

AUSTRALIA'S

# HONEYBEE NEWS

"The Voice of the Beekeeper"  
[www.nswaa.com.au](http://www.nswaa.com.au)

Volume 13 Number 4  
July - August 2020



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*Mars Technology to Save Aust. Bees from Varroa Pg15*  
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## Cover:

*Dawn of a New Season*  
*Photograph: Brett Bingley*





# AUSTRALIA'S HONEYBEE NEWS

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- WFI - Insurance for Rural Business, Business & Strata - 1300 934 934. WFI provides commission to NSW Apiarists' Association (NSWAA) to help member benefits. Please let your local Area Manager know that you are a member to receive this benefit for the Association. - Ms Jane Jones Mob: 0417 943 451 E: [jane.jones@wfi.com.au](mailto:jane.jones@wfi.com.au)
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# NSW APIARISTS' ASSOCIATION INC. EXECUTIVE COUNCIL



*Ray Hull, Neil Bingley, Stephen Targett, Steve Cunial, Robyn Lewis, Brian Woolfe*

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Lisa Mumford 02 6887 2638

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**Executive Director:** Sarah Paradice Ph: 0402 467 780

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Email: Margaret.Heath@rirdc.gov.au Website: www.rirdc.gov.au

## AUSTRALIAN QUEEN BEE BREEDERS ASSOCIATION (AQBBA)

**Secretary:** Mrs Paula Dewar, 157 Lake Moogerah Road Kalbar QLD 4309 Ph: 07 5463 5633 Email: aqbba@bigpond.com

## CROP POLLINATION ASSOCIATION (CPA)

**Secretary:** Mrs Debbie Porter, 135 Eusdale Road Yetholme NSW 2795 Ph: 02 6337 5383 Email: debbie.porter3@hotmail.com

## HONEY PACKERS & MARKETERS ASSOCIATION (HPMAA)

**Secretary:** Mr Ross Christiansen Email: ross@superbee.com.au





# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



## July 2020 President's Report

Executive held a meeting at Bathurst 24<sup>th</sup> June. It was ideal to hold a meeting before the AHBIC AGM and have the executive positions decided. The executive voted to have me as president again. I thank them for the vote of confidence and hope I can live up to their expectations.

NSWAA is making an application for the NSW bushfire sector grants. We will also make a submission to the Federal Government Inquiry into foreign workers. All members who employ foreign workers should have put in a submission to this inquiry.

The new beekeeping code of practice started 01 July 2020. By now everyone should have received a mail out from DPI reference this. Plan your compulsory honey tests before conditions finish.

Almonds have just started to flower (23 July) and trucks have started to roll loaded with bees for pollination. This year beekeepers will have to pay attention and abide by the COVID-19 rules. Such as getting a permit before entering Victoria so that one can re enter NSW.

NSWAA along with all eastern state associations, bee brokers and DPI staff have been having a weekly phone hook up reference border check points etc. The procedure for entering NSW loaded with bees at the end of almond pollination has not yet been determined. We are working on this.

Some beekeepers will have to compromise – bee procedures will be set up at only two bridges – Tooleybuc and the Euston bridges. Procedures are likely only available from sunset to sunrise. If you are travelling before or after this then the bees must be netted and you enter with the normal traffic and holdups.

If beekeepers travel during daylight with unnetted bees and leave bees behind in public places – such as border check points then NSWAA will be recommending the maximum punishment. Endangering the public is not a good look for our industry. As a side note when NSWAA raised the safety aspect at the checkpoints – the police initially stated that ALL bees must be netted. At this stage we have had that changed.

Almond flowering is likely to be longer this year as the full moon is early Aug and again early Sept. With an early season a lot of canola will be nearly finished by early Sept.

Steritech price increases. I heard a rumour that Steritech is increasing prices to \$1100 per pallet for sterilization. I have spoken to Steritech and that is not the case. \$1100 is the price we SHOULD be paying. Steritech Qld

have increased their pallet price from \$340 + GST to \$540 + GST for 15Kgray rate. This was to bring pallet sterilization costs similar to Steritech Vic which has recently come on line for bee pallets. Steritech Vic pallet sterilization cost is approx \$600. 10Kgray rate is cheaper but does not kill EFB.

Queen genetic research project has been signed – Yahoo. Liz Frost has already had meetings with queen breeders etc. Now she is asking for feedback from beekeepers.

After the bushfires there were a lot of insurance claims. Some beekeepers had paid the extra money and had their bees insured – not just the hive woodware. This resulted in some large claims – over \$250,000. Several people have told me that they cannot insure their bees and for some their insurance for hive timberware has increased dramatically. Unfortunately hive insurance is mandatory if you are running a bee business, to my way of thinking.

Bee connect. If you have your hives on a crop such as canola then please use bee connect so that growers know where bees are before spraying. There is a lot of canola in the ground this year. Observant ones will have noticed that the season is early. The mild winter is affecting mother nature – cockatoos were in nesting hollows in early July and white stringybark flowered early. An early season means early insect pests for crops therefore early applications of insecticides.

Bushfire grant application includes some shorter term benefits for the industry and research for longer term benefits. We are asking for grant monies of \$1.94 million with a total project value which includes in kind of just over \$4 million. We should know the outcome in Oct 2020. If successful University of Sydney will be the Project Manager and conduct some of the research. More details will be in the next HBN.

The AHBIC AGM was conducted by videoconf. Trevor Weatherhead is the new chair. Peter Barnes and Ben McKee filled the two vacancies on the executive. Therese Kershaw remains on the AHBIC executive. Keep up the good work Therese.

Most of the state has had reasonable rain with some patches receiving good rain. Spring prospects look reasonable however after christmas the season looks fair at best. Hopefully some short budders will come to the rescue. Travelling in the southern part of the state there are a lot of trees that still look stressed.

Stephen Targett  
President

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## NSW AA Executive Responsibilities

Stephen Targett NSWAA President	Steve Cunial NSWAA Vice President	Neil Bingley NSWAA Executive Councillor	Brian Woolfe NSWAA Executive Councillor	Ray Hull NSWAA Executive Councillor	Elizabeth Frost NSW DPI Advisor
AHBIC Diseases & Quarantine Committee		AHBIC Resources Committee	Bee Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee (BIBCC)		
State Conference		State Resources	State Advisory Group (SAG)	Honeyland	
Bee Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee (BIBCC)	Sponsorships & Trade Show				AHBIC Education Committee





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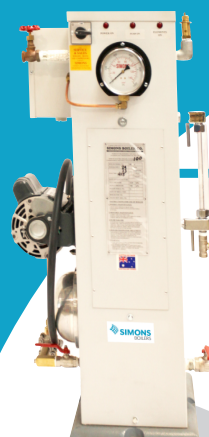
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## Free biosecurity course for Aussie beekeepers

The Biosecurity for Beekeepers online course is now free for all Australian beekeepers, increasing the accessibility of training which will help protect the honey bee industry from pests and diseases.

