

AUSTRALIA'S

# HONEYBEE NEWS

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Volume 11 Number 5  
September -October 2018



## INSIDE:

*The Hon. Niall Blair MLC, Helping to Keep NSW  
Honey Flowing*

*Honey: The New Warrior Against MRSA  
27 Unknown Bee Viruses Discovered*

# DENMAR APIARIES

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*COVER: Double Rainbow over almonds  
Photograph: Matthew Kershaw*





# AUSTRALIA'S HONEYBEE NEWS

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**Editor:** Vikki Bingley PO Box 7425 Sutton NSW 2620  
**Advertising Enquiries:** Mobile: 0427 552 001 Email: [honeybeenews@icloud.com](mailto:honeybeenews@icloud.com)  
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**VICE PRESIDENT:** Stephen Targett PO Box 325 NARRANDERA NSW 2700 Mob: 0428 649 321  
Email: wally.56@hotmail.com

**Casey Cooper** Darby's Road TINGHA NSW 2369 Mob: 0428 233 551 Email: cooperbees@bigpond.com.au

**Steve Cunial** PO Box 771 GRIFFITH NSW 2680 Mob: 0448 627 291 Email: steve@cunialbeekeeping.com.au

**Brian Woolfe** 18 Dumaresq St GLEN INNES NSW 2370 Mob: 0429 032 019 Email: woolfe@exemail.com.au

**SECRETARY/TREASURER:** Roslynn (Ros) Riggs PO Box 267 MANILLA NSW 2346  
Mob: 0400 441 346 Email: info@nswaa.com.au Website: www.nswaa.com.au

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Col Wilson 02 4930 4950  
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James Kershaw 0400 370 481  
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Contact President  
Col Maloney 02 6663 7051  
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Judy Saxvik 0427 684 114  
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## AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL (AHBIC)

**Chairman:** Peter McDonald Ph: 0427 722 167  
Email: prmcdonald@hotmail.com

**Executive Director:** Trevor Weatherhead Ph: 07 5467 2265  
Email: ahbic@honeybee.org.au Website: www.honeybee.org.au

Mailing address: PO Box 4253, Raceview QLD 4305

## HONEY BEE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (HBRDC)

Ms Margie Heath, Project Manager, RIRDC PO Box 4776, Kingston ACT 2604 Ph: 02 6271 4145  
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



SEPTEMBER 2018

## SEASON

Unfortunately the drought continues, with most regions receiving little or no decent rainfall since my last report. There are some localised areas that have canola flowering and yielding reasonable nectar but due to the high demand for hay, many of these crops will soon be cut thus terminating what little production that was being gained. There are still the few prospects previously mentioned but production from these may be short lived. Grey Ironbark on the east coast could still provide some production but caution would be advised due to the extreme drought conditions and the heightened bushfire risk.

## ALMONDS

Another pollination season has finished. Bees in most instances came off in good condition. From all reports there were some beekeepers that don't do our industry any favours, weak or dead hives have NO place being anywhere near an Almond orchard as they pose a heightened Biosecurity risk to other apiarists surrounding them, not to mention little or no pollination provided. If you don't think the returns from pollination fees warrant you to deliver stronger hives, then don't go.

## DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

As we all know drought takes a toll on our eucalypts, this one especially so as it is exacerbated by last seasons reduced rainfall.

Your Association has been successful in gaining fee waivers on all public lands apiary sites. After contacting the NSW Government outlining the current dire outlook for beekeepers and our resource, the Government has responded by introducing bee sites fee waivers across all public land tenures for 12 months. (Press release in this issue)

The NSWAA applauds the NSW Government for their support and recognition of the apiary industry during these trying times.

Heavy vehicle registration fees have also been waived for two years backdated to July 1. Refer to link to see information on registration refunds and rebates : [www.rms.nsw.gov.au-registration](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au-registration)

For a full list of available relief measures check the DPI website.

## RESOURCE

On September 6 I attended a meeting at the DPI offices in Sydney to discuss amendments to the Forestry regulations where I was informed that in the interim all exemptions currently afforded to apiarists in the old IFOAs would continue and be included in the amended Forestry

regulations currently being drafted. I requested that recognition of set down sites be included in the regulation which should allow sites and access roads to be left in a usable condition.

## DPI STAFFING

The Department of Primary Industries has announced that The role of Regulatory Specialist Apiaries, the position Mick Rankmore has held for many years is to be divided into 2 positions. Stephen Green will be responsible for the area north of Dubbo and Daryl Cooper will be responsible for areas south of Dubbo.

In addition to routine regulatory compliance functions the Apiary regulatory specialists will have the responsibility for;

- Coordination and planning of statewide apiary operations

- Completing operational reports and providing practical training on bees to compliance

Dr Doug Somerville is on extended leave and Elizabeth Frost is acting in that role in his absence for 3 months, the position will then be advertised within DPI.

The increase in apiary staff is welcomed by the NSWAA and thanks must go to Scott Hanson (Director General DPI) for fulfilling his commitment to maintain all apiary staffing positions.

## NATIVE TITLE CLAIM

There is currently a native title claim over a large area from south of Sydney down to Eden and encompasses almost all of the south coast beekeeping areas on public lands. I am uncertain as to what impact this may have on beekeeping in this area. Several members including myself have lodged an interest with the federal court relating to our use of the area for beekeeping. We will keep members updated as information is received.

## HONEYLAND

Several branches indicated they wanted Honeyland to continue so at our last executive meeting it was decided to form a subcommittee to manage Honeyland. The committee has been formed from nominated branch members and Casey Cooper has volunteered to guide the committee through this transitional phase.

## MEMBERSHIP

It is very disappointing that some members do not pay the correct membership fee. This severely restricts what could potentially be achieved by your association. The gaining of the fee waivers on public lands bee sites alone will save most commercial apiarists much more than your membership, so please reconsider your funding position



and forward the correct fees.

Members if you believe benefits recently gained by your Association assist your financial viability ,then please encourage others in the beekeeping community to join as well.

#### NEXT MEETING

Our next executive meeting is scheduled to be held on November 26 at Tocal.

Any members wishing to attend need to give our secretary at least 10 days' notice.

Neil Bingley  
President

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## NSW APIARISTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

ABN: 89 417 216 326

### Policy for Branch Delegate to attend NSWAA Executive Meeting

- 1. The branch delegates name to be with the NSW Secretary 10 days prior to meeting.**  
(This aids with catering and booking a meeting room of a suitable size.)
- 2. Delegate is to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to the meeting starting.**
- 3. NSWAA is to provide morning tea and lunch delegate.**
- 4. Delegates may be asked to leave the meeting for some business matters.**
- 5. Delegates are not to take part in discussions unless specifically asked to do so.**
- 6. Delegate or the delegate's branch is responsible for the delegates travel and accommodation costs.**
- 7. Such representative shall only have the right to speak if invited, but will not have the right to vote at such meetings.**



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**Niall Blair**

Minister for Primary Industries  
Minister for Regional Water  
Minister for Trade and Industry

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

XXX

### **HELPING TO KEEP NSW HONEY FLOWING**

They're one of our sweetest producers but the effects of the current drought have made it difficult for beekeepers to produce honey.

To ease the burden on our apianists, the NSW Government has waived another agricultural fee to assist those affected by drought, with commercial beekeepers on public land set to benefit.

Minister for Primary Industries, Niall Blair said as an avid hobby beekeeper himself, he understands how tough the drought can be on bee populations and pollen availability.

"It isn't just cropping or livestock farming that is impacted by drought, it is being felt industry-wide," Mr Blair said.

"In the case of bees, we estimate there will be a 30 to 40 per cent reduction in honey production in NSW this year.

