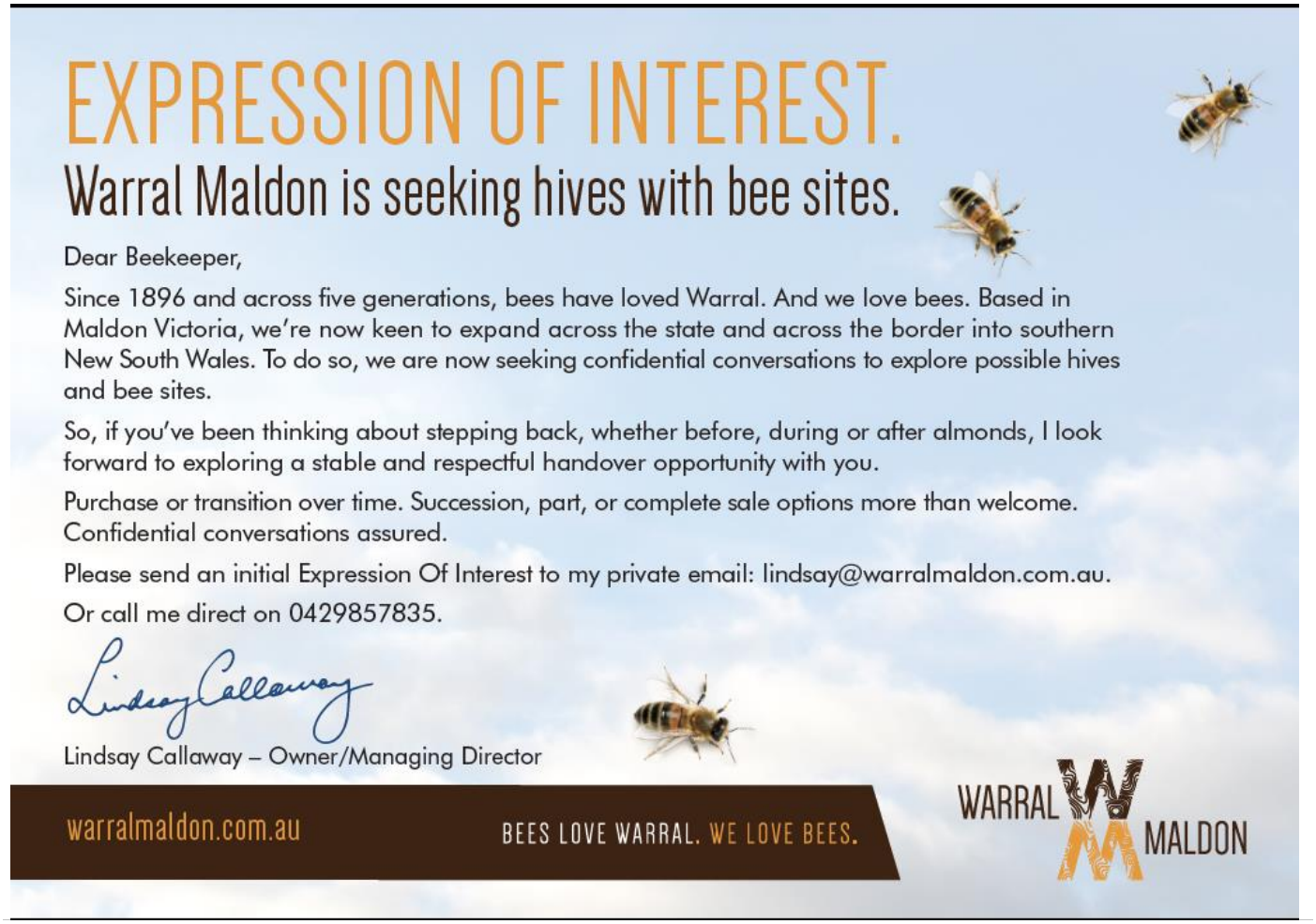
Kind regards,

Lindsay Callaway

President, Victorian Apiarists' Association Inc.

In the August Bee Journal, in the print copy version, the article Mite Maths by Andrew Wootton on pages 16 to 20 is unfortunately missing the superscript references. They are:

page 16 - 2nd paragraph - Let's estimate a population of 30,000 bees (not unreasonable[1]),
page 16 - 3rd paragraph - This is harder to determine due to the variable impact of viruses[2].
page 16 - 4th paragraph - Researchers Cameron Jack and Jamie Ellis[3]
page 16 - 4th paragraph - Since then, data from Canada[4]
page 16 - 4th paragraph - Monitoring weight gain in hives in France[5,6]
page 16 - 4th paragraph - levels due to mite impact being focused on adult bees rather than pupae[7].
page 16 - 6th paragraph - Randy Oliver has built and made available a model of mite population growth[8].
page 19 - 3rd paragraph - Not to mention the damage to the bees and reduction in honey gathered.[6]
page 19 - 3rd paragraph - This is consistent with the NSW experience[9]



CVAA Conference

This past August 21st and 22nd, at great personal risk (because it was my wife's birthday) I attended the 60th annual Central Victorian Apiarists Association conference in Maryborough. The weather was sunny and warm enough that going out to the bees could have been another temptation. This year the conference was held jointly with the North Eastern Apiarists Association and prominently sponsored by the VAA. The afternoon of the Thursday, 33 or so of us gathered around a table to discuss David Briggs' proposal for improving cooperation on breeding programs. Various formats and considerations of association administered breeding programs were discussed, though ultimately I'm not sure anything was decided on a statewide level. Ballarat is planning something in their region. It was a valuable discussion nonetheless.

After afternoon tea there was a very interesting presentation by Matt Petersen of Dividing Creek Apiaries on his extensive learnings in Greece and elsewhere about organic management of varroa. He had made a similar presentation on HiveMeet and somehow many people I talked to after had somehow misunderstood and left with the impression he was advocating non treatment. My understanding is this is not at all what he is saying they do, rather they implement very savvy mite control methods using organic chemicals. The methods can seem overwhelmingly complicated and are frequently at variance with the letter of the Australian labels and law, but he also emphasized the very serious human health risks if things aren't done properly. Where the usage described differed from Australian labels he generally had supporting information from the manufacturer or foreign labels.

On Friday 120 people attended the main day of the conference. The main speakers were Frank Lindsay presenting about the New Zealand varroa experience and what we can learn from them, and ecologist Karl Just presenting on planned burns - specifically, Karl makes a compelling argument that planned burns as currently administered are often counterproductive. Many in the room are opposed to the current planned burn regime as it often damages the productivity of floral resources so they followed this presentation with interest.

Altogether, as a first time attendee to the CVAA conference I was pleasantly surprised to find it almost on the scale of a statewide annual conference, but with if anything presentations of more directly engaging interest to the attendees, and a healthy amount of public back and forth so one felt like one was participating in real substantive industry discussions, actually shaping the course of future discourse. I would certainly recommend future attendance at this event to all commercial beekeepers in Victoria.

Kris Fricke
Editor
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Bendigo Branch Report

September is here, the almonds are finished, bees are moving at haste, swarm season depending on your location has or is about to commence, and the Bendigo Branch is gearing up for the 44th BEEKEEPERS FIELD DAY on Sunday the 12th of October at Harcourt.

Registration for Early bird discount tickets are available now on the VAA website: https://www.vicbeekeepers.com.au/event-6305809.

The 2025 Beekeepers Field Day will feature Open Hive demonstrations, Commercial Q&A Panel, Varroa Development Officers, AgVic, Varroa/Biosecurity booth, Varroa Testing, Beekeeping equipment retailers, Honey Extraction demonstration, Beginners Area sessions, Wax Crafting, Children's activities, VAA information/merchandise stand, Floral Walk, Auction, Lucky door prize, and Honey tasting.

The BBVAA August activity covered swarm management, catching swarms, swarm traps, making Nucs, various options to make splits and the necessary hive equipment. Contrary to the weather forecast there was plenty of sun about at Margie and Wayne's to enjoy while learning, asking loads of questions, getting numerous dependent answers and enjoying bee talk.

Stafford, on a brief almonds break, walked us through a few different methods of assessing and making splits and the equipment required whilst providing encouragement to keep learning, practice making colony increase to collectively become better beekeepers, and be better placed to navigate the upcoming challenges.

By the time the September edition hits your mail box or inbox I hope everyone has at least had a preliminary inspection looking down the frames to assess the number of frames of bees, and available stores.

Stafford on Splits & Nucs

Plan your actions to manage your colonies, monitor Drone brood and when Drones begin flying in your area to make the most of Spring growth.

Lindsay Callaway, owner of Warral Maldon, will present on Queen rearing at our September meeting, an essential skill to build for Beekeepers of all descriptions to cover colony losses preferably before they occur. Skills that allow us to raise

(Continued on page 9)

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Bendigo Branch Report, cont'd

(Continued from page 8)

colonies, breeding from your best Queens or providing a buffer until you can secure your preferred genetics, especially over the next few years.

Keep an eye on the Bendigo Branch Facebook posts and Branch emails for the Spring hive management inspection later in September.