Trevor Weatherhead, Chair of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC), said the course was previously only free for commercial beekeepers who had 50 or more hives with others having to pay a small fee.

"AHBIC funding allows the course to be accessed at no cost to commercial beekeepers and now Australian state and territory governments have contributed to make the course free to all beekeepers," said Trevor

"This is a great step towards improving bee biosecurity standards across Australia which will help ensure the industry's sustainability into the future."

Plant Health Australia (PHA) CEO Sarah Corcoran said the course has also been refreshed to ensure it remains current and relevant.

"The course was updated by the PHA training team with advice and input from AHBIC, state bee biosecurity officers and other industry representatives," said Sarah.

The course, which takes about 90 minutes to complete, covers:

- checking your hives for pests and diseases
- identifying exotic and established pests and diseases of honey bees
- taking action after finding a serious pest or disease in your hives
- minimising the impact of pests and diseases on your hives.

On successful completion of the course you receive a certificate which demonstrates compliance with the [Australian Honey Bee Biosecurity Code of Practice](#).

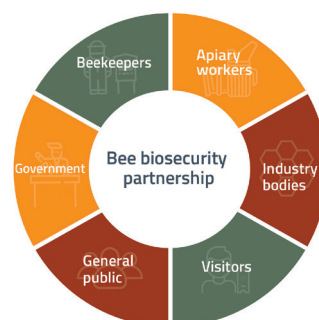
Completing an approved pest and disease management course is a requirement of the Code for all beekeepers with 50 or more hives and this course is one way to meet that requirement. Beekeepers can also speak to their local Bee Biosecurity Officer about alternative options.

The Biosecurity for Beekeepers course is delivered by [PHA](#) through funding from state and territory governments and [AHBIC](#). The original development of the course was funded by [AgriFutures Australia](#).

For information on how to register for the course visit [beeaware.org.au/training](https://beeaware.org.au/training)

### CONTACT

Please direct enquires to [media@phau.com.au](mailto:media@phau.com.au)



***Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice (the Code).***

A new condition will come into effect from 1 July 2020 requiring existing and new beekeepers registered in NSW to comply with the Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice (the Code).

NSW DPI recognises your association as a reputable source of information among beekeepers in NSW. We would therefore greatly appreciate any assistance you can provide to help us ensure that NSW beekeepers are appropriately informed of the upcoming changes to conditions of registration prior to 1 July 2020.

A virtual folder containing a number of electronic resources including newsletter articles, fact sheets and flyers can be accessed by [following this link](#). If you could please share some of the articles and any of the contained information via your communications channels it would greatly assist us to ensure we are reaching as many NSW beekeepers as possible to inform them of the upcoming changes to their registration.

NSW DPI hopes to work closely with industry over the coming months to support beekeepers prior to the change coming into effect. We will continue to communicate updates and resources as they are developed and they will continue to be made available on the NSW DPI registration webpage. If you can think of any communications materials you think would assist in this space please don't hesitate to let us know. We are more than happy to develop any materials that may assist beekeepers to accept and adopt the Code.

NSW thanks you sincerely for any assistance you can provide to help us get this important message to our beekeepers.

Yours sincerely,

Rebekah Pierce

Acting Leader Regional Pest Management



Department of  
Primary Industries

## New registration portal

The beekeeper registration process is now managed by NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI).

Updating the registration portal allows beekeepers one place to:

- Register
- Renew
- Maintain records of hive movement
- Notify of bee diseases



To find out more about the changes, visit  
[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/bees](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/bees)

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# BEEWISE

# CATCH THE BUZZ

## AUSTRALIAN HONEY ABUZZ WITH HIGH-VALUE ANTIBACTERIAL ACTIVITY

By: University of Technology – Sydney



Australia has at least seven *Leptospermum* species that produce honey with exceptionally high levels of antibacterial activity, providing the scientific basis to facilitate the entry of Australian honey producers into premium medicinal markets.

That's according to a new report led by University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Professor Liz Harry, in conjunction with researchers from the University of Sydney and University of the Sunshine Coast.

Funded by the AgriFutures Honey Bee & Pollination Program, Professor Harry, Director of the UTS itthree institute, and the collaborative research team tested more than 5000 honey samples and 2000 nectar samples, covering more than 50 species of *Leptospermum*. Praised for its antibacterial and healing properties, medical-grade honey sourced from *Leptospermum* plants has become a modern treatment for wounds and skin infections.

The latest study found at least seven Australian *Leptospermum* species produced medical-grade honey with exceptionally high antibacterial activity and many other *Leptospermum* species that produced honeys with therapeutically beneficial activity, as well as others that would fall under high-value premium table honeys.

UTS Research Associate Dr. Nural Cokcetin said the research pinpointed several Australian regions, such as south-east Queensland, northern New South Wales and western Tasmania, as 'hot spots' to yield these high value honeys.

"Australia has 84 of the 87 species of *Leptospermum*. Yet before this study, the antimicrobial activity of our *Leptospermum* species was almost unknown, both locally and globally," said Dr. Cokcetin.

"The research puts Australian honey producers on

the world stage, positioning them as a leading and potentially abundant source of medical grade and high-value *Leptospermum* honey."

The report found that specific chemical components relating to antibacterial activity of several Australian *Leptospermum* honeys was similar to that of its Manuka counterpart in New Zealand.

It also discovered that appropriate storage conditions of Australian *Leptospermum* honey was vital to reach its full potential, and outlined key differences between anti-fungal and antibacterial traits.

AgriFutures Honey Bee & Pollination Manager, Research Annelies McGaw said the latest research was an important step in enhancing the worth and profitability of Australian honey.

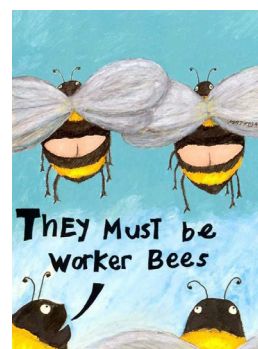
"The research provides scientific evidence to support marketing claims that enable Australian honey producers to gain access to premium therapeutic-based markets," said Ms McGaw.

"Its findings are an important tool to help build the sustainability of Australia's beekeeping industry. It also presents a stimulus for diversification of commercial honey production in Australia."

Ms McGaw said the research team had communicated findings extensively and generated significant interest from members in the beekeeping industry, as well as in scientific and medical fields.

"The report shows that Australian honey could play a pivotal role in the clinical prevention and management of health conditions, such as skin and wound infections," said Ms McGaw.