"Bees are critical to our wider agricultural industry, with the pollination service worth an estimated \$4-6 billion to the Australian economy yearly.

"At this time of the year, apianists would usually be moving their bees into canola crops, but with a large percentage of these crops in NSW not viable due to the drought, the canola honey crop will be very limited.

"By waiving fees for commercial beekeepers on public land, we ease the burden for those apianists, which make up some 40 per cent of all commercial beekeepers."

NSW Apianists Association President, Neil Bingley runs a family business at Sutton and said apianists face a difficult position, where even good rain will not change their prospects.

"Bees are reliant in part on native trees and stressed trees that flower during this period are less likely to produce nectar and pollen, so our short and long-term prospects will be very difficult," Mr Bingley said.

"The waiving of these beekeeper fees on public land will help with cash flow, as has the waiving of large vehicle registration fees, which is saving me \$8000 in 2018 and will be immensely appreciated by industry."

Fees for permit renewals in 2018/19 will be waived. Those beekeepers who have already renewed their permit will either receive a refund or will be provided with a credit for the 19/20 financial year.

**MEDIA: Evie Madden | Minister Blair | 0409 682 163**







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# DOUG'S COLUMN

Doug Somerville

Technical Specialist, Apiculture - NSW Department of Primary Industries - Goulburn  
doug.somerville@dpi.nsw.gov.au



## 30 years and counting

Back in 1987 (April 27<sup>th</sup> to be precise), I started my employment with the government as the “bee man”.

The bee man title is purposely obscure, as my job has changed several times but I still remain the bee man (possibly not politically correct these days - should be the ‘bee person’).

The time frame is also a bit out of date. By the time this article goes to print, it will be 31 years. On a few occasions my achievements have been acknowledged by the beekeeping industry. Recently my work colleague highlighted my career; Elizabeth Frost held a surprise morning tea at Tocal Ag College the day after the most recent NSW Apiarists’ Association executive meeting at the same location. This made me think that writing on a few points reflecting on this journey may make an interesting article.

Spending 30 years with the one employer is becoming a rare event, unfortunately. I say unfortunately, as I believe it takes several years to really get your head around an industry and all its parts. Plus, I believe the cascade of name changes:

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Agriculture & Fisheries
- NSW Agriculture
- NSW Industry and Investment
- NSW Department of Primary Industries

while amusing to outsiders, has been just noise, as long as the industry has the same staff to deal with within the system.

In 1987 there was a stand-alone beekeeping section which covered all aspects of the services provided to the beekeeping industry. This was comprised of six members - one to each region of NSW. Half the role of the Apiary Officers was AFB inspections and the remainder was advisory/extension, with minor roles in education and research.

In the early 1990s the regulatory role was removed from this group, including myself, and given to the multi-skilled regulatory officers. This allowed the bee group to delve more into the education and research areas than before.

For me, I embarked on documenting the floral resources used by beekeepers. This involved surveying all the beekeepers using the 25 NSW Forestry districts across

the state. A major body of work culminated in the publication of 25 separate reports, one for each district and finally with a publication in the Australian Forestry journal *“The primary melliferous flora and other aspects associated with beekeeping within State Forests of NSW as determined by surveys of beekeepers”*.

Then a study on the state floral resources, project title Floral Resource Database for the NSW Apiary Industry, funded by RIRDC (1999). This involved surveying the entire commercial beekeeping industry within NSW. The response was excellent, with an 81% return of surveys. Quite a hefty number, which took some serious lobbying and ground work to achieve.

Somewhere along this pathway I also obtained funding to collect and analyse bee collected pollens to determine their nutritional value to honey bees. The principal attributes were the crude protein levels and amino acid ratios. To a lesser extent, the fat levels and mineral contents were also measured.

This went on for several years and might I say was supported by a number of willing beekeepers who assisted me in these collections. Ultimately the book *“Fat bees, skinny bees - a manual on honey bee nutrition for beekeepers”* was published by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) in 2005. This publication went on to become the major ‘go to’ reference on the subject of honey bee nutrition around the world. Still available on the world-wide-web, simply search for ‘fat bees skinny bees’.

These projects and others provided me with enough material to submit a PhD thesis in 2004 - *“The floral resources of NSW of primary importance to commercial beekeeping”* through the Australian National University.

There were many, many other projects conducted during this time on bee subjects, but another theme was emerging. What was left of the bee team (three by 2000), were increasingly being called on to conduct more and more short courses. To start with, they were all based at Tocal. In the beginning we had acetone plastic overheads. It was a major job to produce these teaching aids. Then came 35mm slides, and then ‘power point’. This made life easier, but each course we ran was different and we continued to add more photos and images to the presentations.

It was a struggle to get the first DPI book on bees published as the powers-that-be didn’t believe there was a market for it. Eventually in 2007 the first Bee AgSkills

book was published. This book has been reprinted and up-dated four times since the initial publication and is one of the best sellers within the DPI book sales. This book was based on a collection of AgNotes/Primefacts written on beekeeping over time, plus the folder of notes handed out at the courses.

Nick Annand and myself compiled and launched the “*Pests and Diseases of Honey bees*” courses in 2010. These were very popular and eventually an AgGuide on the subject was produced. Then came the AgGuide on “*Queen bee breeding*” and “*Honey production*” with the most recent addition on “*Pollination*”.

To parallel this evolution became the need to employ an Education Officer to manage the escalation in demand for formal training in beekeeping. Initially the first officer was Elizabeth Frost, who was quickly joined by Dani Lloyd-Prichard. Elizabeth went on to take over Nick Annand’s position as a Development Officer.

While all this was happening, the Biosecurity Division of NSW DPI was solely focused on compliance (AFB inspection work and health certificates). Then along came a concerted effort by the State and Federal beekeeping peak industry bodies to pull together a national approach to bee biosecurity. This got legs and with no small effort from Craig Klingner and Ian Zadow at the time, was sold effectively to the whole industry. Levies became statutory and Plant Health Australia was the organisation identified to coordinate the national program.

Part of this program was the employment of a dedicated Bee Biosecurity Officer, Rod Bourke, industry funded, working within NSW DPI. The functions and jobs changed for each bee biosecurity officer in each state, but even so, there is now stronger support from state governments for bee biosecurity as a result of the industry’s collective actions.

More recently Nick Geoghegan was employed to head up the latest addition to the bee team ranks. The beekeeping industry has been, for several years, asking for a simpler system and more user friendly structure around bee sites on public lands. This really got momentum in 2015 with a position paper put together by the NSW Apiarists’ Association “*Apiary sites on public lands*”.

Another exciting development is the creation or rebirth of a bee breeding program with Elizabeth Frost as the champion.

I’m conscious that many of the people I deal with have been around longer than me, so lots of my experiences are theirs. But I’m also conscious that there are many new players and what has happened in recent times is their only knowledge and experience so far!

Some other observations worthy of note:

#### Biosecurity

- EFB came into focus in the mid 70s when I

started in bees.

- Chalkbrood in the early 90s, now a major disease of importance.
- SHB in 2002, an obscure pest on the international stage at the time, now well entrenched on the list of major pests of honey bees.
- *Nosema ceranae* snuck in there somewhere, but its impact is still murky.
- European wasps and cane toads, although they have been around for decades, their impact slowly grows from year to year.

#### Honey

- The manuka story has exploded, more so in New Zealand than Australia.
- We have gone from storing honey in 27kg square tins, to 44gallon galvanised drums, to 1000 litre IBCs.
- Stainless steel is now the principal material all honey handling equipment is made from.