Join us at the October meeting, see the VAA website for details, with guest speaker Richard Collins of Collins Honey.

The CVAA 60th Annual Conference was sold-out, and partnered with a Beekeeping Forum made for a terrific couple of days full of great content, creating lots of interesting discussions and following presentations on many great topics with a heavy emphasis on testing, monitoring, treating, and testing again for Varroa throughout the reinfestation period. With the clear message that Beekeepers choose how they manage their bees post re-infestation phase, but you have to keep bees alive throughout the re-infestation phase, during high intensity mite loads being transferred through robbing and drones to adapt to whatever the new normal is post Varroa re-infestation phase.

Well done to everyone involved in organising, volunteering, speaking, contributing and attending the CVAA events.

The VAA will be represented at the Royal Melbourne Show from the 25th September to 5th October, volunteers are essential to run the booth, see VAA Bimonthly bulletin for the full list of benefits in getting involved, contact Peta Dawe via bbvaasecretary@gmail.com to find out how you can join the team and bee a part of Victoria's largest non-specific-Beekeeping show.

Jamie Trimby

Melbourne Section Report

VAA MS 70th Birthday Party in Nov/Dec, The 2025 -26 Committee, Smoker perpetual trophy, VDO visit was August, Native bees in art and science in September, Planning for your apiary in October, VDOs 'expire' in November - What next?

Celebrating our 70th year!

The VAA Melbourne Section was, in 1955, the first amateur beekeeping group established in Victoria. The new group had the particular goal of supporting urban beekeepers. Melbourne was probably about 30% of its current size and meetings included beekeepers from all over the metropolitan area and nearby rural. Later beekeeping groups started either independently or in some cases as 'swarms' from the VAA Melbourne Section.

The MS has met at numerous locations over the decades and provided many activities and services. Many members of the Apiary Code of Practice working group were from the Melbourne Section and this has greatly enhanced the ability of beekeepers to operate across Victoria. More history of the VAA MS in future ABJ editions.

2025-26 VAA MS Committee

The VAA Melbourne Section is 70 years old, I think. 1955 to this year. The social, political and natural environments have all changed markedly in those decades. Today the beekeeper is a positive influence, a champion of nature, a lauded hobbyist.

To continue the tradition, a new Committee was elected on 31st July 2025.

Chairperson: James Doery
Deputy Chairperson: David Baskett
Treasurer: Janet Conos
Secretary: Gillian Greenstein

Ordinary committee members: Andrew Wootton, Garry Dumergue, Ivan Burch, Janette Burch, John van Weeghel, and Mike Love.

VAA Melbourne Section Representative to the VAA Board: Tony Wilsmore is also a committee member.

Perpetual trophy for 'smokering'!

The Melbourne Section runs a smoker competition at the annual break up party in December each year. We have had four so far and Mike Love has constructed a fantastic perpetual trophy from a miniature smoker donated by Redpaths Beekeeping Supplies. James Doery was our latest winner, and we will pass the trophy around to the previous winners in time to hand it to the new winner

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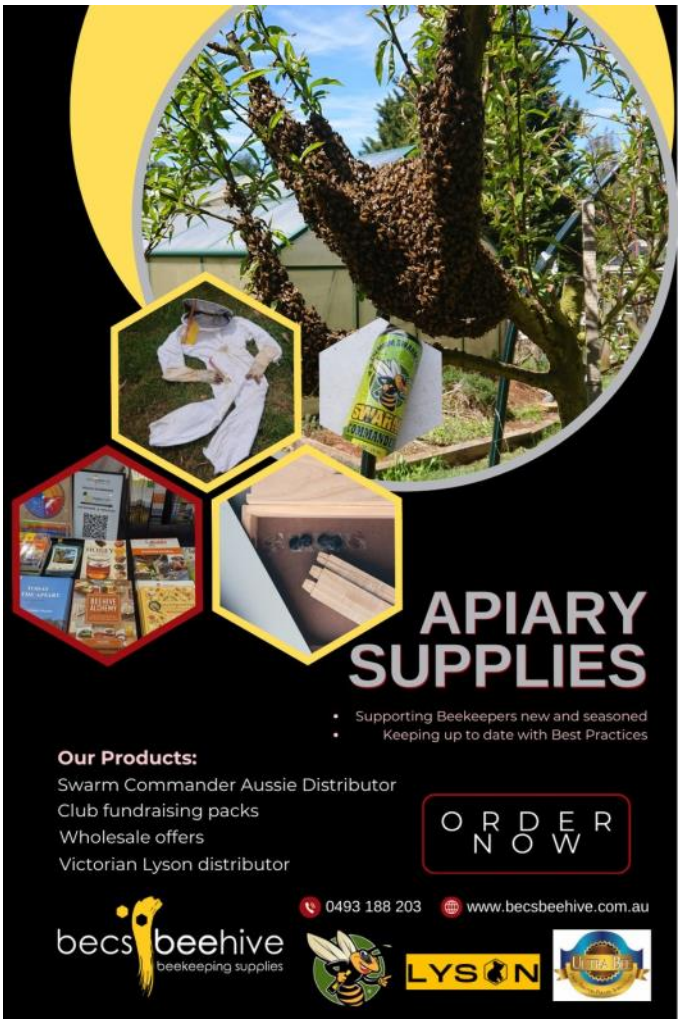

Melbourne Section Report, cont'd

(Continued from page 10)

in December. See picture on left.

August Meeting - Varroa Development Officer (VDO)

The August Meeting welcomed Ashton Edgely who is a 200 hive beekeeper who has participated in the course development and teaching for Certificate III at Melbourne Polytechnic. Along with Tony Wilsmore and Andrew Wootton, Ashton has been presenting at the varroa training days over the last two years.

Mike Love (left) presents the VAA MS Smoker Competition Perpetual Trophy to James Doery

Ashton presented the latest information on varroa infestation in Victoria, the impotent knowledge to have about varroa, and how beekeepers can survive the next few years. The difference between surveillance and monitoring was made clear for me! Do you know the difference? The role of each beekeeper in keeping their hives strong and healthy for themselves and for beekeepers nearby was emphasised. Knowing the consequences of each decision, especially any off-label (= most likely crazy) behaviour can motivate us to stick with the guidelines and share our stories as we develop the sound culture that is required for our future beekeeping.

Varroa training after November 2025!! Is it Clubs?

I hope you attended your training, because the VDO National funding runs out at the end of November this year. Varroa has only just hit Victoria, and VDO's would have been most useful in Victoria during the coming season, so we need to make use of them as much as possible before November, we need to press for more funding of the VDOs and we need to implement other knowledge sharing processes.

Individual beekeepers should look to beekeeping clubs to get varroa knowledge drummed into them. Clubs could share the local knowledge of presence or absence of varroa. Clubs could coordinate the timing and choice of treatments to maximise the decimation, reduce re-infestation and reduce resistance building. There are lots more things to think of for clubs.

September - Native Bees

Stephanie Lee Dix is an artist and scientist who will present to the Melbourne Section at the September Meeting. Native bees are mostly entirely different from European bees: perhaps there will be important lessons

