

AUSTRALIA'S

HONEYBEE NEWS



“The Voice of the Beekeeper”
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Volume 16 Number 1
January - February 2023



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Bees on Garlic Flower

Photo by
Patricia Amon

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AUSTRALIA'S HONEYBEE NEWS

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**Copy Deadline for Next Issue of Australia's Honeybee News
Friday 17 March 2023**



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Well I trust everybody had a great Christmas break and are all set for the New Year! Let's hope that this is an improvement on the last few years! So with that, HAPPY NEW YEAR to all.

It is hard to believe that we are already staring at February and the year has just begun. December saw more new IPs (Infected premises) detected but this was to be expected as surveillance is carried out in the purple zone. This is acceptable as we knew there would be those that would show up in the second round of surveillance (why we have a purple buffer zone) and this is why we need to continue surveillance in all zones. What we don't want to find is an IP in the blue zone, that will bring all the hard work undone. So, this is where all beekeepers can play their part, do your alcohol washes and PLEASE report the findings by either filling in the online form or by ringing 1800 084 881. This helps DPI with data to prove that the blue zone is free of varroa and this will help us get the borders open sooner.

DPI have also stated that they intend to conduct audits of beekeepers that have not reported their alcohol washes. Alcohol washes are required to be done every 16 weeks, so if you do a wash today on an apiary then that apiary has 16 weeks before another wash is required. If you have done your washes but have not reported them you can even if it has been a few weeks ago, we need that data to show freedom from varroa.

As for the borders opening, we have been addressing this issue at every possible opportunity we get. Not just the Victorian and Queensland borders but also the ACT border as well. This is an area that must be addressed right and not just throw the borders open and see what happens, there is a lot at stake here.

On a lighter note, I would like to thank all those who have donated honey or money to purchase honey for Honeyland. This is showcasing our industry and without these contributions, the Association would not be able to participate in the Royal Easter Show. If you are planning on volunteering at the show, please get your information to Debbie Porter (0427 375 380) ASAP.

The Conference planning is well under way, and we hope to see as many members attend this year as possible, you will not be disappointed. There is a "Bee-Creative exhibition" to be involved in and it is not just for us adults, so come on and get the kids creating a masterpiece! Please check out the advertisement in this issue.

Honey has been hard to find for all this year and it does not

look exciting for the future. There have been a few reports of small amounts here and there but no big flows. Hopefully this coming year will be better for honey projects and we will not get washed away or bogged in the process!

I would also like to remind all members that our Website and Facebook pages are a wealth of knowledge and up to date information. If you cannot find it there or have a question regarding a specific issue, please email or contact us so we can get an answer for you.

With that said, let's bring on 2023!

Steve Fuller

Your President

Honeyland Needs You!

Volunteers need for Royal Easter Show

Thursday 6 April - Monday 17 April

Morning 8:30am - 2:30pm

Afternoon 2:00pm - 8:30pm

See page 42 for more information



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<https://faa.ruralaid.org.au/nsw-varroa-mite-outbreak-financial-aid-application/>

We also have available our counselling intake line which is open to all farmers both recreational and primary producing. It's also available for workers on farms and their families. Rural Aid's counsellors are based across the country and offer free, confidential counselling to farmers and their families.

This phone line is staffed 9am to 5pm AEST Monday to Friday. To get in touch with a Rural Aid counsellor phone : 1300 175 594



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Blue Zone freedom paper

The NSW Varroa eradication program has now been operating for 215 days. Restrictions on beekeepers' operations and movements are still in place for NSW beekeepers. The continued cross border restrictions have been significantly impacting interstate beekeepers with both QLD and VIC hives still stranded in NSW. In order to get the stranded hives repatriated and provide the confidence to jurisdictions to facilitate some conditional cross border movement NSW DPI has produced the Blue Zone Freedom paper to support jurisdictions in their decision-making process.

The Blue Zone Freedom Paper has been produced collaboratively with input from epidemiology teams from NSW, QLD and VIC. The paper discusses, in detail, the surveillance that has been completed in the NSW Blue Zone and the resulting level of confidence that the Blue Zone is free of Varroa mite. The calculations and statistics are based on the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) guidelines - ISPM4 – *Requirements for the establishment of pest free areas*.

The paper provides jurisdictions with clear transparent scientific based evidence that the Blue Zone of NSW is free of Varroa with 99.99% confidence. This level of confidence is based on all the DPI surveillance and also takes into account the beekeeper alcohol washes (assuming a level of non-compliance).