#### Flora

- Paterson’s curse has all but disappeared off the radar. Less than 10 years ago, this plant was the number one source of nectar and pollen within the country.
- Blackberries, nodding thistle and scotch thistle have been reduced as sources of nectar and pollen due to successful biological control programs.
- Slow but diminishing demise of desirable eucalypt species across the agricultural landscape, mainly box, ironbark, stringybark and red gums.

#### Communication

- All the state beekeeping organisations have their own journal/regular publications, 10 years ago this was not the case.
- Email is the means of communicating.
- Older clients still prefer written material, younger clients happy with e-pathways for communication.
- Bombarded with sources of information - e.g. “Dr Google” etc. Not always factorial, often opinion based information, but readily available.

#### **What of the future?**

While there has been a proliferation of ‘new’ hive designs and gadgets around the planet, none have really revolutionised or changed the direction of the beekeeping industry.



The speed and growth of technology suggests that this is not going to remain like this over the next 30 years. While we have the continuing threat of exotic mites such as varroa, science is also making rapid headway on how to deal with various issues.

Some topics I think could evolve are:

- remote weigh stations placed on every apiary providing daily data to beekeepers,
- more natural or organic (probiotic) means of dealing with diseases,
- the use of e-noses to detect diseases and pests in hives,
- research around honey as a natural product escalating it into the 'super food' category.

As for the DPI involvement in honey bees, we are in a better place than any point in the last 30 years as far as people resources are concerned.

*(Thanks to Vicki Saville for typing my notes and Annette Somerville for proof reading the final article)*

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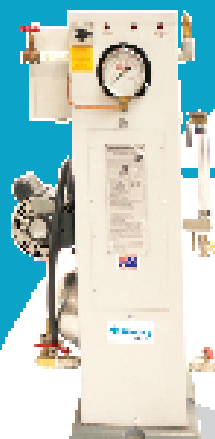
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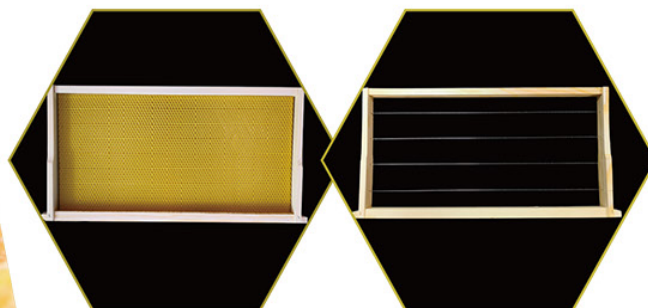
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# THE FROST REPORT

Elizabeth Frost  
Education Officer, 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



## NSW DROUGHT TRANSPORT SUBSIDY

If you're a New South Wales resident and commercial beekeeper who has or will need to transport fodder (i.e. - sugar syrup) or water to support your bees during the current drought, you can apply for transport subsidies. NSW DPI Rural Assistance Authority's Emergency Drought Relief Package offers a transport subsidy of up to 50% of the total freight cost to eligible primary producers to a maximum of \$5 per kilometre (plus GST) to a maximum eligible distance of 1,500 kilometres.

The maximum amount available to an eligible farm business under the program is \$30,000 over 18 months from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019. Importantly, the subsidy will be back-dated so farmers can access subsidies for freight expenses incurred since 1 January 2018.

To apply for transport subsidies for transport of fodder and water, fill out the Rural Assistance Authority application online or print and mail in a manual application from their website:

[www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/emergency-drought-relief](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/emergency-drought-relief)

To speak to someone about drought transport subsidies, call the NSW Rural Assistance Authority at **1800 678 593**

Avoid any delays in the submission of your application by including copies of the following with your application:

- Proof of property location (Copy of latest Local Land Service (LLS) and Local Government Area (LGA) rates notices)
- Owner Carrier (Copy of registration papers, log book entries and copy of travelling stock statement)
- Proof of Expenditure (Tax Invoice/s)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How much funding does the package allocate for subsidies on drought transport?

The Emergency Drought Relief Package includes \$190 million for Drought Transport Subsidies.

### Why does the NSW Government support transport subsidies?

The compounding nature of drought means the Government needs to be agile in the measures it takes to support the state's farmers.

The NSW Government has always supported transport subsidies for animal welfare. These new emergency measures recognise the incredibly dry start to the year, and the forecasts for little relief in the coming months.

Accordingly, these new transport subsidies have a broader application than just freight for fodder. These measures can also be applied to transporting stock to and from agistment, to sale or slaughter, as well as transporting water for stock.

These measures incentivise the State's farmers to make whichever decisions are best for them at the time, based on their personal circumstances.

### How does the Transport Subsidy Program work?

The NSW Government will offer a transport subsidy of up to \$20,000 per eligible farm business.

The transport subsidy of \$20,000 per eligible farm business per year equates up to \$30,000 over 18 months from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019.

The subsidy will be back-dated so farmers can access subsidies for freight expenses incurred since 1 January 2018.

The subsidy can cover 50% of the full cost of freight up to a maximum of \$5 per kilometre (+GST) and 1,500 kilometres per journey, so the maximum subsidy per journey would be \$3,750.

For example:

- Cattle farmer based in Dubbo purchases a truck-load of hay from outside Bordertown, South Australia
- Journey is 1,000 kilometres at a cost of \$5 per kilometre
- Farmer pays \$5,000
- The farmer will receive a \$2,500 Transport Subsidy from the Government if he has not reached the subsidy cap and meets other criteria.

### Is the subsidy limited to road transport only?

No, the transport subsidy applies to transport via road and rail. The same criteria applies for both.

### How does the cap on drought transport subsidies actually work over 18 months?

A farmer with an eligible primary industries business, that meets the criteria can claim as needed, when needed for expenses until 30 June 2019.



There are 18 months from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019 to claim up to the maximum amount over this period. That equals a maximum of \$30,000 in transport subsidies.

This means the farmer:

- Knows there is a set period to claim as the program is currently funded until 30 June 2019
- Has flexibility across the 18 months period to claim as needed, when needed, according to farm management decisions and the season, to either de-stock, sell or transport fodder/water to sustain livestock
- Must keep tax invoices that include the journey distance and rate for freight
- Should seek professional advice about taxation and other financial implications when applying for a transport subsidy.

### **Who can apply for Transport Subsidies?**

Eligible farming businesses needing assistance with incurred costs of transporting fodder, water for stock to a property, stock to and from agistment, and stock to sale or slaughter can apply.

To be eligible, primary producers must demonstrate that:

- They are the owner and operator of a farm business in NSW
- The business operates as a sole trader, partnership, trust or private company and trades agricultural products. The business is registered with the Australian Taxation Office as a primary producer and has an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- The owners and operators of the business earn more than 50% of their gross income from the primary production enterprise under normal seasonal circumstances.
- The business is being negatively impacted by drought conditions.
- The owners and operators of the business do not have gross off-farm assets exceeding \$1,000,000 (excluding funds in a registered superannuation fund).
- Payments will be made on receipt of eligible tax invoices.

### **Should the subsidy be treated as Taxable Income when my Income Tax Return is completed?**

As individuals circumstances vary, as always, we strongly encourage applicants to seek professional advice as to the taxation and other financial implications when applying for a transport subsidy. Contact the ATO Small Business Hotline on 13 28 66 for more information.

### **Are trusts considered an off-farm asset?**

Assets held within the trust would be considered off farm assets unless the trust is used to operate the farming enterprise.

### **Why has the Government backdated the measures?**

This relief measure is backdated to 1 January 2018 when the drought intensified, especially in the Upper Hunter and Western NSW. This means eligible farmers who made the decision to destock will still benefit from this new relief package.

### **Can I get a subsidy if I transport stock, fodder or water myself?**

Yes. Owner carriers are eligible for the transport of their own livestock and must provide proof of sale or slaughter, registration papers and travelling stock statement.