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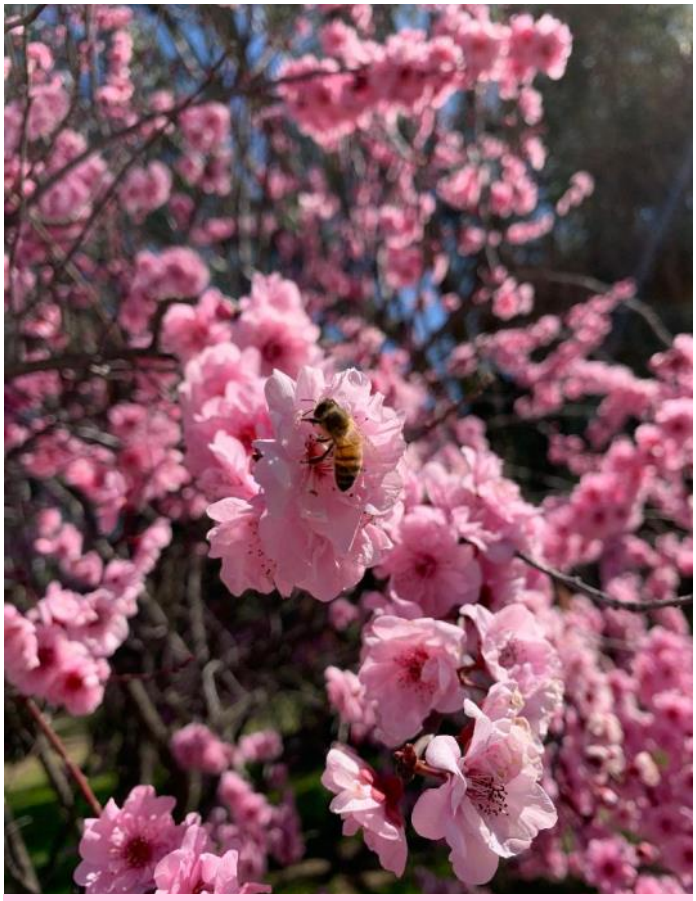
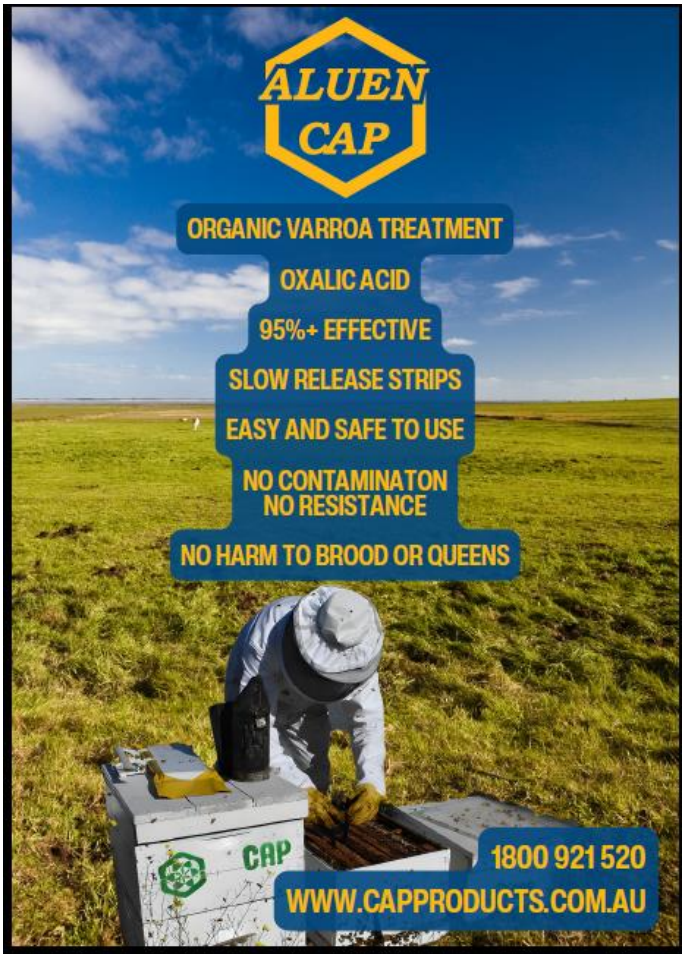


Photo: Dana Windle. Spring



Melbourne Section Report, cont'd

(Continued from page 11)

to learn about native bees when all the wild hives die out from varroosis! Either way, we rely on the Australian bush to feed our bees so we should find out who we are sharing it with.

September is also a chance to get some hands on beekeeping guidance at the Collingwood Children's Farm Apiary. If there are any young beekeepers out there, then get in touch with the VAA MS Secretary on vaamelbournesection@hotmail.com to get you or your brood a taste of beekeeping for a season.

October - Making Apiary Plans

Planning is possibly like eating dry bread, but unlike dry bread, planning will make your life easier. We look forward to Stafford Kelly from the Bendigo Branch of the VAA giving us the plan of how to plan for our apiary.

Varroa may overwhelm some of us, or just stress us madly, or just be a nuisance compared to the good old days, but new beekeepers will "have always lived with varroa": at least that is the experience from NZ and the rest of the world. BAU: Bees as Usual Includes Varroa. Or BAUIV, which can be represented as BAU6! I'm off to the copyright office!!!

November and December

We will celebrate 70 years of VAA Melbourne Section contributions to beekeepers in Victoria. Stay tuned for details.

Enjoy your last varroa free Melbourne Spring

Behave as though it is and get those new habits ingrained! Be ready to give your hive a top-up feed if they are struggling with changeable weather. Spring is our hives' most vulnerable time.

Enjoy your bees

VAA MS Committee.
Rob's phone number 0421 078 387
Email vaamelbournesection@hotmail.com

NEAA Field Day
Sunday October 5th. Swanpool. See pages 19 & 29

Bendigo Branch Field Day
Sunday October 12th. Harcourt. See pages 14, 30 & 35

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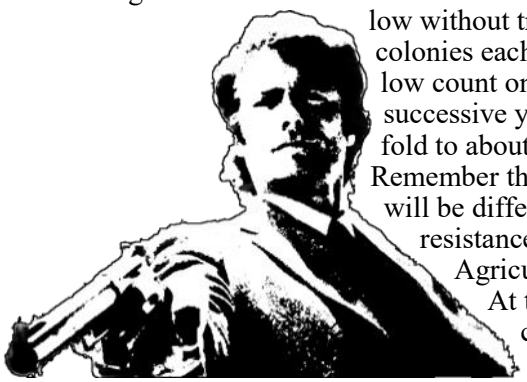
Do you Feel Lucky?!

By Andrew Wootton

Varroa is coming. A number of beekeepers appear to think going "treatment free" is worth a shot. They hope the "Bond" approach (live and let die) will find mite-resistant colonies and accelerate natural selection to a chemical-free and rosy future. Well, do you feel lucky? Let's look at the chances of success.

Varroa resistance is complex and multifactorial but has certainly been emerging in various locations around the world[1], as natural selection works its magic. It requires a combination of the sensitive detection of mite-infested brood cells, together with the behavioral adaptation to do something about it (eg uncapping and recapping brood). Together, these result in a reduced mite reproduction rate and in the right circumstances (probably relatively low and stable mite immigration), the colonies maintain low mite numbers without treatment. We are confident that at least some of the genes that code for these characteristics are present in our Australian bee gene pool. However, most of these genes are thought to be recessive and readily "breed out". Thus, extensive selection efforts will be required to increase their frequency to effectiveness.

Now let's examine the likelihood that you just happen to have resistant stock in your apiary. We can't know this until our colonies have been exposed to varroa, but one way of estimating it is to look at a project that Randy Oliver has been conducting in the USA for the last 8 years or so. He argues that it is not necessary to understand the actual mechanism and genes involved in resistance and that only the result (colonies that naturally keep mite counts very low without treatment) is needed[2]. His experiment involves testing 1500 colonies each year by mite washing and only selecting and breeding from the low count ones. In the first year this was one colony! By repeating this over successive years, the number of colonies keeping counts low has increased 70 fold to about 4.5%. It very much looks as though the approach is working. Remember though, at the start it was 1 in 1500 or 0.07%. Our Australian bees will be different from Randy's and his may have already undergone some resistance selection, but let's apply that figure to our hives. According to Agriculture Victoria there are about 12,000 hives in greater Melbourne. At this frequency, there should be 8 hives with naturally resistant colonies, able to maintain their mite counts at low levels. What makes you think yours will be one of these!



I'm suggesting that you have a vanishingly small chance your hives will survive treatment free. Rather, they will not only die out but also create "mite bombs" for neighbouring hives. That's a double whammy; neither sensible nor responsible behaviour. Nevertheless, don't despair because there are efforts underway to breed such resistant bees. The Australian Queen Bee Breeders Association (AQBBA) has initiated a program and its president, Peter Czeti, highlighted this at the VAA's recent conference[3]. It's not, however, going to happen overnight and in the meantime, you need to keep your bees alive. Testing is key so you know your mite numbers. Then you can respond with treatments to control the count. It will be perfectly reasonable first to use the organic acid treatments, bearing in mind that you may need to resort to the harder chemicals if mite numbers begin to climb uncontrollably. The NSW experience is that during the first acute phase with significant mite immigration, organic treatments weren't sufficient[4]. You need to know the numbers!

Andrew Wootton is Vice President of the VAA and a certified master beekeeper with the Eastern Apicultural Society of N America. He first started beekeeping in the 1960s.

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[4] Dave Fairhall, NSW DPI, personal communication

New Superfood For Bees

By John Kennedy

According to a report by the BBC, a study conducted by Oxford University working with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the University of Greenwich and the Technical University of Denmark has defined a new "superfood" which can protect honeybees against climate change and habitat loss.

The BBC has used a paper published in the journal *Nature* as its source.

The paper says that honeybees are facing severe declines due to nutrient deficiency, viral diseases, climate change and other factors.

It notes that in the USA annual colony losses have ranged between 40 to 50 percent in the last decade, and this is expected to continue.

A similar loss rate is expected in the UK. The paper quotes the experience of the chair of the Cardiff, Vale & Valleys Beekeeping Association in Wales, who says he lost 75% of his hives last winter.

The UK study has apparently defined sterol as the major deficiency in supplementary feed products.

According to Oxford's researcher and team leader Jennifer Chennells, supplementary feeds like protein flour, sugar and water have always lacked the nutrients that bees require.

She says it is like a human eating a diet without carbohydrate, amino acids and other vital nutrients.

Sterols have always been too difficult to manufacture but the Oxford project has identified the exact sterols that bees need and how to engineer them.

At Oxford they have used clear glass hives in an incubator that have been fed with different foods that have been made using common kitchen scale equipment.

"We put ingredients into what look like a cookie dough with different proteins, fats, different amounts of carbohydrates and micronutrients the bees need.

"It's to try to work out what the bees like best and what is best for them".

Chennells is quoted as using gene editing and the Oxford team has been able to make up a yeast that produces the sterols that bees need.