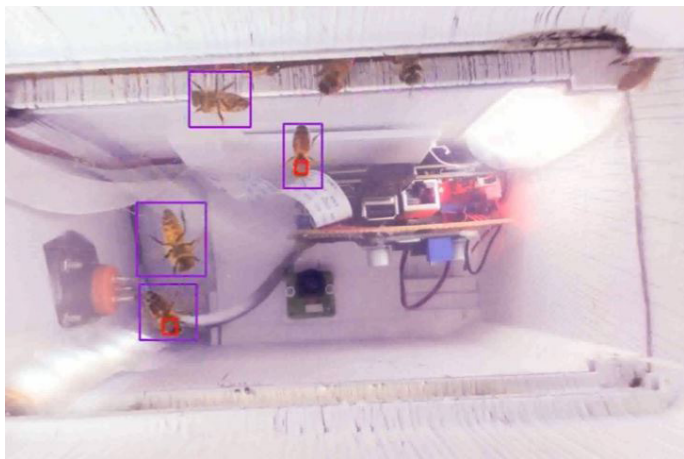
"More broadly, it provides key recommendations to further advance the value of Australian honey and make it easier for beekeepers, consumers and the medical community to understand its importance."





# Engineers brought together by Mars are now using technology to save Australia's bees from devastating varroa mites

Landline by Tim Lee



*Purple Hives use cameras to photograph bees entering or leaving hives, and AI to identify varroa mites.*

Australia's biosecurity regime is about to get a timely technological boost from an unlikely alliance.

Some young tech-savvy aerospace engineers have joined forces with one of Australia's largest dairy companies.

They've created the Purple Hive Project, which is aimed at safeguarding Australia's bee and honey industry from invasive and destructive pests.

Number one on the least-wanted list is *Varroa destructor*, a pinhead-sized, blood-sucking mite that has devastated hives around the globe.

Australia is the only inhabited continent still free of the pest. It's in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.



*Vignesh Murugan (left) and Joel Kuperholz, co-developers of the Purple Hive. (Landline: Tim Lee)*

"It frightens us to a great degree," said beekeeper Ian Cane. "Varroa mites have a devastating effect on bee

health and their ability to pollinate food crops and produce honey around the world."

Mr Cane believes it's inevitable that varroa will reach our shores. So in recent months, he has been eagerly road-testing a high-tech purple device on his beehives in the tall eucalypt forests of Victoria's East Gippsland region.

It's purple because the colour is kind to a bee's sense of sight, and looks like a letterbox attached to the front of a hive.

The entry slot contains sophisticated surveillance equipment.

"It's got two cameras, one top, one bottom," explained co-developer Vignesh Murugan of the Melbourne-based Virmana Tech company.

"As a bee comes through the front slit we monitor the bees, take an image every second and detect whether varroa mite is there."

Individual images of thousands of bees per hive are taken over the course of a day. That's where artificial intelligence comes into play.

"So, we've invented the world's fastest and smallest artificial intelligence that can see like humans," said Dr Shivy Yohanandan, who works for the Australian branch of Xailient, a high-tech firm headquartered in Silicon Valley, California.

"So what's happening here is we've trained AI to count bees and detect hitchhiking varroa mites."

If the mite is detected, an alarm signal can be sent instantly to a device such as a mobile phone.

The inspiration for the Purple Hive owes much to the Red Planet.

In 2018, engineering students Joel Kuperholz and Vignesh Murugan were part of a team from Melbourne's Monash University that won the chance to compete in the University Rover Challenge in Utah, USA. They excelled at their challenge of using robotics to build the first semi-autonomous Mars rover, and late last year the pair formed their own company.

"We found we had a great working relationship, so we decided to take that and apply it to the Australian agriculture sector," said Mr Kuperholz.

"We both wanted to make a difference and help prevent the (varroa) mite getting into Australia."



This varroa identification chart was sent to registered beekeepers throughout Australia in 2012. (Matt Brann: ABC Rural)

Bega Cheese Limited's involvement stems from its recent diversification from dairy products into table spreads.

In 2017, it bought the Vegemite brand and peanut butter from Kraft. This month, it launched into processing and selling Australian honey. Aware of the threat posed by pests such as varroa, it sought a high-tech safeguard.

"We identified a need and opportunity to leverage technology and innovation to protect the Australian bee industry," said Bega's Adam McNamara. "To make it easier for the monitoring of this mite." At present, quarantine inspectors conduct regular physical inspections of so-called 'sentinel beehives' placed at ports and other points of entry to Australia to detect if the mite has arrived.

"The current process for monitoring the *Varroa destructor* is painstakingly manual," said Adam McNamara of Bega Cheese.

"To the entry points of Australia, they are the biggest risk areas," said Mr McNamara. "We'd like to establish a mesh network where a Purple Hive can be attached to any beehive around Australia."

Apiarists are excited by the project. Aris Petratos of Victorian Apiarists' Association believes it represents an enormous advance in biosecurity and the ever-present threat of varroa.

"If technology alerts you on your phone, you instantly know there's a problem. You can go out and do something about it," said Mr Petratos. "If it (the pest) is there for a month or a week or two



## Alfred Ernest NORTON

The late Alfred Ernest Norton a very well-known apiarist who operated from Tamworth NSW between 1920 and 1955.

Along with his sons Fred and Perce, traded as Peel River Apiaries, later forming the firm Norton's Pty Ltd. Alf co-formed the commercial Apiarists' Association of N S W in 1933 and was an Executive member from its inception until 1946.

Alf had a book called "A Beekeepers Diary" first published in serial form from 1952 to 1958 and again from 1972 to 1978.

During his years Alf made a collection of wax figures. This collection remains intact today and is proudly displayed in a custom-made display unit at his grandson, Frank Norton's home in Tamworth.