### **I have already incurred costs this year, can I still make a claim?**

You can make a claim on incurred costs from 1 January 2018 providing you can produce a tax invoice for applicable transport.

### **What transport costs can the subsidy be claimed for?**

The subsidy can be applied for the cost of transporting fodder, water to a property for stock, stock to and from agistment, and stock to sale or slaughter.

### **Can I apply for subsidies for multiple trips?**

Yes, providing you are still within the subsidy cap of \$20,000 per eligible farm business per year, which equates up to \$30,000 over 18 months from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019.

### **Does stock have to be a particular score?**

No. The subsidy applies to transport costs of any stock.

### **Is there a limit to how far I can transport fodder, water or stock and still apply for a subsidy?**

The subsidy applies up to a maximum distance of 1,500 kilometres per journey.

### **How do I need to apply?**

You can apply online via our Emergency Drought Relief online form, or print out an application form, fill it in and send it to the NSW Rural Assistance Authority. You will need to present valid tax invoices for all transport costs, LLS rates notices and an LGA rates notice.

### **Can I get a subsidy before I pay for transport?**

You will need to present a valid tax invoice for all transport costs to apply for a subsidy.

### **Can I claim on an invoice dated before 6 August 2018 that does not itemise the transport costs?**

For invoices issued prior to 6 August 2018 that do not itemise transport costs the Rural Assistance Authority **DOES NOT** require those invoices to be reissued.

Where necessary the RAA will request additional information from the supplier to verify either the cost of the specific transport or the rate per km utilised. This



could be provided via email directly to the RAA or via the applicant.

If needed the RAA may ask the farmer to complete a statutory declaration however this will be on rare occasions where the transport costs cannot be identified in any other way.

#### MORE QUESTIONS?

If your burning question on drought transport subsidies isn't answered above, don't hesitate to call the NSW Rural Assistance Authority at **1800 678 593** or check out the online or manual application forms here: [www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/emergency-drought-relief](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/emergency-drought-relief)

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## Honey: The new potential warrior in the fight against MRSA

Written by Anuja Vaidya (Twitter | Google+) | March 02, 2018

A study published in the Journal of Hospital Infection ([https://www.journalofhospitalinfection.com/article/S0195-6701\(17\)30582-0/fulltext](https://www.journalofhospitalinfection.com/article/S0195-6701(17)30582-0/fulltext)) compared medical-grade honey with mupirocin, a topical antibiotic, for the eradicating meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus colonized in patients' noses.

Researchers studied patients older than 18 years with MRSA colonized in the nose. Participants received one to two courses of either honey or mupirocin (2 percent) three times per day for five consecutive days.

The study shows the proportion of patients who were decolonized after one or two courses of treatment was similar between the honey and mupirocin (2 percent) groups. However, the rate of new acquisition of mupirocin resistance was 9.75 percent.

"Although not significant, a decolonization rate of 42.8 [percent] for [honey] was impressive," study authors concluded. "Our findings suggest that this strategy, which has the potential to combat antimicrobial resistance, should be assessed in similar but larger studies."

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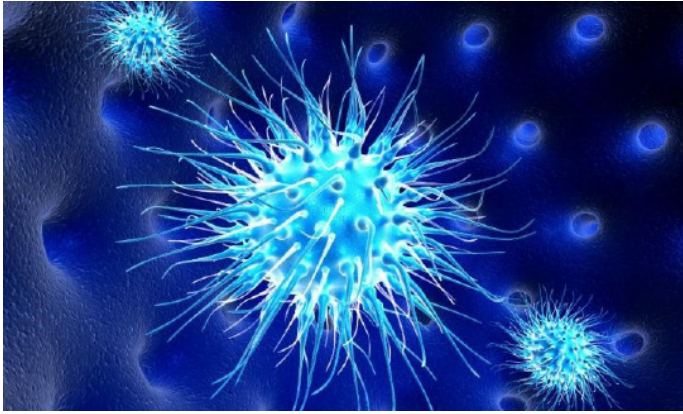
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# CATCH THE BUZZ

## 27 Unknown Bee Viruses Discovered.

### 27!



An international team of researchers has discovered evidence of 27 previously unknown viruses in bees.

The finding could help scientists design strategies to prevent the spread of viral pathogens among these important pollinators.

“Populations of bees around the world are declining, and viruses are known to contribute to these declines,” said David Galbraith, research scientist at Bristol Myers Squibb and a recent Penn State graduate.

“Despite the importance of bees as pollinators of flowering plants in agricultural and natural landscapes and the importance of viruses to bee health, our understanding of bee viruses is surprisingly limited.”

To investigate viruses in bees, the team collected samples of DNA and RNA, which is responsible for the synthesis of proteins, from 12 bee species in nine countries across the world. Next, they developed a novel high-throughput sequencing technique that efficiently detected both previously identified and 27 never-seen-before viruses belonging to at least six new families in a single experiment. The results appear in the June 11, 2018, issue of *Scientific Reports*.

“Typically, researchers would have to develop labor-intensive molecular assays to test for the presence of specific viruses,” said Zachary Fuller, postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University and a recent Penn State graduate. “With our method, they can sequence all the viruses present in a sample without having any prior knowledge about what might be there.” Fuller noted that because the cost of high-throughput

sequencing continues to decrease, the team’s approach provides an inexpensive and efficient technique for other researchers to identify additional unknown viruses in bee populations around the world.

“Although our study nearly doubles the number of described bee-associated viruses, there are undoubtedly many more viruses yet to be uncovered, both in well-studied regions and in understudied countries,” he said.

Among the new viruses the team identified was one that is similar to a virus that infects plants.

“It is possible that bees may acquire viruses from plants, and could then spread these viruses to other plants, posing a risk to agricultural crops,” said Christina Grozinger, distinguished professor of entomology and director of the Center for Pollinator Research at Penn State. “We need to do more experiments to see if the viruses are actively infecting the bees — because the viruses could be on the pollen they eat, but not directly infecting the bees — and then determine if they are having negative effects on the bees and crops. Some viruses may not cause symptoms or only cause symptoms if the bees are stressed in other ways.”

Beyond identifying the new viruses, the team also found that some of the viruses exist in multiple bee species — such as in honey bees and in bumble bees — suggesting that these viruses may freely circulate within different bee populations.

“This finding highlights the importance of monitoring bee populations brought into the United States due to the potential for these species to transmit viruses to local pollinator populations,” said Galbraith. “We have identified several novel viruses that can now be used in screening processes to monitor bee health across the world.”

According to Galbraith, the study represents the largest effort to identify novel pathogens in global bee samples and greatly expands our understanding of the diversity of viruses found in bee communities around the world.

“Our protocol has provided a foundation for future studies to continue to identify novel pathogens that infect global bee populations using an inexpensive method for the detection of novel viruses,” he said.

The National Geographic Society and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service supported this research.

# The Australian Manuka Honey Association Establishes Mark of Authenticity Standards

Press Release Jun. 11, 2018 at 5:00 PM



PERTH, Australia — The Australian Manuka Honey Association (AMHA), in partnership with leading scientists, has established a set of standards for authentic Australian Manuka honey.

Honey that carries the AMHA's Mark of Authenticity must be pure, natural Manuka honey, produced entirely in Australia, and be tested by an independent, approved laboratory to ensure it meets minimum standards of naturally occurring methylglyoxal (MGO), dihydroxyacetone (DHA), and leptosperin.

"These compounds are all naturally occurring in authentic Manuka. The level of MGO determines the potency of the honey, while the amount of DHA shows that this potency came naturally from the bees collecting Manuka nectar, and the leptosperin is further proof of authentic Manuka," said honey chemistry expert, Dr Peter Brooks.