The superfood was fed to the bees for three months and showed that colonies fed with the mixture had up to 15 times more bees that made it from birth to adulthood.

When the bees have complete nutrition, they would be less susceptible to disease.

"They would be particularly useful during summers when flowers and plants appear to have stopped producing sufficient pollen and nectar for the bees to make it through winter" the study concludes.

Larger trials are proposed to assess the long term impact of the food on honeybees, but a commercial supplement could be available to beekeepers within two years.

Australia's Honey Market

HIVE & WELLNESS HAS FORTY PERCENT OF $200 MILLION HONEY MARKET
By John Kennedy

A recently published article in the Australian Financial Review claims that Hive & Wellness honey brands, Capilano and Barnes Honey, hold 40% of the Australian two hundred million table honey market.

The article says the company, backed by billionaire businessman Kerry Stokes, expects to grow its sales by 10% this year as consumers seek more medicinal properties in their honey choices.

Barnes Honey is given as the company's best performer having doubled its sales in pharmacies in the past three years.

"Hive & Wellness is controlled by Stokes' Australian Capital Equity, DOC Partners and Albert Tse's Wattle Hill Partners which each hold about one third of the company".

The article says, "In 2008 the consortium took the company private in a $200 million deal which saw it delisted from the ASX".

Hive & Wellness CEO, Ryan D'Almeida, is quoted as saying that the Capilano brand has benefitted from the introduction of new products including a hot chilli honey, and also from wellness brands generally, with people putting honey into healthy drinks such as smoothies.

Its revenue in the last year was $145 million and the forecast for this year is $160 million.

D'Almeida became CEO in 2019 and has expanded the group internationally, with sales of about $40 million focusing on China, Japan, South Korea and the US.

The article notes the company has 330 contracted beekeepers in Australia and it is one of the biggest honey companies in the world, with annual production of about 15,000 tonnes.

AHBIC Update 70
Varroa mites have been detected in hives in South Australia, east of Waikerie, during routine PIRSA surveillance. Hives from Queensland that moved into SA under permit have tested positive at low levels for varroa. PIRSA is urging any beekeepers within 25km of the IP to notify the PIRSA Apiary Unit for assistance pirsa.beebiosecurity@sa.gov.au. This detection is a blow for SA beekeepers who have been enduring the worst drought and lowest honey production for many in living memory. However, experience from eastern states suggests that the spread is slow and it is not expected to impact beekeepers this season in SA. It has been demonstrated that when detected early, as is the case here, it takes time to establish and reach treatment thresholds so spread is usually slow and beekeepers have time to prepare.

HiveKeepers At Apimondia

HiveKeepers Takes Australian Innovation to the World at Apimondia 2025

2025 is shaping up to be the biggest year yet for HiveKeepers and the momentum is building. The Australian-founded company, recognised for its commitment to sustainable beekeeping and cutting-edge technology, is preparing to showcase its breakthrough innovation, the Micro Honey Harvester, on the world stage at *Apimondia 2025* in Copenhagen, Denmark. Apimondia, the International Apicultural Congress, is the largest and most prestigious global gathering for the beekeeping industry.

Each year it attracts researchers, scientists, innovators and professionals from across the world to share knowledge, present new technologies and address the challenges shaping the future of bees and honey production. For HiveKeepers, being part of this year's event represents a defining opportunity to take its innovation to an international audience and reinforce Australia's growing reputation as a leader in agricultural technology.

A World-First Technology Changing the Future of Honey Harvesting

The Micro Honey Harvester is transforming not just how honey is harvested, but how it is experienced. By removing unnecessary handling and processing, the system allows beekeepers to deliver honey that is fresher, cleaner and closer to nature. For consumers, that means confidence in quality and authenticity — honey that is pure, full of flavour, and as close as possible to enjoying it straight from the comb. It's a win for bees, a breakthrough for beekeepers, and a taste revolution for honey lovers. In many ways, it's the Nespresso for honey — a simple, elegant way to enjoy something that was once complicated and messy.

The response has been extraordinary. Earlier this year HiveKeepers launched the product on Kickstarter and reached its funding goal in just 45 minutes. The overwhelming support reflects a strong global appetite for innovation in beekeeping and highlights the industry's urgent need for solutions that improve efficiency and sustainability.

CEO and Founder Simon Mildren says the success of the launch proves how significant this technology is for beekeepers everywhere.

"The Micro Honey Harvester isn't just a new tool for beekeepers, it's the start of a new era for honey lovers everywhere. By rethinking how honey is harvested, we're making it possible to enjoy honey as it was meant to be, fresh, authentic and straight from the comb. The excitement from the global community tells us that this is a change the world is ready for," he said.

Award-Winning Australian Innovation

HiveKeepers' success has not gone unnoticed in Australia. In June 2025 the company was named the Best Early Stage Company at the Australian Agritech Awards, recognising its dedication to driving innovation and supporting the growth of sustainable agricultural practices. This award is recognition of HiveKeepers' vision to revolutionise honey itself - building tools and systems that protect bees, empower beekeepers and give consumers confidence in the purity and provenance of every drop.

"This recognition from the Australian Agritech Association means a lot to our team," said Simon. *"It validates the years of research, design and testing we have put into creating the Micro Honey Harvester and inspires us to keep pushing the boundaries of what's possible in sustainable agriculture."*

Making an Impact on a Global Stage

Apimondia will provide HiveKeepers with the platform to connect directly with international beekeepers, researchers and policymakers as well as showcase its technology to thousands of attendees from across the globe. The team will not just be demonstrating its innovation. HiveKeepers is also playing an important role in advancing industry knowledge.

The company has been invited to present two academic submissions on honey fraud, one of the most significant challenges facing the global honey industry today. Honey fraud, involving the adulteration or mislabelling of honey products, has become a multi-billion-dollar issue impacting producers and consumers worldwide. HiveKeepers' research explores new approaches to combating honey fraud and protecting the integrity of honey supply chains. *"Honey fraud is a growing global concern and it is damaging for beekeepers, consumers and the industry as a whole,"* Simon explained. *"Our research focuses on practical solutions that can help protect both the quality of honey and the livelihoods of beekeepers who work so hard to produce it."*

Looking Ahead

For HiveKeepers, Apimondia 2025 represents more than just an opportunity to launch the Micro Honey Harvester internationally. It is the start of the next chapter for the company as it expands its reach, builds collaborations with global partners and continues driving innovation in the industry. *"We are proud to represent Australian innovation at the highest level,"* said Simon. *"Our mission has always been to create tools that make life easier for beekeepers while supporting the long-term health and sustainability of bees worldwide. This is just the beginning."*

With an impressive product launch, an award-winning technology and a growing reputation for thought leadership, HiveKeepers is ready to make its mark both at home and across the international beekeeping community.

Eva Crane Back In Print

By John Kennedy

Eva Crane OBE (1912-2007) graduated in quantum mechanics and later gained a Doctor of Philosophy in nuclear physics.

For her wedding she and her husband were given a beehive as a help against wartime sugar shortages. This led to her lifetime interest in bees and bee behaviour leading to her founding the International Bee Research Foundation, which she substantially endowed on her death.

Founded in 2002, the IBRA with six trustees has funded 80 research projects around the world including citizen science, bee researchers and academics to advance knowledge of bees and beekeeping.

Over her lifetime Crane authored and published a large number of relevant bee books, now largely unobtainable, but considered "some of the most important books on bees and apiculture".

Northern Bee Books in the UK (www.northernbeebooks.co.uk) has countered the unavailability of her books with a reprint of one - *World Perspectives in Apiculture* as a 184 page paperback, which they offer for about $A38 plus postage and packing.

They note that Crane "was uniquely qualified to author a book on world perspectives in apiculture" and that "many of the editorials presented here are as timely now as when they were written".

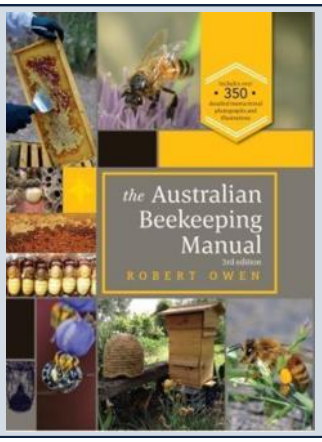
Robert Owen's *The Australian Beekeeping Manual (3rd edition)* is back in stock at Exisle Publishing.

It's their top-requested reference heading into spring, valued by hobbyists and pros alike for its clear, step-by-step guidance and 350+ colour images, including updated pests/ disease management and a section on native bees.

• Format: Hardback, 368pp

• RRP: AU$49.99

• ISBN: 9781922539793



The Farm Business Resilience Program supports primary producers to build stronger, more drought resilient businesses.

We want to understand the needs and program delivery preferences of Victorian beekeepers. Tell us what you think. Scan the QR code and fill in the online survey.

The Farm Business Resilience Program is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Victorian Government's Sustainability Fund.

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Future Drought Fund

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

Malfroy's Gold Special Honey

By John Kennedy

Operated by Tim Malfroy and his wife, Malfroy's Gold Honey is undoubtedly Australia's largest Warre Hive beekeeping operation.