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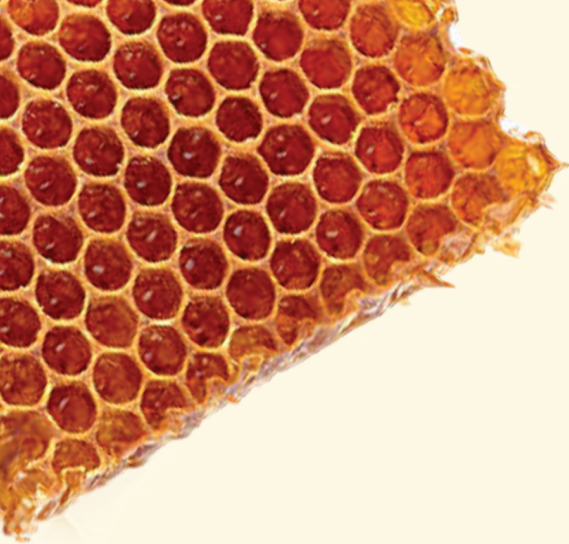
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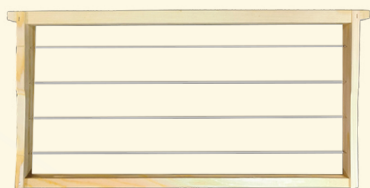
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Wood Frame Full Depth  
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Plastic Frame Full Depth

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1 x brood box

1 x bottom board (including 2 feeders and pollen trap)

1 x Entrance reducer

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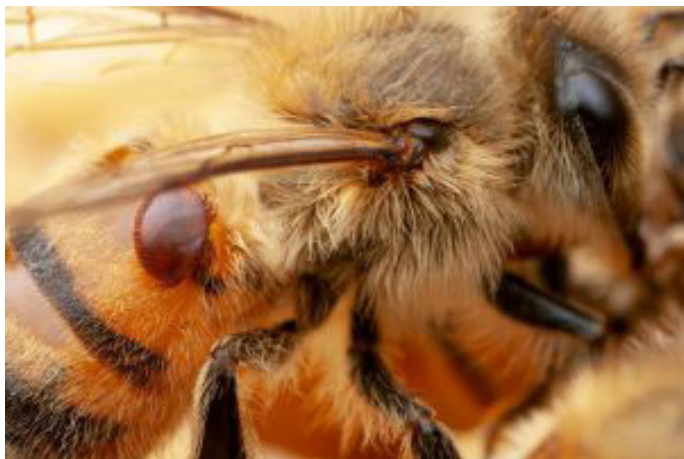




# CATCH THE BUZZ

## BACTERIA ENGINEERED TO PROTECT BEES

### Bacteria Engineered to Protect Bees from Pests and Pathogens



*A Varroa mite, a common pest that can weaken bees and make them more susceptible to pathogens, feeds on a honey bee. Photo Credit: Alex Wild/University of Texas at Austin.*

**AUSTIN, Texas** — Scientists from The University of Texas at Austin report in the journal *Science* that they have developed a new strategy to protect honey bees from a deadly trend known as colony collapse: genetically engineered strains of bacteria.

An increasing number of honey bee colonies in the U.S. have seen the dwindling of their adult bees. According to a national survey, beekeepers lost nearly 40% of their honey bee colonies last winter, the highest rate reported since the survey began 13 years ago.

The engineered bacteria live in the guts of honey bees and act as biological factories, pumping out medicines protecting the bees against two major causes of colony collapse: Varroa mites and deformed wing virus. The researchers believe their method could one day scale up for agricultural use because the engineered bacteria are easy to grow, inoculating the bees is straightforward and the engineered bacteria are unlikely to spread beyond bees.

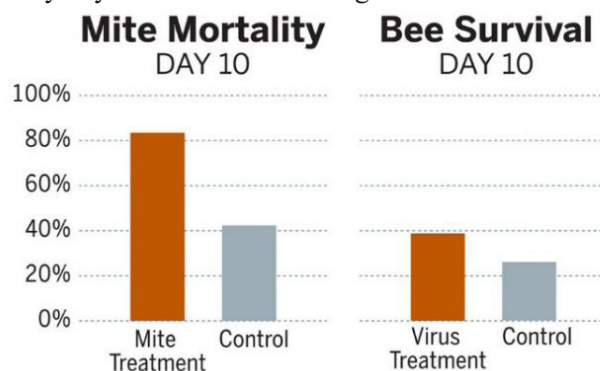
“It has direct implications for bee health,” said Nancy Moran, a professor of integrative biology and the primary investigator on the study.

“This is the first time anyone has improved the health of bees by genetically engineering their microbiome,” added Sean Leonard, a graduate student and first author of the study.

Varroa mites and deformed wing virus often come together; as the mites feed on bees, they can spread the virus, while also weakening the bees and making them more vulnerable to pathogens in the environment.

To address each problem, the team engineered one strain of bacteria to target the virus and another for the mites.

Compared with control bees, the bees treated with the strain of bacteria targeting the virus were 36.5% more likely to survive to day 10. Meanwhile, Varroa mites feeding on another set of bees treated with the mite-targeting strain of bacteria were about 70% more likely to die by day 10 than mites feeding on control bees.



Compared with control bees, the bees treated with the strain of bacteria targeting the deformed wing virus were 36.5% more likely to survive to day 10. Meanwhile, Varroa mites feeding on another set of bees treated with the mite-targeting strain of bacteria were about 70% more likely to die by day 10 than mites feeding on control bees. Credit: University of Texas at Austin.

According to the American Beekeeping Federation, honey bees contribute nearly \$20 billion each year to the value of U.S. crop production, and they play an enormous role in global food production. Without honey bees, dozens of crops, from almonds to berries to broccoli, would either vanish or produce significantly less food. Like humans, honey bees have an ecosystem of bacteria in their guts called a microbiome and also an antiviral defense mechanism called RNA interference (RNAi) that helps the body fight off certain viruses, called RNA viruses. When an RNA virus is introduced, it produces molecules called double-stranded RNAs that a healthy cell detects, triggering an RNAi immune response.

“You usually only get signs of these molecules when an RNA virus is replicating,” Moran said. “It’s a signal that this might be an evil thing and you should attack it.”

To promote a helpful RNAi response to viruses in bees — and trigger a lethal RNAi response in the mites — the team introduced modified bacteria to hundreds of bees in a laboratory setting. Sprayed with a sugar water solution containing the bacteria, the bees groomed one another and ingested the solution. The team found inoculating young worker bees with the engineered bacteria led the bees’ immune systems to be primed to protect them against deformed wing virus, which is an RNA virus, and caused the mites’ own immune systems to fight against

and ultimately kill them.

While the experiments occurred under strict biocontainment protocols used with genetic engineering, Moran said, even absent such protocols, the risk of the engineered bacteria escaping into the wild and infecting other insects — and thereby conferring some anti-pest or anti-pathogen superpowers — is very low. The type of bacteria used are highly specialized to live in the bee gut, can't survive for long outside of it and are protective for a virus that strikes only bees. Still, further research will be needed to determine the effectiveness and safety of the treatments in agricultural settings.

Another benefit of the approach is for researchers to use it as a tool in studying bee genetics. The engineered bacteria can knock down specific bee genes, enabling insights into the workings of the bee genome, and possibly enabling new breeding strategies to produce more robust bee colonies.

The other senior author is associate professor Jeffrey Barrick. Other co-authors are professor Andy Ellington, associate professor Bryan Davies, research associate Eli Powell, former postdoctoral researcher Jiri Perutka, postdoctoral fellow Peng Geng, undergraduate Luke Heckmann and research scientist assistant Richard D. Horak.