MGO is the centrepiece of the AMHA's Australian Manuka honey rating system. This is in line with changing international standards and labelling requirements. Large international retailers, such as Holland and Barrett (one of the UK's largest health food retailers with a growing presence in Europe and Asia), are moving away from the UMF(R) system, to MGO ratings and are soon to phase out UMF(R) labelling.

"We are delighted and not surprised with this

decision as MGO has increasingly become the preferred rating system across the world," said AMHA Chairman, Mr Paul Callander. "It makes sense that large retailers are moving to the MGO system and, in doing so, they are making direct comparison between different products much easier for their customers."

## About The Australian Manuka Honey Association

Formed in October 2017, the AMHA was initiated by a group of Australia's leading Manuka honey exporters, including ASX listed Capilano Honey Limited, Berringa, ManukaLife Pty Ltd, Blue Hills Honey and Honey Australia.

AMHA is now the leading national body for the protection and promotion of Australian Manuka honey, representing Australian Manuka producers, packers and exporters.

In the short time since incorporation, the Association has:

- formulated (through its highly credentialled - Scientific Advisory Board) Criteria for Defining Australian Manuka Honey which details the Association's robust, scientifically based international guidelines that benchmark true Australian Manuka;
- developed a Mark of Authenticity for display on members' tested and approved products, providing businesses and consumers in Australia and internationally with confidence that each jar purchased is authentic Australian Manuka honey; and
- assembled a panel of industry authorities including leading scientific experts, the Honeybee Cooperative Research Centre (CRC HBP), Australian Government Intellectual Property (IP) Officials, the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) and Australia's most dedicated honey packers to lead the charge in protecting Australia's right to promote its native Manuka honey.

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## AFB Awareness month - Check your hives in October!

American foulbrood (AFB) is a deadly, fatal disease of honeybees and is the biggest threat to Australia's apiary industry. Any hive can contract AFB.

AFB spores are spread in contaminated honey and apiary products, hive components and equipment. Robbing out of weak hives is a major means of spreading the bacteria. A single infected hive can quickly infect nearby hives as healthy bees rob out the contaminated honey. As more and more hives contract the disease, the cycle perpetuates, leading to serious outbreaks that can impact entire regions.

Early diagnosis is crucial in managing AFB. AFB Awareness Month is a joint initiative of NSW DPI, the Amateur Beekeepers' Association NSW, the North Shore Beekeepers Association, NSW Apiarists' Association and Steritech. The initiative is aimed at raising awareness of AFB and how to manage the disease.

### 1. Inspect

Spring is a good opportunity to open your hives and check for AFB.

### 2. Test

If you suspect AFB, you can test for it by sending in a larval smear for analysis or by using a field diagnostic AFB test kit.

### 3. Notify

It is a legislative requirement to report AFB to NSW DPI within one working day. You can report AFB by calling the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881 or by submitting an online form.

### 4. Act

If you have AFB, you must:

- kill the bees in the affected hive, and
- destroy the affected hives and frames by burning, or
- treat the hives by hot wax dip,
- or irradiate the affected hives and frames.

For more information about AFB awareness month, please refer to the AFB Awareness month webpage at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/afb](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/afb).



**NSW** Department of Primary Industries

# October is AFB Awareness Month

## HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF AMERICAN FOULBROOD IN AUSTRALIA

**INSPECT**  
**TEST**  
**NOTIFY**  
**ACT.**

**NOTIFY WHERE?** 

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE 1800 084 881**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON AFB VISIT [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/afb](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/afb)



### Going to the almonds? Don't bring American foulbrood back into NSW

Under the NSW Biosecurity Act, you can only bring in bees and hives into NSW if they are not contaminated with American foulbrood (AFB). These restrictions apply to all beekeepers and anyone dealing with bees and beekeeping equipment entering NSW.

If your hives are diagnosed with AFB, or are suspected to have AFB, you can't bring them into NSW. Symptoms of AFB include dead outs, ropiness and irregular brood pattern.

For more information on AFB, go to <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees/pests-diseases>.

If you suspect that your hives are contaminated with AFB, then you must:-

1. Euthanise the bees.
2. Make the hive and its components bee proof (to prevent robbing) **before** bringing them into NSW.
3. The infected hive and its components must be treated with irradiation or hot wax dipping before exposing to bees again.

For further information, see the group permit at

[https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/817471/group-permit-afb-hives-into-nsw.pdf](https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/817471/group-permit-afb-hives-into-nsw.pdf).

**Dr Emma Cottage** | Senior Plant Biosecurity Officer Preparedness & Programs

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**If you suspect you have found a new pest, call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881**



*Photo: Rod Bourke*

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# AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC (AHBIC)



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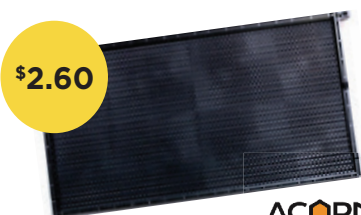
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# BEE BIOSECURITY OFFICER REPORT

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](mailto:rod.bourke@dpi.nsw.gov.au)



## Spring brood work, Barrier systems, Pollination and American foulbrood (AFB)

### Spring Inspections

Everybody reading this article should by now have been busy with their heads down in the brood boxes examining every frame, as this is an important part of every new beekeeping season. Don't just check the frames that currently have brood, also check the older/outer frames just to be certain that there are no old sunken cells or American foulbrood (AFB) scale there. Poke a match or twig into every suspect cell, even if you are thinking it is just a bit of chalkbrood.

Make sure that you shake all the bees off each frame and have a good thorough look at both sides. While you have the frame out of the hive you can also clean it up and scrape off any burr comb so that you have a nice clean box of brood frames when you are finished. If the hive is strong enough, some operators lift up older brood frames or outside frames containing honey and add in some new waxed foundation frames or irradiated brood frames into the brood box at the same time. These frames are later extracted and then melted, burned or irradiated. Those first inspections in spring should be a critical factor in determining which of your hives will be producing your honey in the coming months, which need to be requeened or split to prevent swarming, which are in need of intensive care and which are going to be burned or irradiated.



*Drone layer and a dead out. This hive should have been requeened in February-March, not neglected and then taken to almonds in August.*

### Barrier systems

If you run a barrier system and identify each hive with a number or code, then record keeping is really simple. For example, simply write down hive "Blue 3" or "A6" needs action A, B, C and D and whoever works that load next can

follow up on it. Don't rely on your memory as to which hive needs what work. Keeping accurate records is vital to maintaining a high standard beekeeping operation.

Left alone, a bee colony does pretty well for itself over the course of a year and it is interesting to note how many clean colonies from a forgotten apiary will still be alive after ten years. Beekeepers, on the other hand, are often their bees' worst nightmare. It is because of what beekeepers do or don't do that AFB continues to be an ongoing major problem in Australia. This is due to beekeepers allowing AFB to prosper within their operations by not dealing with it effectively. They literally breed AFB!



*This hive needed some intensive care a long time ago.*



*AFB was the cause of this hive's demise and should have been found long before the wax moth arrived.*

If every beekeeper ran a good barrier system, avoided using antibiotics, did regular brood inspections and quickly dealt with any hives showing signs of AFB, then the incidence of AFB would drop dramatically. If all beekeepers operated



like this then the days of living in fear about putting a load of bees on a rip-roaring honey flow because “Joe Bloggs the AFB farmer” has a site nearby and you will probably pick up a dose from his load of diseased hives would be a distant forgotten memory.