The Blue Zone Freedom paper has been scrutinized by all 26 parties in the CCEPP including experts from each state and territory governments. Endorsement of this paper demonstrates the level of confidence all the experts in this space have that the Varroa is contained to the Newcastle zones.

What changes?

Acceptance of this paper does not change anything for the NSW beekeepers. It does, however, give jurisdictions greater confidence when re-assessing border restrictions. Those discussions are separate to the paper and will need to be considered by each jurisdiction.

To maintain the confidence in the Blue Zone freedom NSW must continue with the current level of surveillance and tracing capability. Agreement to the paper has been conditional on continued Blue Zone surveillance and hive movement recording. So, NSW beekeepers will still need to continue with 16-week alcohol washes and movement declarations for some time yet.

Vote of Confidence

Endorsement of this paper demonstrates to the broader beekeeping community that the eradication program is on track and is in the best possible position to achieve eradication. As always this is dependent on no new Blue Zone unexplained detections occurring and totally reliant on beekeepers complying with the rules.

Beekeeper Compliance

The whole system including the eradication, continued easing of restrictions and maintaining confidence is reliant on beekeepers being compliant. Each state has different requirements for their beekeepers, but it is critically important that we all play our part. Whilst we are on-track for eradication we can only achieve it if beekeepers remain vigilant and continue to work within the rules.

Cross-Border movements

AHBIC has been lobbying VIC, QLD and SA to allow controlled and harmonised cross-border movements to allow business continuity. The Victorian government has been the first to allow some movements. This easing of the restrictions is not allowing free-for-all movements, but strict conditional movement permits that require permitted beekeepers to adhere to surveillance and movement recording requirements.

This conditional easing of movement restrictions will not compromise the eradication efforts but will allow hives to be repatriated. It will also allow beekeepers that rely on cross-border movement to gain some business continuity. This is a big moment for the response with a national vote of confidence in the eradication program giving jurisdictions the confidence to facilitate easing of restrictions whilst not compromising eradication

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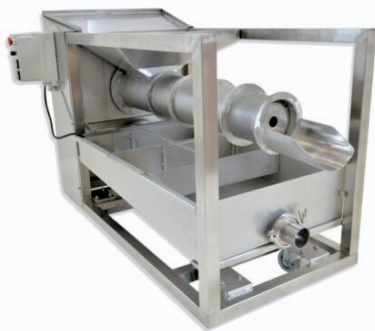
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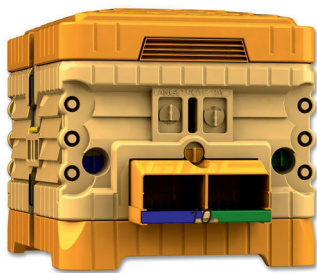


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NSW Apiarists' Association Inc

2023 AGM, Conference & Trade Exhibition

18 - 19 May 2023

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Association hereby gives notice that its Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, 18 & Friday, 19 May 2023 at Penrith Panthers Rugby League Club, 123 Mulgoa Road, Penrith to conduct the following business:



Opening & Welcome

Apologies

Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting

Matters Arising from the Minutes

President's Report

Receiving and considering the financial statements for the financial year ended 28 February 2023

Branch Reports

Declaration of Executive members Election Results

General Business



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ABN: 89 417 216 326

OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION

To provide a means whereby the apiarists of this state may be represented through a common organisation for the welfare of the Industry.

To provide relevant information on the production of apiary products and services produced in NSW and to ensure an adequate return to the apiarist, for their labour and capital in the Industry.

The Association is committed to increasing the demand for apiary products, disseminating information to Members, securing business concessions for members and protecting the natural resources valuable to bees.

To co-operate with the relevant government agencies in instructional and experimental work connected with the Industry.

To assist Members in their apicultural rights, secure effective legislation and administration in affairs affecting the Industry.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Membership of the Association provides beekeepers with a voice in industry affairs, either through the members' branch or through the Annual State Conference.

The Association's publication, *Australia's Honeybee News*, helps keep members abreast of political, technical and economic developments that affect their livelihood. It is published six times a year and is free to members.

Most importantly, membership of the Association directly supports the state's only organisation of professional beekeepers ... the only organisation that can help you survive.

The Association fights for better prices, better access to honey and pollen producing flora, better protection from agricultural chemicals and better research and development.

Voting in ballots is proportional to operational size and ranges from 1 to 12 votes depending on the number of hives owned.

BRANCH STRUCTURE

Anybody of not less than ten members may apply to the Executive Council for registration as a branch of the Association.

Branches run their own programs and conduct their own business. They also have the right to be represented at meetings of the Association's Executive Council.