Marc Airhart  
College of Natural Sciences  
p: 512-232-1066  
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## BENDIGO BRANCH V.A.A. INC. – 41ST ANNUAL BEEKEEPING FIELD DAY 2020 CANCELLATION OF 11TH OCTOBER 2020 HARCOURT FIELD DAY - RE COVID-19

The Bendigo Branch V.A.A. Inc.'s President and executive committee has decided, in the interest of public health, after careful consideration of the collated opinions (gained via a survey of its members) and together with thorough consideration of the health advice, guidelines and pandemic restrictions regarding COVID-19, to cancel this year's 2020 annual beekeeping field day which is usually held at Harcourt.

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Carol Maunder (Secretary)  
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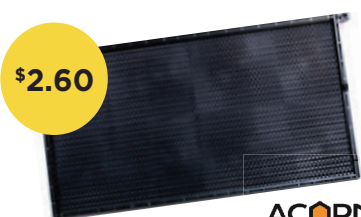
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# Technical Specialist, Honey Bees Report

Elizabeth Frost

Technical Specialist, Honey Bees  
Tocal Agricultural College, NSW Dept. of Primary Industries  
T: 02 4939 8821 M: 0437 731 273 E: elizabeth.frost@dpi.nsw.gov.au



## “Plan Bee” - National Honey Bee Genetic Improvement Program

Written by Dr. Nadine Chapman (Univ. of Sydney) and reviewed by collaborators Elizabeth Frost (NSW DPI) and Dr. Rob Banks (Univ. of New England)

Plan Bee aims to work with queen breeders, producers, beekeepers and growers to create a sustainable national honey bee genetic improvement program using innovative breeding technologies to transform the performance of honey bees in Australia. It will focus simultaneously on traits of importance to beekeepers, and of the horticulture and broadacre industries dependent on honey bee pollination. The strength of this project lies in its ability to deliver benefits across multiple industries by creating a more profitable and sustainable beekeeping industry, improving crop pollination efficiency, and enabling industry expansion through enhanced pollination security.

### Goals

#### Queen breeders

- Breeding is valued and rewarded appropriately
- Increased demand for queens
- New entrants to the industry due to increased demand
- Facilities to improve stock at a faster rate
- An established breeding program that can be adapted to selection for *Varroa* resistance if/when the pest becomes established

#### Queen producers

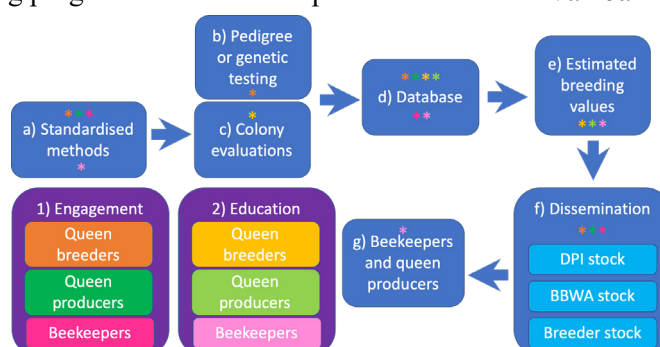
- Increased demand for queens
- New entrants to the industry due to increased demand
- Mechanisms to choose improved stock suitable for their conditions
- An established breeding program that can be adapted to selection for *Varroa* resistance if/when the pest becomes established

#### Beekeepers

- Improved communication of what traits are selected for and how
- Increased resilience due to selection for disease resistance
- Increased profitability from selecting stock for production and disease resistance
- Mechanisms to choose improved stock suitable for their conditions
- A means to choose a queen breeder/producer with good genetics for traits of importance to them
- An established breeding program that can be adapted to selection for *Varroa* resistance if/when the pest becomes established

#### Growers

- Strong beekeeping industry due to improvements in profitability
- Strong colonies for pollination due to selection for disease resistance
- Colonies whose temperament is preferred for pollination i.e. lower risk of aggression
- Improved knowledge of colony management for pollination, and if that differs for different crops e.g. crops that need pollen versus nectar foragers
- An established breeding program that can be adapted to selection for *Varroa* resistance if/when the pest becomes established





### a) Standardised methods

Having standardised methods provides certainty that queens were selected in an effective way for traits of interest. Queen breeders will differ in the traits that they select for. In addition, they may use one of several methods for assessing a given trait. As a simple example, some breeders will select for honey production by rating colonies on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), while other breeders will weigh how much honey is produced by each individual colony. As the point is for individual breeders to choose the best colonies from amongst their stock to produce the next generation, it is not necessary that every breeder uses exactly the same method, as long as they follow a sound procedure and apply it consistently to their stock.

The research hives managed by NSW DPI will provide an opportunity to evaluate different methods of assessing traits – for instance comparing scoring honey production on a 1-5 scale, compared with weighing hives. Such comparisons will help breeders identify the most cost-effective methods to use in their own programs.

Beekeepers, queen breeders, and queen producers have been engaged through surveys to determine the traits that are important to them.


Queen breeders and producers will play a vital role in developing a standardised trait selection manual – which will help us determine which trait assessment methods are most useful.

Queen breeders will also play a vital role in consideration of the most appropriate goals for breeding programs – what traits are important, how important are they, is there likely to be one type of bee that suits all environments and roles, or a range?

The most important message here is that the project will be open to participation and involvement from all who wish to be involved.

### b) Pedigree or genetic testing

Estimated breeding values (EBVs) use known relationships between individuals and the individuals' performance to determine their genetic merit. Therefore, participation in Plan Bee will require the provision of pedigrees or samples for genetic testing. The use of genetic testing improves accuracy because it is possible to determine which queens are half-sisters or super-sisters, through either their mother or their father.



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We will work with queen breeders to develop a fair access model for genetic testing. Stock from NSW DPI and Better Bees WA (BBWA) will have priority. Further testing will depend on available funding as the program expands.

#### **c) Colony evaluations**

Colony evaluations can be recorded manually, or using an App developed by BBWA.

Queen breeders will be trained in how to use the App. We will also hold workshops for those with further questions about how to use the standardised manual. Tocal College Registered Training Organisation will include the standardised manual in their Queen Breeding Course.

#### **d) Database**

The database will house information on the relationships between queens, either through entry of pedigree or through genetic testing, along with colony performance data. Data from colony evaluations will either be entered manually or via the App.

Queen breeders and producers will be involved in the setup of the database. We must consider questions such as:

- Privacy
- Security
- Customised information access
- Pending breeders' permission, determine what data is appropriate to compare

Training for queen breeders in the use of the database will be an early priority. As the project progresses, and once decisions have been made about database access, this training will be extended to beekeepers and queen producers.