Their latest news update advises of the release of limited numbers of 500 gram jars of Mountain Meadow Post Brood Polyflora Honey, which he positions as a Gold Medal Honey and an "extraordinary honey that delivers intensity and vitality".

It was also tested for pollen. The typical concentration for honey is between 2000-10,000 grains per gram - this honey tested with a pollen concentration result of 2.6 million grains per gram!

Post Brood honey is described as "a thick creamy texture of pleasing spicy nuttiness with a perfumed aroma, a unique honey produced from 100% natural comb in bee-friendly Warre apiaries in the high altitude world class land of the Central Tablelands in NSW.

Harvested exclusively from "post brood frames that are aged for three to five years inside the hive, it is said to have unique health benefits (all owing to the propolis and bee bread inherent in the aged combs).

Tim adds that in the bee season of 2025 the Central Tablelands had suffered drought. The drought finally broke triggering the flowering of ground flora species that are rarely seen, resulting in a flavour profile quite unlike any of their other honey. "This is only the second time in 25 years that we have produced this variety".

The honey is priced at $90 for a two by 500 gram pack, plus shipping.

For more info see www.malfroysgold.com.au

Virus Baseline testing

As part of the National Transition to Management Program a virus baselining project has been delivered. The aim of the project was to collect bee samples from around Australia and test for exotic viruses that might interact with varroa. Eight viruses were tested across 5,769 pools of samples with samples coming proportionally from all states and territories. Across all samples there were no new viruses or exotic viruses to Australia detected. This gives us great confidence that viruses like deformed wing virus are not lurking broadly across the bee population at low levels. Interestingly rhabdovirus 1 & 2 was only detected in areas where varroa had established which reaffirms that this virus arrived with the varroa incursion. For the endemic viruses for which testing was undertaken there was a very high prevalence of Black Queen Cell virus (94.8% of all pools tested were positive), Lake Sinai virus genotypes 1 & 2 (83.9%), Sacbrood virus (82.2%) and Israeli Acute paralysis virus (39.0%).

From the AHBIC August Newsletter CEO Report

NEAA Swanpool Field Day

NEAA SWANPOOL FIELD DAY CONFIRMED - SUNDAY 5 OCTOBER
By John Kennedy

The North Eastern Apiarist's Association has confirmed that its highly valuable annual Beekeeping Field Day will be staged again, on Sunday 5 October from 8.30 am to 4 pm.

The venue is the Swanpool Cinema and grounds, midway between Mansfield and Benalla.

Registrations are now open for this highly popular and informative day at a cost of $80 per person, inclusive of morning and afternoon teas and lunch.

The theme of the day is "Are You Ready to Keep Your Bees With Varroa".

The event, as always, is run by experienced sideline and commercial beekeepers.

There will be beginner and advanced live bee tutorials, Integrated Pest Management, learning about the mite its consequences and management solutions, all under the guidance of very experienced, committed and practical beekeepers.

Having attended for many previous years, I can vouch for the value of attending.

It is increasingly topical this year as varroa mite incidents are being reported from a number of places in Victoria.

You need to register to attend as soon as possible on line as this event is usually sold out well ahead of the actual date - attendance is limited to 80 persons.

To register see https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/beekeeping-field-day-in-swanpool-vic-2025-registration-1593322463379?aff=oddtdtcreator

TOM SEELEY UPDATES
By John Kennedy
Two current video updates from Dr Tom Seeley are now available on Facebook and can be accessed at the Bee Love Beekeeping website, sponsored by Mann Lake, the leading USA bee goods retailer.
Dr Seeley, in the two presentations, each about forty minutes in duration, reflects on a broad range of topics and his learnings from his 50+ year career and six published and highly readable books on beekeeping.
Some of his topics include propolis, bee mating and bee lining, the interest he first developed from observations as a young boy. The information he delivers is topical, interesting and well worth watching.
They are also relevant to his most recent book - *Piping Hot Bees & Boisterous Bee Runners – 20 Mysteries of Honey Bee Behaviour Solved* – published by Princeton University Press.

September 2025 Seasonal Update

By John Edmonds

What happens to our food supply if we don't have honey bees?

Many years ago, this fellow Cliff Winkler lived in Torquay. I had 50 hives of bees in his "depot," a piece of land on the edge of Torquay where he would dump clean fill... One day he approached me saying he needed bees in his large backyard as he was not getting his pumpkins pollinated. So, I took 15 strong hives and placed them along his back fence. Behind the property was the Surfcoast Shires work center and beside was the Ambulance building so I expected complaints. The bees flourished and became triple deckers full of honey. Every time I attended to the bees Cliff insisted on being tough and watched me inspecting the bees from close quarters refusing to wear a veil until eventually the bees forced him to retreat. As the pumpkin vines died off, I could not believe my eyes as the backyard garden was covered in pumpkins. They certainly benefited from the bees nearby. No complaints arose and the bees were kept there for many years until Cliff passed away and the property was sold.

August 12th 2025 While shifting bees to flowering canola, I observed an excellent germination of clover plants... "Corkscrew," also known as Pelargonium [*Pelargonium spp.*], has started to flower with its pink flowers. Plantain [*Plantago lanceolata*] is in profusion and when it starts to flower it provides a lot of pollen for the bees.

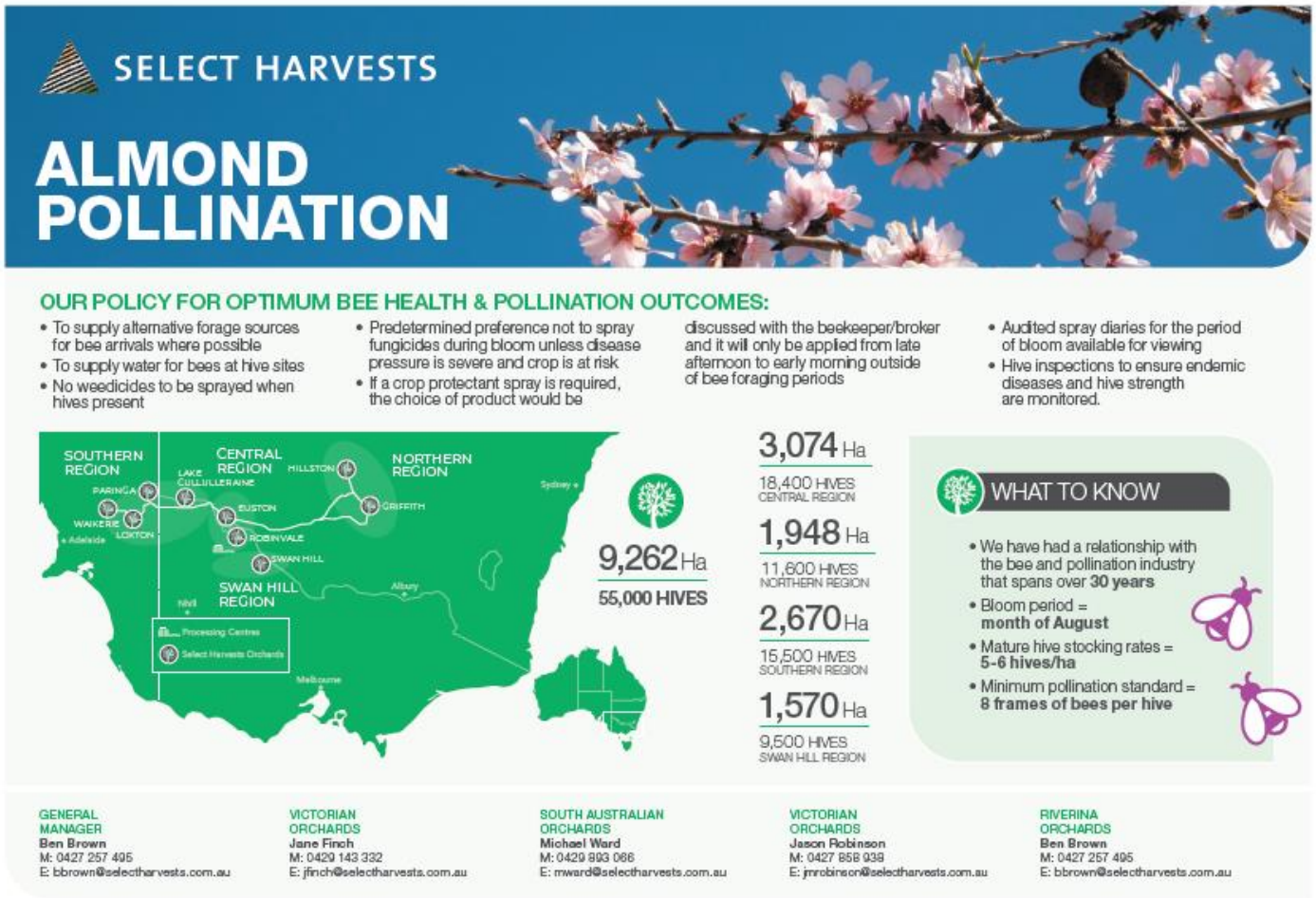
The season appears to be two to three weeks later than usual. Almond trees at Mildura are barely flowering. The ones locally are in full bloom and they are usually three weeks before the almond orchards of the Riverland. Bee hives have been brought in from many places - New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory - and a South Australian orchard purchased two B-doubles of bees from Western Australia. First flowers are appearing on various wattles: hedge [*Acacia paradoxa*], sallow [*Acacia longifolia*], golden [*Acacia pycnantha*], and Cootamundra [*Acacia baileyana*].