Most members of the Association are also members of their local branch. Presently there are branches in the Central Tablelands, Hunter Valley, North Coast, Northern Tablelands, Riverina, Southern Tablelands, Sydney Metropolitan, Tamworth and Western Plains.

THE VOICE OF THE BEEKEEPER



NSW APIARISTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

ABN: 89 417 216 326

2023

NOMINATION FORM - EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

NOMINEE (Person you are nominating)

Name:
(please insert nominee name)

Member No:
(insert nominee member number)

I hereby accept this nomination.

Signed:
(to be signed by nominee)

Date

NOMINATOR

I
(please print your name)

Member No:
(insert your membership number)

hereby nominate the person listed above as the Nominee for a position on the NSW Apiarists' Association Inc. Executive Council.

Signed:

Date

SECONDER

Name:
(please insert your name)

Member No:
(insert your membership number)

hereby second the nomination of the person listed above as the Nominee for a position on the NSW Apiarists' Association Inc. Executive Council.

Signed:

Date

- No Member of the Association shall be eligible for election to the Executive Council unless they reside in NSW or the ACT and has been a Financial Member for at least two successive years immediately prior to the date of the holding of the Annual Conference at which Nominations for election are received
- Each member shall be elected for a 2-year term and must retire from office at the Annual Conference held at the end of such 2-year term, but if eligible, may seek reappointment.

Return:

By Post to: Secretary/Treasurer, NSW Apiarists' Association, PO Box 3055, West Tamworth NSW 2340
Or Email to: info@nswaa.com.au

This form must be received by NSWAA no later than 5pm, 27 April 2023

Chalkbrood disease

What is chalkbrood disease?

Chalkbrood disease is caused by the fungus *Ascosphaera apis*. The fungus produces spores which are swallowed by honey bee larvae when they are fed by nurse bees. The spores germinate in the honey bee's gut and ultimately cause the larvae to die of starvation. Chalkbrood is present throughout Australia and its incidence is generally higher when the colony is under stress due to cool wet weather or poor nutrition. It is more common in the spring when the brood nest is rapidly expanding and a smaller adult workforce cannot maintain brood nest temperature.

What should beekeepers look for?

Infected hives show a scattered brood pattern with perforated cappings. Larvae infected with chalkbrood disease usually die after capping and the fungus grows to fill the cell. The larval body dehydrates creating diagnostic 'mummies' – hard, shrunken and chalklike. The fungal mycelium infiltrates the larval tissue and fruiting gives the mummies a white-grey colour.

The cappings of cells containing dead larvae may be chewed away by the honey bees and the mummies removed to the hive entrance, dropped to the bottom board, or on the ground outside the hive.

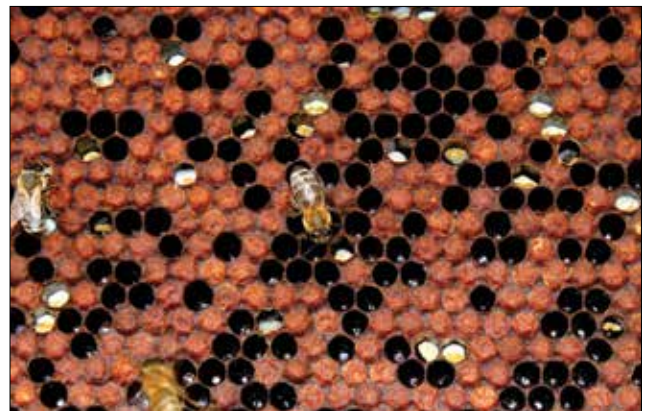
What can it be confused with?

Chalkbrood disease symptoms of scattered brood with perforated cappings could be confused with either American foulbrood (AFB), European foulbrood (EFB) or sacbrood virus. However, the presence of mummies in the cells, the hive entrance and bottom boards, together with no rosy thread when conducting the ropiness test, would suggest chalkbrood disease is the cause.



The chalkbrood fungus starting to envelop a developing pupa

Rob Snyder, www.beeinformed.org



Comb infected with chalkbrood disease showing a scattered brood pattern with mummies in cells

Rob Snyder, www.beeinformed.org



Dead larvae in cells that have turned white due to fungal growth

Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), Crown Copyright

How does it spread?

Chalkbrood disease can be easily spread between hives through the drifting behaviour of drones and worker bees, as well as the robbing behaviour of worker bees. Once inside a hive, fungal spores are quickly spread throughout the hive from mummies. It can also be transferred between apiaries on contaminated equipment, pollen and in water. The chalkbrood spores may remain viable for 15 years.

Where is it now?

Chalkbrood disease is present throughout Australia; however, it has not been reported or confirmed in the NT.