#### **e) Estimated breeding values**

EBVs will be generated using the data entered into the database. These will then be provided to the queen breeder for them to make the final decision about which colonies they will select to produce the next generation. Training will be provided to assist this process.

#### **f) Dissemination**

Beekeepers have been engaged to determine the information they would like to have when making decisions about queen purchase. We will further engage with queen breeders and producers to develop our dissemination strategy, which will be specific to the stock.

Queen breeders will continue to sell their stock as usual. There will be the means to acknowledge the work that they have put into their breeding: what traits and how they were selected for, should they choose.

BBWA will develop a plan to distribute their stock.

Plan Bee will work with industry to develop a fair system for getting our stock (NSW DPI) out to industry.

#### **g) Beekeepers/queen buyers**

In order to grow the queen bee market, the program will provide training for beekeepers on:

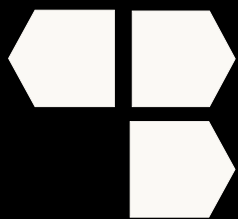
- The importance of breeding and having quality queens
- The role of genetic testing
- How EBVs work
- Importance of environmental effects and choosing the right queen for you

#### **Activities not included in the diagram**

- Literature review of past and current bee breeding programs, including breeding structures
- Examination of management and other traits that will improve the value of colonies for pollination
- A genetic study of Australia's breeding population
- Domestic queen bee market analysis
- Economic modelling and a business case
- Development of seasonal hive management strategies and floral resource tracking
- Survey of the needs of growers

#### **Acknowledgements**

Plan Bee (National Honey Bee Genetic Improvement Program) is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment as part of its Rural Research and Development for Profit program. The project is further supported by AgriFutures Australia, the Department of Regional NSW (formerly NSW DPI), University of Sydney, Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit, Better Bees WA Inc, When Bee Foundation, CostaGroup, Olam, Beechworth Honey, Monson's Honey and Pollination, Auston, South Pacific Seeds, and commercial beekeepers.



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27<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

Letters to the Editor, Honeybee News

The following was my response to a topic featured in our Victorian Weekly Times (rural) newspaper as per below and I thought it may be of interest to share with other members of our industry.

### Reference: Manuka Honey

“Dear Editor,

In response to the article on page 14, Weekly Times, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020, in relation to Manuka Honey, I wish to add my comments.

This article appears to suggest that Australian Honey Producers have no right to claim the word “Manuka” as a descriptive of the honey produced from *Leptospermum scoparium*.

I have been a beekeeper (commercial) going back over seventy years and “Manuka” as a description of ‘Tea Trees’ was in common usage when I first began my beekeeping career.

In fact, the ‘Tea Tree’ title was a description that was seldom used. “Manuka” as a description of Tea Trees was the universal word to describe all Tea Tree varieties with an acceptance by most people that Tea Trees flowered at different times in different areas. The theory was that that there was only one variety and that elevation, rainfall, and/or soil type was where they differed. It was only as time passed and Australian Researchers delved more deeply that we became aware of the variations (**80 listed varieties**).

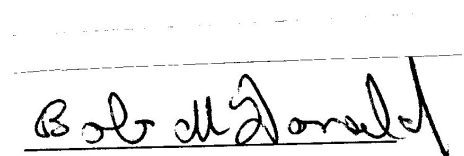
To quote from the book “*Money in Bees in Australasia*” by Tarlton Rayment, published in 1915 - Quote: “Tea Tree (Manuka or Prickly i.e. *Leptospermum scoparium*).

This is very common, especially about the Grampians; in fact the Tea Trees are characteristic of the Australian landscape. It is known also in New Zealand as “Manuka”. End quote.

This then indicates that the word “Manuka” was in common usage in Australia going back into the early years of commercial beekeeping in Australia.

Mention of the Grampians also indicates that to change the origin (name) of the plant/honey source to “Coastal Tea Tree” etc. - as was mentioned in the article - would not be applicable.

I have also read somewhere back in the past of the questioning as to whether there is the possibility that Manuka Tea Tree (*Leptospermum scoparium*), as the only variety growing in New Zealand is actually native to New Zealand, or rather, introduced from seed out of Australia? “



# Beekeepers – only bring healthy hives to almonds in Victoria

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

*The 2020 almond pollination season is fast approaching. Beekeepers planning on entering Victoria with hives from interstate must meet Victoria's entry requirements.*

Almond pollination provides a cash flow opportunity for beekeeping businesses who have suffered from the effects of drought and fire over recent years.

While most interstate beekeepers do the right thing each year, beekeepers bringing diseased hives into Victoria for almond pollination have been fined up to \$5000.

To reduce the risk of disease at almond pollination, beekeepers planning on bringing hives into Victoria need to take the following steps:

## 1. Check to make sure you're compliant with 'the Code'

Most of the [Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice](#) ('the Code') is now law in Victoria. Use the checklist below to make sure you're compliant:

- Check to make sure that your registration as a beekeeper is current and that your registered brand is clearly marked on all your hives.
- Ensure that all your hives are structurally sound, have intact external surfaces, and only have openings that are designed specifically for bee access.
- Inspect your brood regularly to check for pests and diseases. Remove any diseased or substandard hives from your

load before taking them to almond pollination.

- Test your hives for exotic parasites, such as [varroa mite](#), via [drone uncapping and either the sugar shake or alcohol wash methods](#).
- Communicate with your broker/grower with information about your apiaries, including your expectations of your available hive numbers and their quality.
- [Maintain records](#) of your inspections, tests, observations and actions (such as movement) as they relate to your hives.
- Complete your annual honey culture test. This is mandatory for beekeepers who own 50 or more hives. To order a test kit, contact Gribbles Veterinary Pathology on 1300 307 190.
- To demonstrate to your broker or grower that you are compliant with the Code, provide them with a completed and signed copy of the 'Certification of Compliance' document. It can be found at the back of [the Code](#).

## 2. Obtain a copy of a blank Victorian Health Certificate

- You will need a blank health certificate for the introduction of bees, bee products, fodder or used beekeeping fittings into Victoria. You can get one by either:
  - downloading it from: <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/moving-livestock-and-animals/moving-bees-interstate>
  - sending an email to: [honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au) and requesting a blank

health certificate; we'll email one back to you.

- phoning our Customer Service Centre on 136 186 and asking to speak to an apiary officer. They will arrange for a certificate to be posted or faxed to you.

NOTE: Previous versions of health certificate forms are no longer in use. Please ensure you are using the current version from the Agriculture Victoria website for all movements into Victoria.

### 3. Complete Part A of the certificate 'Certification by Owner'

When bringing hives into Victoria for almond pollination, you need to state on the form the total number of bee colonies (i.e. hives) that you intend to bring in.