14/8/2025 As I came up the Geelong Ring Road I noticed the hills of soursob [*Oxalis pes-caprae*] in flower with their butter-yellow flowers. Every year we see more of this weed growing around Geelong. It provides the bees with a thin amber nectar and tan-coloured pollen. The bees breed well on it, but sometimes they can get nosema from the thin nectar. If the farmer decides to plough the paddock, the bulb has many small bulblets attached and it will spread and multiply.

21/8/2025 I added an ideal box to the hives working canola. A good shake of nectar and plenty of pollen. Lots of brood and pleasing to see drone brood nearly ready to emerge. Adjoining the crop is a massive paddock of small canola which should be a month away from flowering. We desperately need more rain. In mid-September the bees will need nucs taken off them or else they will swarm.

Onion grass [*Romulea rosea*] pink flowers are just commencing flowering. The bees gather tan-coloured pollen and a light brown nectar and breed profusely.

(Continued on page 21)



September 2025 Seasonal Update, cont'd

(Continued from page 20)

Often the cockatoos can be seen eating the bulbs from under the ground.

Along the surf coast I noticed the sallow wattle flowering, coastal bearded heath [*Leucopogon parviflorus*] just starting to flower. This plant makes horrible-flavoured honey but makes the bees breed in profusion. Golden wattle through the bush north of Lorne is in full flower. Blue gums [*Eucalyptus globulus*] around Lorne and surrounding bush are flowering, and the cockatoos are having a great time nipping off the flowers and the tips of the foliage.

1/9/2025 I have been told that the almond trees near Mildura had only a light flowering this year and the strong winds have blown many petals off the flowers. It is expected that by the middle of the week the message to start shifting the bees out will begin.

It is interesting to see the Facebook clips of beekeepers bringing large loads of bees from Queensland and New South Wales to the almonds. They certainly must have big areas for their trucks to manoeuvre and load the hives. Around Ballarat the canola crops are still not flowering and have healthy large cabbages, which will result in more flowers. Good rains will ensure good crops.

The late canola crops that have been sown are just plantlets (2 to 4 leaves). It will be interesting to monitor when they start flowering, hopefully after the main crop has finished. When having successive canola flowerings, you have to be careful as the bees will swarm. Best to take away a nucleus of bees off the strong hives and give them frames of foundation. Locally it has been too dry and crops are not as good as normal. Hopefully some heavy rainfall will come soon.

It is amazing to see how quickly the canola crops catch up and start flowering. The best-yielding crops are those that grow a large "cabbage" before flowering. I added boxes and foundation frames to some hives today, and despite the cool showery weather the bees had fresh nectar in the combs. My Iraqi refugee worker commented, "the bees are fat and will fly," in other words the boxes are full of bees and will swarm.

In the August 2025 *American Bee Journal*, Christine McDonald has an interesting article about juvenile hormone. I have made a summary of the article. Juvenile hormone (JH) is produced in the head of the bee and controls many of its behaviours. It has an important role in making a queen bee and inhibiting the worker bee developing reproductive organs. JH is lowest in nurse bees and highest in forager bees. Higher levels of JH make bees better guard bees and more receptive to alarm pheromone. Young nurse bees use their hypopharyngeal glands to produce brood jelly. As they age, they change from feeding brood to making enzymes to process nectar. This process can be reversed or accelerated by manipulating the JH levels. In adult bees the JH

(Continued on page 22)

September 2025 Seasonal Update, cont'd

(Continued from page 21)

is lowest in early adulthood and highest in the transition to out-of-the-hive jobs (flying). The reverse happens with queen bees. It suggests that due to the queens making mating flights, JH may have something to do with flying. In drones the JH levels increase as they age and are highest just before taking mating flights. The drones switch their diet from brood food to honey as they commence flights. The presence of a mated queen decreases the JH in nurse bees. It most likely keeps the balance in the colony. In hopelessly queenless bees the JH increases and they become more defensive and become foragers. Impacts of temperature and CO_2 have the effect of lowering JH. Neonicotinoid pesticides cause JH to spike and rush the transition from nurse bee to forager. Perhaps these chemicals are more dangerous to bees than the labels suggest.

The CVAA conference at Maryborough celebrated the 60th year of the association. It was a very good conference and well attended. A novel approach of being free to members was very good. The catering was exceptional. Frank Lindsay from New Zealand gave a presentation of his experiences with varroa in New Zealand and made recommendations that the Victorian government should allow the use of alternative varroa treatments for the beekeeping industry to remain viable. The first three years will require constant vigilance monitoring the mite levels in the bee hives. After the feral and unmanaged bee colonies have died then you should be able to control the mites with two treatments per year. Overseas has seen approximately half of the beekeepers and bee hives drop out after varroa invasion. It appears the effect on the bee hives is different in each area, as the many variables have to be considered. Small hive beetles are proving to be a nuisance in northern NSW but as a result the feral hives are dying out quickly.

An interesting comment from Frank Lindsay's speech was there will be many swarms when varroa comes, as the bees abscond, but they are full of bees carrying varroa. Best to kill them. After the feral hives die out, the swarms generally do not hang in the trees and shrubs but fly straight to new homes in buildings and hollow trees. Eventually they die out from the varroa.

Many beekeepers have been making their own treatments, but this is not advised. It is easy to make a mistake and possibly kill or weaken your hives. I know a beekeeper who imported an oxalic acid vaporizer and, despite wearing a full-face mask with the correct respirator, he was alarmed to find he could smell the vapours. It will be easy to make a mistake and damage yourselves. Initially it is best to use the approved treatments, although they are expensive. They are safe and reliable.

The only honey flow for the season that looks certain is red gum [*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*]. Hopefully other trees will make budding.

John Edmonds 1/9/2025

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BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

The 2025 Pollinator Photography Competition is now open and invites everyone to capture photos of bees and other pollinators in their local environment, whether in a garden, park, school, nature strip or on a farm. First place wins $1,500, with $750 for second, $500 for third and $750 for people's choice. Every winner also receives an annual subscription to *Wild* Magazine. The School Competition awards a primary and secondary school winner with individual prizes for the students and a $500 class prize each. The competition is sponsored by Flow, Hornsby Beekeeping, House of Honey, *Wild* Magazine, the Centre for Bee Education and Bee School by Beechworth Honey. Winners will be announced via a webinar on Thursday, 13 November at 7.30pm AEDT. The Competition closes Sunday, 26 October at 5pm AEDT. *From the Wheen Bee Foundation September Newsletter*

Oxalic Acid Drizzle And Strip Treatments

Technical Specialist Bees Report
By Elizabeth Frost

Observations on oxalic acid drizzle and strip treatments

In this article I'll focus on legal oxalic acid drizzle (oxalic solution) and non-legal oxalic acid and glycerin strips. A new Canadian study on both of these oxalic acid treatment types provides statistically significant results on summer treatment effectiveness and bee health impacts in Canada. While the Australian examples I'll provide in this article are not statistically significant, they do provide some interesting early observations for winter treatment options.

In Australia we are lucky to have 7 different chemical miticide products available for Varroa management. You can read all about them here: www.varroa.org.au/chemicals This variety gives us the opportunity to rotate chemicals with different modes of action. Chemical rotation is important so we can prevent varroa from developing resistance to a chemical miticide (especially the synthetics) for as long as possible. Api-Bioxal™ oxalic acid, either in solution (dribble method) or powder formulation (vaporisation method), is the most recent chemical product to be permitted for use in Australia.

Hopefully, in the near future, we'll also have Aluén CAP oxalic acid slow-release strips approved for use. You can follow the company's updates regarding Australian registration here: www.capproducts.com.au/ Over the past season, I've heard that some beekeepers have been trialling their own oxalic acid and glycerin strips, a chemical use which is not likely to ever be legal in Australia, due to a change in legislation being required. Making these strips correctly and safely is challenging, so I'm looking forward to when beekeepers have access to a legal oxalic acid slow-release strip product manufactured at a uniform, high standard.

For beekeepers keen to learn more about oxalic acid varroa treatments, a new Canadian study (*Figure 1*) tested oxalic acid and glycerin strips as well as oxalic dribble methods in the Canadian summer, when brood quantities are at their peak. The Canadian study estimated the efficacy, or effectiveness, of each treatment at killing varroa (Table 1).