### Pollination and AFB

Unfortunately, that warm and fuzzy scenario seems but a pipe dream at this stage, especially after what I saw on the almonds this year (full story to be covered in the next issue). Just a few days of looking around Robinvale showed there are a lot of beekeepers who can’t even tell if a beehive still has bees in it before they take it to almonds, let alone if there are enough bees in the box to make the 7-8 frames required for pollination!



*These three frames of bees should be at home in a nucleus hive, not on an almond pollination job.*



*This is perhaps four frames of bees, so not a hive to send down to almonds.*

How will these operators ever stop chasing their tail and get on top of their disease issues if they can’t even remove sub-standard hives from their loads before going to the biggest pollination job in Australia! They also spread disease to others by taking the hives there in the first place. It is quite obvious that too many operators are running far more hives than their current staffing and beekeeping skills can adequately handle. I was taught from an early age that you can never have enough hives to cover all the honey flows that you will come across, so concentrate on managing your hives well and doing as best as you can

on the flows that you can cover. This will result in less hives to manage, less travelling, and more time to spend on each hive in preventing or dealing with disease. In the end, there will also be a lot more honey to pull off!

A skilled operator running a manageable number of hives (let’s say 400-500 if it is their full time job) will achieve much better results for a lot less work than somebody running 20-50% more hives, but who can never quite seem to “get on top of everything”. A skilled beekeeper knows that their main job is to breed and maintain healthy bees and everything else falls into place after that. The “numbers man” that just chases honey and paid pollination but does not prioritise colony management will never do as well.



*Regularly inspect hives for disease, especially if they are becoming weak. Prevent them from being robbed out!*



*Slime outs from Small Hive Beetle larvae are far more common in weak hives. Keep hives strong and compact to reduce their occurrence.*

By running too many bees you end up taking short cuts, such as skipping regular brood checks, not managing diseased hives and allowing robbing to happen.

Many beekeepers don’t understand AFB very well, which is why they try to cure it by using antibiotics such as oxytetracycline (OTC). OTC is only registered to treat European foulbrood. Any other use on bees is illegal. Antibiotics may assist with temporarily suppressing symptoms but are unlikely to cure the disease. The only sure way to control AFB is to euthanise the bees, destroy

the affected hives and their components by burning, treat the hives by hot wax dip or irradiate the affected hives and frames.



*Sterilization by fire - this approach works well with AFB riddled colonies!*

What long term users of OTC will also be starting to see is that it “just doesn’t seem to work as well as it used to” and it has to be used more often. What this shows is that unfortunately their hives are permanently full of AFB spores. Their misuse of OTC may also be breeding OTC resistant strains of AFB, as has occurred in some countries overseas.

It is easy to breed up bees, so don’t be lazy when it comes to destroying colonies infected by AFB – ‘kill and grill’ the diseased colony and bring up a clean nucleus hive to take its place!

A few examples of what beekeepers need to consider so to improve their methods and management;

- If you went to the almonds and the broker did not pay for all of your hives, or compliance burned some or told you to get them out then you need to improve your beekeeping.
- If you need to use antibiotics regularly to keep on top of your AFB, then how you are currently “managing AFB” is not very effective! Stop using antibiotics, run a closed barrier system and start killing/burning/irradiating everything that comes down with AFB.
- If you routinely find dead-outs in your loads then you need to improve on your overall management of colony strength. You are probably also spreading AFB as your hives and those of others may be robbing them out and potentially picking up AFB spores from within the hive. A hive doesn’t have to be showing AFB symptoms to have AFB spores in it (spores are the infectious stage of AFB and they can easily live for 40-70 years), so if bees rob out honey they may take spores back to feed to their own brood!
- If other beekeepers seem to find the dead-outs in

your loads before you do and you really can’t or don’t care about it then perhaps you need to sell up and find a new job. You may well be a major biosecurity threat that causes AFB to spread around the area.

Complying with the Australian Honey Bee Industry Code of Practice is a good step towards making yourself a better beekeeper, so download and read the Code at <https://honeybee.org.au/programs/code-of-practice-and-national-bee-biosecurity-program/>.

If you are a commercial sized beekeeper (50+ hives) and would like assistance with implementing improvements within your operation, your record keeping, Biosecurity for Beekeeper BOLT tokens, implementing a barrier system or moving away from using antibiotics, please contact me on 0438 677 195 or [rod.bourke@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rod.bourke@dpi.nsw.gov.au).

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# AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC

ABR: 63 939 614 424



Address: P.O. Box 4253, Raceview Q 4305

Email Address: [ahbic@honeybee.org.au](mailto:ahbic@honeybee.org.au)

Phone: 07 5467 2265

Web Site: [www.honeybee.org.au](http://www.honeybee.org.au)

## STATEMENT OF RECENT FRAUDULENT HONEY CLAIMS.

The Australian honey bee industry is a small industry with a BIG impact. The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) believes with 100% pure Australian Honey, we have the absolute best honey in the world.

The whole beekeeping community is disappointed with the allegations of adulteration in the Australian retail honey market and is keen to reassure customers that this is a question about imported honey, not Australian honey. Australian honey is safe and not under question. Australian honey should be trusted.

AHBIC has recently asked the Australian government to begin using Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) to test honey imported into Australia as one of the best available methods of testing. AHBIC made this request on the 4th of July 2018 and it is being considered by Government. Since that time AHBIC has become aware of questions about the veracity of the NMR testing on its own as an appropriate testing regime and is continuing discussions with Government as to what is the most effective and reliable suite of testing measures that need to be used to identify adulterated honey.

Through its strategic plan AHBIC has identified as a key priority the need to maintain access to well functioning markets and help maintain a viable domestic honey market. This is underpinned by plans to:

- take a strong interest in bee products and Imported Honey testing/protocol focus and act as "watchdogs" to the ACCC and Government.
- test imported honey samples and report non-complying products to ACCC."

This issue highlights the need to increase the current testing rate of only 5% of shipments of honey being imported into Australia and for a better testing regime than currently exists. AHBIC will be working with the Government to achieve this.

AHBIC cannot comment further on the specifics of the current case as it is not aware of the full details, but fully supports a speedy investigation by the ACCC of this matter. AHBIC trusts the ACCC to protect the interests of the consumer.

It is essential at a time like this that the public gets behind Australian beekeepers and companies who provide a reliable and quality honey product.

Peter McDonald

Chair

5 September, 2018



# YOUR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SUMMARY

Points from Executive Meeting 16 August 2018

- It should be noted that new Executive members Brian Woolfe and Steve Cunial attended the meeting in their new roles and provided some very productive input.
- Casey Cooper has been asked to document GPS recording of Apiary sites on Travelling Stock Routes in the Northern Tablelands in what will be a pilot program for NSW. (No start date as yet)
- Stephen Targett & Brian Woolfe attended Industry Liaison Officer (ILO) training in Melbourne on September 11 & 12. Industry liaison training is nationally accredited training that was funded by AHBIC. Two representatives from every state including one from the NT attended
- The training included the importance of the Liaison Officer, roles and responsibilities and conflict of interest declarations. The training was concluded by the role playing for two bee related incidences occurring within Victoria. These exercises were a great learning tool and showed how underprepared NSW (primarily DPI) is for a major bee incident in NSW. Victoria have bee trained and equipped rapid response teams – NSW have????
- Casey Cooper being a member on the Bee Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee (BIBCC) advised that the committee is starting to show some good results
- Guest Speakers to the Executive meeting were Paul Wells and Alex Russell from NSW Department of Primary Industries who addressed the meeting re: Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA). There were 3000 IFOA submissions sent in, therefore it will be some time before there is a result. Copies of submissions can be viewed on the Parliamentary website under Submissions.
- Guest Speakers Nick Geoghegan and Alex Russell joined the meeting to discuss outstanding issues and outcome re: Apiary Sites on Public lands.