You must also declare (by signing the form) that your bee colonies are not coming from a quarantine area or from an apiary that is showing symptoms of American foul brood (AFB) or any other bee diseases.

If the hives are from an apiary of 50 or more hives, you must also attach the result of a honey culture test that is less than 12 months old.

### 4. Submit the form to your apiary officer

Once you've completed Part A of the form, you can submit it to an apiary officer in your state or territory. They will complete Part B of the form and return it to you. They may be in contact with you to request further information.

### 5. Bring your hives into Victoria

When both parts of the form have been completed, you can now bring your bees into Victoria.

When taking your bees into Victoria, you must:

- Keep a copy of the health certificate with you when you come into Victoria;
- Give a copy of the health certificate to your 'consignee' – this might be the broker or orchard you are delivering your bees to;
- Send a copy of the health certificate to a Victorian apiary officer within 48 hours of your arrival. You can do this by emailing it to [honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au); or if you don't have access to email,

phone 136 186 and ask to speak to an apiary officer who will make other arrangements for you.

### 6. Enjoy your stay in Victoria

All beekeepers are responsible for assisting with maintaining biosecurity and controlling the spread of bee diseases. If everyone complies, the risk of disease is reduced and the whole beekeeping industry benefits.

Do yourself and the industry a favour and leave any weak or diseased hives at home.

For more information go to [agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au)



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# BEE BIOSECURITY OFFICER REPORT

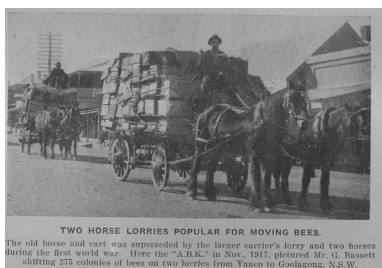


Rod Bourke - NSW Bee Biosecurity Officer  
NSW Department of Primary Industries - Biosecurity NSW  
Tocal Ag College, Tocal Rd Paterson NSW 2320  
Ph: 02 4939 8946 Mob: 0438 677 195 Email: rod.bourke@dpi.nsw.gov.au



## NSW Biosecurity Act and Code of Practice Record Keeping Requirements for Beekeepers

A lot of very successful beekeepers keep great records, but I have also been surprised by the large number that keep very few records or don't keep any at all. In the old days if you were not all that great at school then you may have been sent off to learn to become a beekeeper, because having good reading and writing skills was not nearly as important as knowing bees, trees and your country (plus having a strong back and being able to work damn hard).



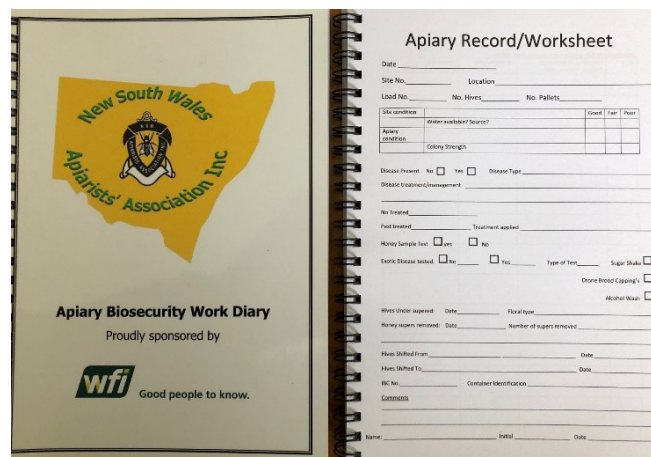
### *Old time beekeeping*

Fast forward to now and many things in this world have changed, but there are still many people who have trouble with literacy or using a computer and internet, or simply don't want to keep records. For years it has been a legal requirement in NSW for beekeepers to keep adequate records, so with NSW now also adopting as a mandatory condition of registration the Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice (the Code) it is even more important that beekeepers address any deficiencies in their record keeping. This is going to be a big challenge for some operators so the best time to start is RIGHT NOW.

The records that legally need to be kept by beekeepers in NSW include the following;

- Where your hives are currently located (active bee sites), how many and their previous movements
- When each (every) hive had its full brood checks performed
- Notifiable diseases found and what actions were undertaken
- When mite surveillance was done in each load and the results

Many beekeepers use available beekeeping Apps or other custom built Cloud platforms to record all their hive data, which can vary from being quite simple to very information rich, depending on their operational requirements. Whilst these forms of technology have many benefits for those that use them it is not a system for everybody, so if you are only just starting record keeping then one of the best ways to keep all this information is to fill in a basic site sheet every time you visit an apiary and undertake work. If your bees always stay together as a load then you may find it easier to keep a separate book or section in your folder for every load. There are numerous different site sheets available to try out and compare, including templates on the NSW DPI and BeeAware websites. You can also purchase the NSWAA and ABA log books. For those not currently using a site sheet I encourage you to make up a few of your own from scratch (either on paper or printed out from a computer) to see what works best for you.



### *One of many record keeping options*

Most importantly it needs to cover off all your requirements under both the NSW Biosecurity Act and the Code, so the most important information that you really do need to list on any site sheet is;

- Date (plus perhaps arrival & departure times)
- Location (if a nickname then keep the actual address on file somewhere)
- Number of hives on site
- Overall strength of hives
- Biosecurity concerns discovered (hives being robbed, knocked over by livestock, sick/dead bees or signs of diseases etc.)



- Brood inspections or mite surveillance undertaken.
- Number of weak hives or hives with notifiable diseases and the biosecurity actions you undertook to manage and report them (to DPI).
- Hive movements to another location

Other information that may help your operational efficiency includes;

- Type of bee work you undertook on the day
- How many honey boxes added/taken off, or put above clearer boards to be taken off next time (you can then tell if somebody stole boxes or how much space you will need when you do pull them off).
- Hives split, Queen-less, swarmed, managed as weak etc.
- Estimated date for next visit (especially important with canola and during spring)
- Nectar and/or pollen sources currently being worked or possibly starting soon.
- Supplemental feedings/follow up requirements
- Small Hive Beetle management
- Other (which covers everything else)

By keeping these records you will be better able to manage your hives, brood checks and ultimately run better bees as your chances of “forgetting about some” is greatly reduced. Preventing problems with your bees by undertaking regular management is a far better approach than fixing problems once they get worse, as the longer you leave things the more likely that hives become weakened and robbed. By keeping good records

and following up in a timely manner you can avoid the commonly made mistake where bees are left for too long between visits.

As the keeping of records is now a requirement all beekeepers need to rise to this new challenge, as it is a legal requirement and must be followed, or the consequences faced.