Their results showed oxalic acid and glycerin strips had around 55.8% (±3.2%) effectiveness at decreasing mite levels. This is considered a moderate level of control. They showed oxalic acid dribble had around a (39.5 ± 4.3%) effectiveness at decreasing mite levels. The low level of control with oxalic acid dribble during summer is to be expected, due to the high quantities of capped brood protecting mites from coming into contact with the oxalic acid liquid solution. Remember, oxalic acid solution, when dribbled between the top bars of frames covered with bees, is only effective at killing varroa mites on adult bees.

Figure 1. Canadian study on oxalic acid dribble and strips by Thurston et al.

Table 1. Varroa treatment effectiveness in a Canadian summer study. Adapted from Thurston et al. (2025).

Treatment type	Efficacy
Oxalic acid dribble	39.5 % (± 4.3%)
Oxalic acid and glycerin strips	55.8% (±3.2%)

In regards to hive health, the Canadian study did not find any significant negative effects of either oxalic acid dribble or strip treatments on hive population, worker longevity, queen status or colony survival. Their application of oxalic acid and glycerin strips did temporarily result in a greater number of hives with spotty brood patterns early on in the treatment period. The spotty brood patterns recovered to normal after 45 days from the start of oxalic acid and glycerin treatment in the Canadian study.

Based on their results, the Canadian researchers and technicians found:

"Oxalic acid and glycerin strips might help control varroa mite populations, delaying their exponential growth and helping reduce economic losses for beekeepers, but this treatment should be considered as part of an integrated pest management strategy and not a stand-alone method for Varroa control."

(Continued on page 25)

What is the Honey Levy?

The honey levy is a federal compulsory charge collected on all honey produced and sold in Australia at the first point of sale.

It's currently set at 5.6 cents per kilogram, and it applies to both commercial and amateur beekeepers who sell over 1,500kg per annum. While the amount per kilo might seem modest, when pooled across the nation's beekeepers, the levy becomes a vital source of industry funding.

From 1 July 2025, the levy was increased by 1 cent per kilogram from 4.6 to 5.6 cents per kilogram. This temporary increase will be in place for six years and is specifically designated to repay the debt incurred from the national response to the Varroa mite incursion. This includes paying our share of the many services you may have participated in through the T2M program including Varroa Development Officers and training.

From the AHBIC August Newsletter

Oxalic Acid Drizzle And Strip Treatments, cont'd

(Continued from page 24)

Oxalic acid drizzle without and with brood

OA drizzle without brood: In most of Australia, we don't have many if any periods without brood. There are, however, several ways to manipulate a hive to make it completely broodless. The hive I applied oxalic acid solution to in *Figure 2* was a virgin queen bank I had set up for my Tocal College Queen Bee Insemination Course. Once the course was done, I let the hive go totally broodless. On 28 March this completely broodless hive had 21 mites in an alcohol wash. On the 28th I added a new Apithor small hive beetle harbourage and treated the hive with 50ml of oxalic acid sugar syrup solution, made up according to the product label. 3 days later on 31 March I alcohol washed this hive again and it only had 1 mite in the alcohol wash. The hive had a ventilated bottomboard in place with a tray to look at mite drop as a result of the oxalic acid syrup solution treatment. 24 hours after treatment 471 mites had dropped dead onto the bottomboard tray as well as 100 small hive beetle (SHB) as shown in *Figure 3*. Oxalic acid solution via dribble/drizzle method was very effective at killing varroa, as all mites were on adult bees given there was no brood present.

Figure 2. 50 ml oxalic acid in sugar syrup solution drizzle 28 March 2025 in a totally broodless hive.

Figure 3. Bottomboard tray mite and SHB drop 24 hours after oxalic acid drizzle and Apithor application.

OA drizzle with brood: If your hive has brood however, oxalic acid drizzle is less effective, as the Canadian study showed. On the 28th of May I applied 50 ml of oxalic acid sugar syrup solution to a hive with a total of 12 frames of bees and a total brood area of 3 full depth frames. Plenty of bees, brood, varroa and small hive beetle at the end of May 2025 in the NSW Hunter Valley! This hive had a mite wash result of 32 mites on the 17th of May and an average natural mite drop of 9.4 mites per day, monitored through the ventilated bottomboard between 17 May and treatment on 28 May with oxalic acid drizzle. I did not add an Apithor SHB harbourage to this hive as I was curious if OA drizzle alone would have any impact.

It was pleasing to see hundreds of mites fall dead through the ventilated bottomboard onto my counting tray in the 3 days after treatment (*Table 2)*. However, on the 2nd of June I did another alcohol wash to check how the oxalic acid drizzle had affected overall hive infestation and came up with 38 mites, which was higher than before treatment. This hive had a lot of adult small hive beetles, and I was keen to see if any would die with the use of oxalic acid drizzle alone. Not a single dead small hive beetle found during treatment with OA drizzle, however still plenty alive inside the hive!

Table *2. Mite counts in alcohol wash and ventilated bottomboard tray before and after oxalic acid drizzle treatment in a production hive with 3 frames of brood and 12 frames of bees.*

Date	Alcohol wash # mites per 300 bees	# dead mites fallen onto bottomboard tray in 24 hrs
17/05/2025	32	Avg. 9.4
28/05/2025 (*OA drizzle in*)		Avg. 9.4
29/05/2025		414
30/05/2025		229
31/05/2025		157
02/06/2025	38	

After I got the 38 mites per 300 bees result in my alcohol wash, I prepared the hive for synthetic treatment which is not temperature sensitive. I consolidated my 12 frames of bees in their 8-frame full depth brood box with migratory lid, removed the ideal honey super and applied Apitraz strips (*Figure 4*). I chose Apitraz because the treatment I used prior to OA drizzle was Bayvarol in January 2025 and I needed to rotate to a chemical with a different mode of action to either Bayvarol or Apistan. I could've alternatively used Apivar which has the same mode of action to Apitraz. It made sense for me to use an amitraz product because I was able to consolidate this hive to the broodnest

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Oxalic Acid Drizzle And Strip Treatments, cont'd

(Continued from page 25)

and remove all honey supers. This allowed me to use Apitraz, a product which should not be used with honey supers on which will be extracted for human consumption.

Figure 4. At the end of the 6-week Apitraz treatment my migratory lid was filled honeycomb that had to be disposed of according to Apivar permit.

Oxalic acid and glycerin strips

Disclaimer: Oxalic acid and glycerin strips are not legal for use in Australia currently, however, the company Aluén CAP has applied to have their oxalic acid slow-release strip product approved by the APVMA for use here. Many beekeepers overseas use oxalic strips and I've heard through the grapevine that Australian beekeepers have been trialling them this past season to rotate with the available chemical and mechanical control tools, all the while chasing as much honey as they can.

Pilot trial: Anecdotal evidence I'd heard of beekeepers using oxalic acid and glycerin strips during the 2024-2025 season included variable effectiveness on varroa control and hive impacts. I was keen to have a look for myself. I utilised Australian Pesticides & Veterinary Medicines Authority Permit 7250 which allows me in my role within the NSW Government to conduct a small-scale trial using an active chemical constituent on small numbers of livestock at a research station. In this case, the active was oxalic acid in glycerin mix applied via 3 cellulose strips per hive for 5 bee hives on NSW DPIRD research station Tocal Agricultural College. The strips were made according to the standard New Zealand 40:60 oxalic acid to glycerin ratio. A five-hive pilot trial will not yield statistically significant results. However, it might provide some valuable observations which could guide future trials that are properly planned, scaled, and include control hives without treatment for comparison. At the very least, I hope to provide some food for thought for beekeepers in the following section.

Figure 5. Hive 1 oxalic acid and glycerin strips hanging within the brood cluster in an 8-frame hive maximises bee and varroa contact with the strips.

Once the nucs had grown in population, I transferred them to 8-frame full depth brood boxes (Figure 5). It took 28 days within the Tocal mite-infested apiary for the 5 mite-free nucs to produce alcohol wash results yielding detectable mite infestations: 7, 0, 1, 5, and 3 mites per 300 bee sample respectively for the five hives. This speed of natural mite infestation was similar to the first nuc I brought back to Tocal early October 2023, shortly after the Eradication finished. In that case, the first nuc back onsite in October 2023 was the only managed hive at Tocal. It took 1 month for that hive to reach 5 mites in an alcohol wash which the NSWAA Executive was kind enough to conduct for me during their 2023 executive meeting at Tocal. I think the exercise caused a few nightmares!

Back to the 5 hives in the oxalic acid and glycerin strip trial. On 13 June 2025 I inserted 3 strips per colony, each

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Oxalic Acid Drizzle And Strip Treatments, cont'd

(Continued from page 26)

overhanging on either side of a frame with brood.

This is best practice for oxalic acid and glycerin cellulose strips, and in fact all synthetic strips legally available in Australia, as it results in the greatest amount of contact between the strips and the bees, where there is the most activity in the hive by bees that are also the most likely to have mites on them. Where the strips were tight, reducing bee space between the frame top bars and hive lid, some of the hives propolised the strip edges. None of the hives propolised strips which were hanging over brood between frames.