## Even Better Than Manuka? Jarrah and Marri Honey: A Liquid Goldrush of Medical Benefits.

By: Sean Murphy



In high demand, Jarrah and Marri honey fetches a high price due to its medicinal properties (ABC News)

Western Australia is experiencing a new gold rush, but it has nothing to do with precious metals.

It's liquid gold — honey sourced from the state's unique jarrah and other forests, rich in antimicrobial and other health giving properties.

Farm gate prices have increased tenfold in the last decade and the strongest “medi-honeys” are now selling for as much as \$100 a kilogram in China.

Independent testing of jarrah and marri honey in New Zealand in 2016 found that it had stronger antimicrobial properties than the much prized manuka honey.

Jarrah and marri honey samples were submitted for a phenol equivalence assay, which compared resistance against *Staphylococcus aureus*, otherwise known as golden staph.

The results confirm work being done by WA's government laboratory, the ChemCentre which has also found the forest honeys are anti-inflammatory, high in antioxidants and are good for human gut health.

The ChemCentre's principal food scientist Ken Dods, said some of the WA samples had 30 per cent higher activity than manuka.

“Jarrah and Marri honey, because of the nature of the activity that we have — which is a peroxide based activity — actually has quite a broad spectrum antimicrobial activity,” Mr Dods said.

“Diversity is a very good thing because ... what we end up with is stronger therapeutic outcomes.”

Mr Dods is managing a \$3.1 million research project on WA's bioactive honeys.

He said the aim was to build science-based foundations for the industry including how to measure the range of bioactivity in the forest honeys.

"What I'm doing is helping them produce something more consistently and more clearly identifying for them the key attributes of those honeys that they can then use in their marketing," Mr Dods said.

"The ChemCentre is providing the international certification that gives the credibility that enables them to get a really good price for their product."

### **Investors buzzing as popularity grows**

Prices are already surging on the back of unprecedented demand for WA's mono-floral honey, which is selling for about \$30 a kilogram at the farm gate.

According to chairman of the WA Bee Industry Council, Colin Fleay, five new extraction and packing plants have been built recently to take advantage of export opportunities, changing what has been a largely cottage-based industry selling blended honey.

"They [investors] are all coming in now, as soon as people realise the worth of the product because it sells itself," Mr Fleay said.

"If you've got a good product with major health benefits people are going to want it and if there's a premium on it compared to the normal price of honey, anywhere there's money people will come."

The state's biggest producer is Capilano, which bought into WA honey industry in 2013 and now includes media baron Kerry Stokes as a 20 per cent shareholder.

Managing director Michael Bellman said the company wanted to triple its production of jarrah and other forest honeys but was mindful of the market fraud which had beset New Zealand's manuka industry.

He said WA producers were working together to certify international distributors and create consistent industry standards.

"It's so important we maintain a presence in Western Australia, we keep packing in WA. We don't want to send bulk honey overseas, which can be adulterated like the New Zealand stuff has happened," Mr Bellman said.

"It can end up being 10 tonne on the ground becoming 100 tonne because they put something else in it, so we want to make sure that whole custodian supply chain is maintained."

Traceability and chain of custody models will be key areas of research for the newly formed Honey Bee Products Collaborative Research Centre (CRC), which was opened in Perth at the end of last year.

With a budget of about \$7 million the CRC will have up to 26 research projects running at once in areas such as bee health and nutrition, hive site management, plantations and professional certification.

"What it does is connect us with everything that's happening internationally ... so we can translate immediately something we see out there and bring it into Australia and incorporate it into what we're doing," said the CRC's new chief executive Liz Barbour.

Dr Barbour said the CRC may join an international research effort to breed bees resistant to the varroa mite parasite, which had devastated colonies around the world.

Australia was one of the only places where the parasite had not taken hold and the CRC could use cutting edge proteomics to study varroa resistant bees discovered in Brazil and Africa.

Dr Barbour said researchers could investigate resistance without exposing any bees to the varroa mite.

"Normally if you want to breed up resistance in a population you have to expose it to that disease," she said.

"The new way of doing that scientifically is actually to look at ... the protein profile of a bee that is resistant, and instead of us actually exposing the bee to the disease we look for those protein profiles and then we start breeding bees up.

"And of course the big advantage is we have one of the oldest breeding programs here in Western Australia."

WA has what is thought to be the world's oldest continuous queen bee breeding program on Rottnest Island which could be crucial if Australia has to survive a future incursion of varroa mite.

The program began in 1980 when the Department of Agriculture started 20 new breeding lines because quarantine restrictions meant local bee keepers could no longer import queens from the eastern states. The Better Bee program is now a collaboration between eight commercial bee keepers who send drones and queens to Rottnest every year to help maintain the genetic

## **Welcome to New Members**

Daniel Warman - Dubbo, NSW

Ruth Howard - Dubbo, NSW

Brett McPherson - Yoogali, NSW

Wendy Randoll - Sextonville, NSW

Kevin Hayward - Wandandian, NSW

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Alan Ernst - Rosewood, QLD

Dwayne Sykes - Dubbo, NSW

Romina Rader - Armidale, NSW

Noreen Munson - Billywillinga, NSW

Zack Blackwell - West Kempsey, NSW

health and diversity of their hives.

Rottnest is 16 kilometres from the mainland, which is too far for bees to fly so the isolation guarantees the genetic integrity of the program.

The queens bred on the holiday island are famed for their calm temperament and ability to produce bees which yield up to double the global average of honey per hive.

According to Mr Fleay, who is one of the Rottnest breeders, the island could be crucial for the survival of the industry if there is a verroa mite incursion.

“You could go and set up a permanent breeding program over there and supply the rest of the mainland and you could trial verroa resistant stock and things like that, so the Rottnest Island project is an integral part of the whole survival mechanism we’ve got in plan,” Mr Fleay said.

### ***Cold Storage for Honey Bee Colonies Breaks the Brood Cycle and Makes Varroa Treatments More Effective. How Cool!!***



*The black bump on this honey bee's back is a varroa mite. Mites weaken bees' immune systems, transmit viruses, and siphon off nutrients. Photo by Scott Bauer, USDA Agricultural Research Service.*

*By: Scott Weybright – College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences*

PULLMAN, Wash. – Saving honey bees is easier when varroa mite infestation is reduced. WSU researchers are hoping mid-season hibernation can help in the fight against the mighty mites.

Varroa mites are pests that weaken bees' immune systems, transmit viruses and siphon off nutrients. They're a huge factor in colony collapse around the country.

“Most treatments only kill varroa on adult bees, and are generally only effective for three days,” said Brandon Hopkins, assistant professor of entomology and manager of the WSU bee program. “But a lot of mites live in the brood, which are under a wax cap that treatments can't touch. Those bees hatch out and are already afflicted.”

Currently, treating for mites requires three treatments over a 21-day period to make sure you treat all the new bees that come out infested with mites.

These treatments are difficult and expensive because beekeepers must treat all their colonies on a specific schedule. It's very labor intensive to treat thousands of colonies by hand three times at precise timing cycles, Hopkins said.

#### **Cold storage**

Bees don't truly hibernate, but they do change their behavior in winter. Queens stop laying eggs, so no new 'brood' is created at that time.

Last August, WSU researchers put 200 honey bee colonies into refrigerated storage. This is a time when bees are still active, but have finished making honey for the season, and there are no crops that require pollination. It's also when beekeepers normally do a round of mite treatments.

By placing colonies in refrigerators, the queen stops laying new eggs, which stops the production of brood. When the bees come out of refrigeration, there is no 'capped brood'.