For further reading about record keeping and to download some record keeping templates please use the following;  
<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees/links>  
<https://beeaware.org.au/code-of-practice/record-keeping/>

Here is the full listing of records required under the Code.

## REQUIREMENT

### 5.1 All beekeepers must keep legible records of:

- The dates of all apiary inspections and observations from the inspections including an assessment of the overall strength of the hives in the apiary, any pests or diseases found in the hives and the method used for detection of arthropod pests specified in Part B 3.2.**
- Details of all actions taken to manage any pests or diseases in the apiary.**
- Details of sampling method, date(s) of collection, testing body and the results of all honey tests or other independent assessments for the presence of American foulbrood.**
- Details of movements of hives (including swarm catch boxes); including dates, numbers, geographic locations.**
- Details of introductions of any bees and used hives or hive components (with or without bees) from external sources; including the date of introduction and the supplier or source.**
- Details of biosecurity-related training by the beekeeper and any employees of the beekeeper.**



## Wanted Cover Photos

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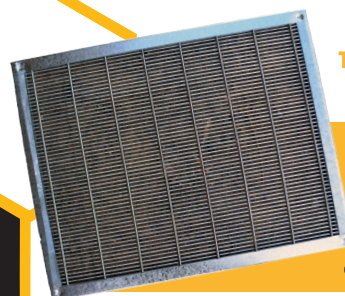


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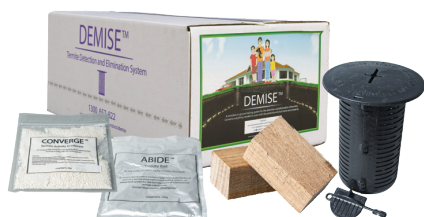
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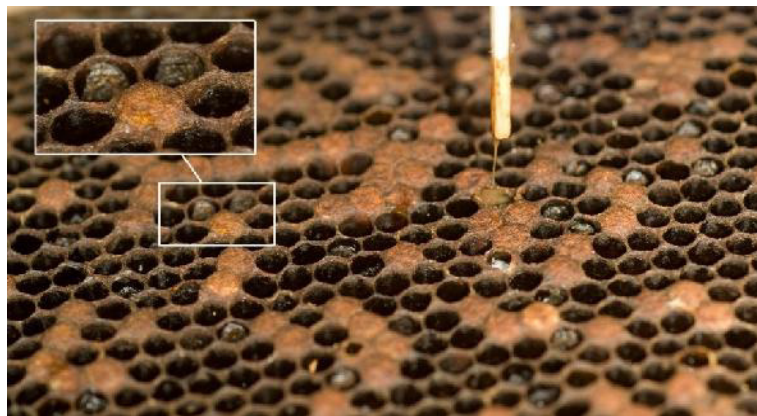
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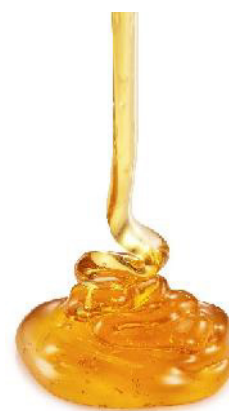
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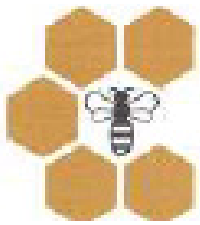
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# AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC (AHBIC) UPDATE

Full newsletter available from <http://honeybee.org.au>

## NOTE FROM THE NEW CHAIR, TREVOR WEATHERHEAD

This is my first report as Chair of AHBIC. It is an honour to be able to serve in this capacity.

Firstly I would like to pass on thanks to Peter McDonald for his time as Chair of AHBIC and also his time on the Executive before that. There have been many issues that have come up during the time Peter was Chair and he handled them with his usual efficiency. Also thanks to Michelle his wife.

Our AGM was a success with the new format (via ZOOM) forced upon us by covid-19. Thank you to Ben McKee and Peter Barnes for allowing themselves to be put forward to serve on the AHBIC Executive. The rest of the Executive Members are Stephen Fewster as Deputy Chair, Therese Kershaw and Leilani Leyland. We are all held together by our hard working CEO Helen Goodall. I am sure we will make a great team to take our industry forward.

If there are issues that you think AHBIC should be attending to, feel free to bring them up with your AHBIC Council representative so they can bring it to our attention.

There are many issues that we have on the books at the moment and we are looking to address these as soon as possible.

Covid-19 is presenting problems for interstate movement of hives, particularly as we are coming up to the almond pollination time. I know the Queensland and New South Wales Associations are working together and liaising with their State Governments to work out how the movement of the hives to pollination can occur. If you require information contact your State Association.

So I hope that the coming season is looking better than the last for many of the beekeepers but from some reports it will again be a challenging time. Remember that there are financial counsellors available to help you through the tough times and most of all don't bottle it up inside. Talk with someone about your issues. Remember it will all turn out for the best in the long run but stick with it. Remember HiveAid can help and for those who can support HiveAid with donations I would urge you to do so. See the AHBIC website for details.

Trevor Weatherhead AM

## NOTE FROM CEO, HELEN GOODALL

As previously advised, AHBIC held our Annual General Meeting on the 6 July 2020 via a zoom meeting. While the meeting did not allow for observers, it was successful in providing AHBIC members with a virtual meeting format. However, it was agreed that there is significant value in continuing to hold the AGM's as a face to face in the future.

AHBIC have commissioned research agency Pollinate (funded through AgriFutures) to conduct research to develop a communications plan to raise awareness of the crucial role of honey bees. Raising awareness of the crucial role of bees - many are aware of the role bees play in ecosystems and agricultural industries, however many are not. This project seeks to create a communications plan that will assist industry in raising awareness of the importance of bees for; healthy ecosystems, healthy forests and global food security. A range of stakeholders including AHBIC members, people from adjacent industries and the general public will be interviewed to gain insight and input. It expected that the results from this work will be realised in the next few months.

During the month I had the pleasure of participating via zoom in the Cooperative Research Centre (CRCs) Association Early Career Researcher Showcase Finals which celebrates science communication. Approximately 50 post graduate (Masters and PhD) students and early-stage postdoctoral researchers from CRCs competed to clearly and succinctly explain their research, how their project will benefit society, and their individual role in delivering the science. There were five finalists from different areas of science, with Jessica Moran, CRC for Honey Bee Products who is developing a 'beehive breathalyser' being awarded the overall finalist.

Lastly, I would like to say a special thank you to the outgoing Chair, Peter McDonald. Thank you for your professionalism, hard work, obvious dedication to the industry and particularly the support and patience you have provided to me over my first three months. With Trevor Weatherhead as the new Chair, the continuing Executive members and Ben McKee as a new Executive member, we will continue to work for the benefit of the industry.

Helen Goodall



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