Some interesting things I noticed during this pilot trial were:

- how quickly the strongest hive chewed the strips (*Figure 6*)
- how some hives stopped raising brood under the strips (*Figure 7*)
- how the queen in the hive with the lowest population stopped laying, was seen being balled by her workers, and eventually disappeared (*Figure 8*)
- how poorly some hives removed strip debris from the bottomboard *(Figure 9*)

Figure 6. Chew-happy Hive 1 at 21 June 2025, 1 week after oxalic acid strips placed within the hive. By 20 July 2025 the only strip pieces left were a small square piece on the top bar.

Figure 7. Hive 1 brood at 28 June 2025. Note they've removed brood behind the strip and this Carniolan queen is full speed ahead laying drones in Hunter Valley NSW winter.

Figure 8. A queen being balled by her workers, forming an aggressively tight cluster around her, on 21 June 2025. She had just begun to lay again after a break which occurred at the start of treatment

Figure 9. Chewed strip debris on ventilated bottomboard on 20 July 2025.

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Deadline for copy for the October journal is 10pm on Wednesday 1st of October 2025

Oxalic Acid Drizzle And Strip Treatments, cont'd

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The most interesting thing of all of course, was assessing and comparing mite infestation between 13 June, the day I applied the strips and again 37 days later on 20 July 2025 (*Table 3*). The average treatment efficacy seems great at 80%, however the lowest efficacy at 40% is a possible concern. This hive had the strongest population, the biggest brood area, and chewed the strips to nothing the fastest. If a strong single hive of bees can do this in 37 days in winter, how fast are production hives in spring and summer chewing through them? *A mite treatment can't work if it doesn't exist.*

Table 3. Oxalic acid and glycerin strip treatment effectiveness range and average in a pilot trial at Tocal.

Hive ID	13 June 2025 - Alcohol wash # mites per 300 bees	20 July 2025 - Alcohol wash # mites per 300 bees	Treatment efficacy
1	15	9	40%
2	10	0	100%
3	14	1	93%
4	8	0	100%
5	6	2	67%
		Average treatment efficacy	80%

Beekeepers should be cautious about relying on averages. If you average my 20 July alcohol washes it's 2.4 mites per 300 bees. Seems okay right? However, if you look at individual hive results, Hive 1 has the highest at 9 mites per 300 bees and should be the first hive I alcohol wash next time to gauge if it's time for another varroa treatment.

While Hive 1's super strip-chewers were great at chewing away the strips, they were not as good at cleaning the debris out of the hive. I wonder, if this occurred in spring, summer, or autumn when our already high small hive beetle populations are actively reproducing, if juvenile hive beetle will enjoy this strip debris, bound to get nice and humid on a solid bottomboard.

Plenty for beekeepers to think about regarding oxalic acid sugar syrup drizzle and oxalic acid strips. In larger scale trials, oxalic acid and glycerin strips have yielded efficacies of 55.8% (±3.2%) in the Canadian study mentioned at the start of this article, and over 95% in studies cited on Aluén CAP's website. If the 55.8% efficacy shown in the Canadian study can be achieved in Australia and if the product is approved for use in Australia, oxalic acid strips will be a key future tool for Australia with its globally record-breaking long honey and brood production seasons. You can check out the Canadian study referenced in "Further Reading" and brush up on the currently legal oxalic acid and other treatment methods on the Varroa Program website.

Figure 10. Scan QR code to Api-Bioxal solution dribble method video and permit details.

In my next article I'll focus on oxalic acid treatment using vaporisation.
Until then, some further reading below and keep monitoring your mite levels!

Further reading

- National Varroa Mite Management Program. "Varroa chemical control options." www.varroa.org.au/chemicals
- Thurston, D., Eccles, L., Kempers, M., Borges, D., Ducsharm, K., Ovinge, L., Stotesbury, D., Scarlett, R., Kozak, P., Petukhova, T., Guzman-Novoa, E., & Morfin, N. (2025). Efficacy and Safety of an Oxalic Acid and Glycerin Formulation for Varroa destructor Control in Honey Bee Colonies During Summer in a Northern Climate. *Pathogens*, *14*(8), 724. https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0817/14/8/724

First printed in NSWAA Honey Bee News

The 2025 Australian Colony Loss Survey launched on the 1st September for a second round.
The survey is for anyone and everyone who keeps bees anywhere in Australia!
It take 7-15 minutes to complete and is completely anonymous.
Your participation is crucial in identifying beekeeping trends and assessing the impact of Varroa.
Whether or not your hives have been affected, your insights will help measure Varroa's effects in established areas.
You have until 1 November 2025 to have your say.
Take the survey and find out more information about COLOSS on the **website**!

Interesting UK Commentary

By John Kennedy

Regardless of where you keep bees there are always challenges.

In its latest seasonal update, the London Honey Company provides a downbeat assessment of the UK summer beekeeping season and the local impacts including a lack of rain and unusually high summer temperatures.

They add another angle noting that "we have undertaken our annual migration to the high heather moors already.

The bees are in position in carefully selected locations to ensure they thrive on the colourful available nectar.

"Yet it hasn't been without its challenges due to the drought but also the challenges of the heather beetle."

"Heather beetle (lochmaea suturalis) is posing a significant threat to the UK's moorlands.

"It has been around for thousands of years, however in recent time, outbreaks have become more intense, causing widespread damage and raising concerns about the health of our heath moorlands, stripping them of this distinctive flora.

"And such is the nature of farming.

"No season, no year is ever the same.

"We adapt, and we evolve, we work with nature to find new ways and solutions".

INSPIRATIONAL COTSWOLD BEEKEEPING

By John Kennedy

Welsh beekeeping entrepreneur Gwenyn Gruffydd produces a regular stream on informative beekeeping videos. They are available from his website (www.gwenyngruffydd.co.uk) and are always worth watching on Facebook. His latest is an hour long interview and visit to the hives, nucleus production and honey production operation of former Ukrainian beekeeper Victor Zalcenko, who with his wife Lucy has created and run V & L Honeymakers (or www.honeymakers.co.uk) in the Cotswolds in the UK. Over five years Victor has used his Ukrainian experience to grow from about 29 to 1000 hives with a focus on honey production.

Gwenyn's video is shown as part of a three video series with more to follow on his honey house and his timber hive production centre.

Victor is already quite famous as he is also the hive consultant to Jeremy Clarkson's unique – Clarkson's Farm television series – already established as the most famous television program in the UK - with its fourth series about to emerge. Taking just an hour or so of your time to watch Gwenyn's production you will see some informative ideas on how successful beekeeping is done in other places. I am sure there some of Victor's ideas that are capable of being adopted locally.

WA Honey Attractively Packaged

By John Kennedy

Some time ago I got on to the mailing list of WA beekeepers and honey producers, South West Honey – a family business that has grown from a hobby into an artisan business.

Based at Pemberton in south west WA the business has access to pristine forests of Jarrah and other varietals.

I recently received an email alerting me that they had launched a new website and a honey offer to celebrate.

So I invested in a three pack comprising three 250 gram jars of their Jarrah. a Creamed and a Coastal Honey to experience the taste of WA's unique varietal honeys.

The pack came at a cost of about $54 including the substantial circa $10 Australia Post delivery charge – albeit that it arrived in about four days from shipment.

I was surprised to find it came in attractively designed and produced, well branded cardboard packaging.

So the message here is if you want to sell your honey nationally and build a client base, the packaging in which you ship your product is equally important!

Red Dwarf Honey Bee Incursion in WA

A total of 47 colonies have now been found and destroyed. 27 abandoned nests have been located and there is now only 1 active foraging site of concern. All the current detections are still within 2km of the original IP, but all detections have had Euvarroa present. The response is now using drone technology to assist in surveying difficult terrain and hard to reach areas. *From the AHBIC August Newsletter CEO Report*

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

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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:
Ph: 136 186
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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
www.bees.agriculture.vic.gov.au
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Meeting at 7.00 pm.
Lakeside Hotel, Bendigo.
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Venue: As notified.
Please register to attend all Meetings

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Secretary, Rob Kerr
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"J" Beekeepers Club Inc.
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Southside Beekeepers Club:
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Meetings third Friday of month at Belmont Masonic Centre,
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Woodend Bee-Friendly Society
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Neil Barraclough
Lauren Powell
Jarrod Wallis

Do you have photos of bee or honey related subjects? The Australian Bee Journal would love your photos for use in the journal and/or on the VAA website. Please send to abjeditors@yahoo.com

John van Weeghel

Classified ads
$2.20 per line
VAA members are reminded that they are entitled to one **FREE 6–line classified ad** each year.
Members Notices (births, deaths etc) are always free.

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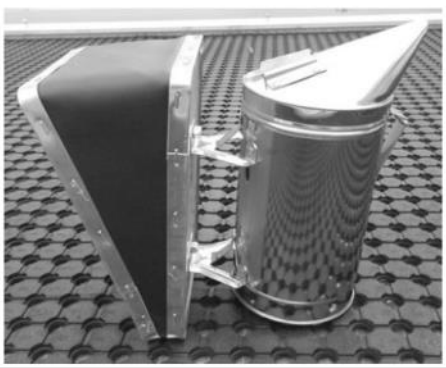

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