At that point, Hopkins and his team apply a varroa treatment on the adult bees.

The initial results were overwhelmingly positive. Researchers found an average of five mites per 100 bees on the control colonies (not refrigerated) one month after the normal three-cycle mite treatment.

The refrigerated colonies had an average of 0.2 mites per 100 bees one month after the single mite treatment.

“That's a significant decrease,” Hopkins said. “Refrigeration is expensive, so we need to do more work to prove the cost is worth it for beekeepers, but we're really excited so far.”

Additionally, the infestation levels varied tremendously from colony to colony in the control samples. That's because of the difficulty in treating colonies consistently over three cycles. The colonies that had the refrigeration treatment had consistent mite numbers with little variation.

#### **Doubling down**

After hearing about this research, a few beekeepers approached the WSU scientists about doing a similar round of refrigeration in the early spring. Most commercial beekeepers in the U.S. take their colonies to California for almond pollination in February and March. But there's a time gap between the end of the almond pollination season and the start of pollination season in the northwest.

“Beekeepers generally have two periods of time for



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mite treatments, before the bees make honey and after,” Hopkins said.

Once bees have mites, the infestation increases during the pollination and honey production months.

“But if they can start with low mite numbers, the bees are healthier during the honey production period,” Hopkins said. “A lot of varroa damage comes while the bees are making honey.”

Calculated risk with 100 colonies

This spring, Belliston Bros., a commercial Idaho beekeeper, donated 100 honey bee colonies to do a refrigeration study just like the one done in August last year.

“It’s a big risk for them,” Hopkins said. “But if it works, beekeepers would have significantly better varroa control while using fewer chemicals. And they’ll have better colony survival during the following pollinating season. It’s a win all-around.”

Nobody really knows how bees will react to being put back into their winter mode in what is normally the middle of their active season, he said. But that’s what science is all about. And if this works, it could be a major and environmentally sound victory in the great varroa mite battle that beekeepers have been waging for decades.

“We’re hopeful,” Hopkins said. “We won’t have results back for several months, but we’re excited we may have a way to help beekeepers keep their colonies strong and stable.”

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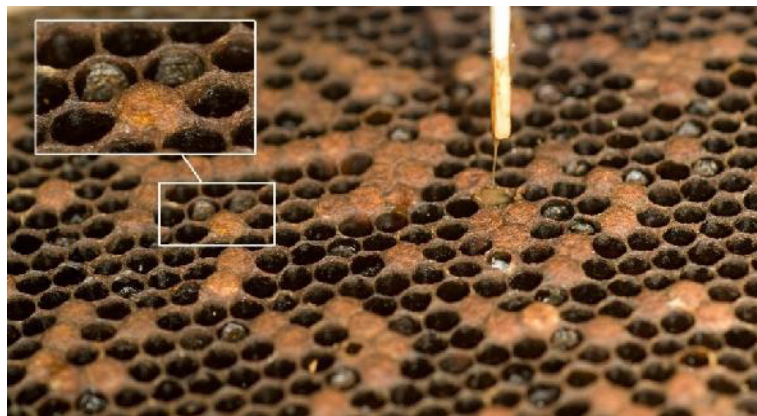
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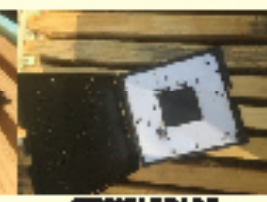
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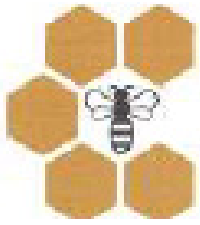
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# AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC (AHBIC) UPDATE

## PASSING OF IAN STEPHENS

A stalwart of the beekeeping industry in Tasmania and Australia, Ian Stephens, passed away. There was a private funeral held for Ian. There will be a Memorial Service on Sunday 23 September, 2018 at 1pm in the Mole Creek Hall.

On behalf of the industry we would pass on our condolences to Shirley and the family. I will put in more about Ian's life after the Memorial Service on 23rd.

## VEGAN HONEY

AHBIC is still awaiting actions by either the New South Wales Food Council or the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) on our complaint about the vegan honey.

The ACCC advised they were not going to take any action but note it on their files. AHBIC has asked the ACCC to reconsider and are awaiting their response. Not sure what is happening with the NSW Food Council. I have reported two (2) instances in the past week where this product is still for sale in health food shops in Ballarat and Castlemaine in Victoria.

To say that AHBIC is very disappointed with the response from either the NSW Food Council or the ACCC would be an understatement.

## ASIAN BEES IN DARWIN

Ian Zadow and Stephen Fewster spent a week in Darwin helping out with the surveillance and also talking with the Department about the next steps to take. At this time there are no bees being found foraging in Darwin. Just some stingless bees.

The Exercise Bee Prepared will be held in Darwin on 20 September. I will be attending to represent AHBIC in the exercise.

Whilst there I will be consulting with Jenny Shanks for PHA who runs the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (NBPS) and the NT Department about how the NBPS can be run in the NT. Unless you have been to the NT, it is hard to comprehend that beekeeping there is totally different to beekeeping in other parts of Australia. Having sentinel hive at the port is not easy due to the lack of suitable bee flora in the area.

As Darwin is one of our high risk areas for the introduction of exotic bees, it is important that we do all we can to help the NT put in place a program that suits their conditions and also provides us with maximum protection.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Please let me introduce myself, I am Peter McDonald and have recently been elected as the Chairman of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC).

I am 50 years old and a commercial beekeeper based in Castlemaine, central Victoria. With my wife Michelle we run a business mainly based upon honey production which also incorporates some pollination.

I grew up in a family that operated a large migratory

beekeeping operation but left to pursue other careers when 17. Firstly in the Army as a communications technician operating from bases in Melbourne and Brisbane and then in the Computing field based at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba. I returned to beekeeping full time 15 years ago.

I have been involved with various beekeeping industry groups at local, state and national levels over the years assisting where I could. I have been a member of the AHBIC Executive for the past 4 years, becoming the Deputy Chairman last year. When I first joined the AHBIC Executive 4 years ago I thought I had a good understanding of what it did. I was astounded by the amount of work that is involved.

The breadth and complexity of issues AHBIC have to deal with continues to grow, year on year and each one of these issues are vital to the continued running of our industry as a whole and for each and every one of our individual businesses as a consequence. I would like to thank all of you who have continued as, or recently come on board as a Friend of AHBIC. It is essential that we revitalise all our industry organisations as they all work for the betterment of beekeeping.

I would like to personally thank all the previous people who have contributed their time and effort to AHBIC over the years it has been in existence. In particular, I would like to personally thank the following recently retired members of the AHBIC Executive:

Lindsay Bourke. Lindsay is our outgoing Chairman who has served the beekeeping industry for a long time in many roles. He has always been a positive and passionate advocate for beekeeping, constantly promoting the best aspects of our industry.

Ian Zadow. Ian also has been a long serving member of AHBIC, a previous Chairman and also a passionate industry advocate. He was a driving force in undertaking the vital role of implementation of the Biosecurity Code of Practice and continues as our Chair of the Disease and Quarantine Committee.

Phil McHugh. Phil was only on the Executive for the past year but brought much needed skills and clarity of vision that was greatly appreciated and very timely for the development of our recent 2018 Strategic Plan.

I ask that you all help AHBIC through being involved within our industry structure in some way. Helping the industry groups helps us all individually as a result. Please also spread enthusiasm and optimism throughout our Honey Bee Community as to what could be accomplished if we all work together.

Peter McDonald



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Forbes NSW 2871  
T. (02) 6851 1155  
E. (02) 6851 1177  
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