How can beekeepers protect their hives from chalkbrood disease?

Beekeepers should replace diseased combs which can act as a reservoir for chalkbrood disease spores, as well as cleaning away mummified larvae from the bottom boards and around the entrance of the hive. These activities will remove the main source of infection within a hive, and assist in preventing reinfection of the disease. Hives should also be placed in a well-ventilated, dry area with the sun facing the entrance of the hive to reduce conditions that favour the disease.

Honey bee stocks differ in susceptibility to chalkbrood disease, so beekeepers should replace the infected colony's queen bee with one supplied by a reputable breeder. This variation in susceptibility is mainly due to differences in the hygienic ability of the honey bees to uncap and remove diseased brood. By selecting queen bees or obtaining honey bees from hives that show this trait, the effects of chalkbrood disease can be reduced.



Mummies on the hive floor

Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), Crown Copyright



Mummies are moved from the infected cells or hive floor by nurse bees to the hive entrance

Rob Snyder, www.beeinformed.org

For more information about chalkbrood, go to www.beeaware.org.au/chalkbrood. The BeeAware website contains extensive information on chalkbrood, including:

- Life cycle
- Appearance
- Similar pests
- Spread and distribution
- Management options
- Additional fact sheets

Disclaimer: The material in this publication is for general information only and no person should act, or fail to act on the basis of this material without first obtaining professional advice. Plant Health Australia and all persons acting for Plant Health Australia expressly disclaim liability with respect to anything done in reliance on this publication.

Plant Profile

Plant Profile: Grey ironbark (*Eucalyptus paniculata*)

The following plant profile is from *Honey & Pollen Flora of South-Eastern Australia* by Dr. Doug Somerville. This book focuses on the value of plants to nectar and pollen-eating animals, honey bees in particular. The result of over 30 years of research, it brings together scientific knowledge and the experience of hundreds of beekeepers into a valuable reference work. The book can be purchased from Tocal College here: www.tocal.nsw.edu.au/publications/bees

Honey and pollen flora feedback form:

NSW Department of Primary Industries values your experience working plants for honey and pollen. We would love to hear your feedback on the plant profiles republished in the Honey Bee News. Any help you can provide will be considered in the next update of Dr. Doug Somerville's *Honey & Pollen Flora of South-Eastern Australia*. Please submit your feedback here: <https://forms.office.com/r/BmT1kFkFOB>



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Grey ironbark

Eucalyptus paniculata

One of the most important trees on the NSW coast for honey bees. The yield of nectar is regular and reliable, producing a highly desirable high-quality honey. The pollen intake before and during the grey ironbark flowering should be closely monitored and steps to provide supplementary protein could be considered if a shortage is apparent.

Being an ironbark, it is favoured as firewood. It is also considered a desirable construction timber and a sought-after forest tree for harvesting. Unfortunately, young regrowth trees are not considered as reliable in frequency and duration of flowering. Their regeneration is not, in some cases, as quick as other eucalypt species in the same forests.

There is some concern by beekeepers that this tree is being suppressed in its numbers over several timber harvest periods due to its slower growth and recovery compared to other eucalypt species.

Habit: A medium to tall forest tree growing to 40 m in height.

Occurrence: Concentrated along the east coast of NSW from Coffs Harbour in the north to Bermagui in the south.

About two-thirds of the area in which this tree grows is on public lands and about one-third on private property.

Bark: The bark is a typical deeply furrowed ironbark. The rough bark extends to the smaller branches and is grey in colour, which is its distinguishing feature in the presence of other ironbark species.

Leaves: The leaves are lanceolate, 9.5–15 cm x 1.2–2.4 cm and stalked. They are dark green on the upper surface and slightly paler beneath.

Buds: Buds are initiated in autumn and carried for 6–9 months.


Flowers: Flowering may start in winter and extend through summer and into autumn. The heaviest flowering occurs from October until January. Flowering frequency is usually every 2–3 years, although droughts can extend this period.



RATING

Flowering period												
Months	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Response Level												





Fruit: Fruits are hemispherical or pear-shaped, 6–10 mm x 5–9 mm, and on short stalks. The disc is narrow or of medium width. Valves are flat or depressed and generally enclosed, usually 5.

Honey: Honey crops of 60–80 kg per hive are not uncommon, with 54 kg per hive reported as the mean honey yield per hive in the late 1990s. One report in the 1940s suggested that 200 lb (90 kg) of honey per colony was able to be extracted from grey ironbark. The honey is light in colour with good density and excellent flavour.

Pollen: Of little to no value as a source of pollen.



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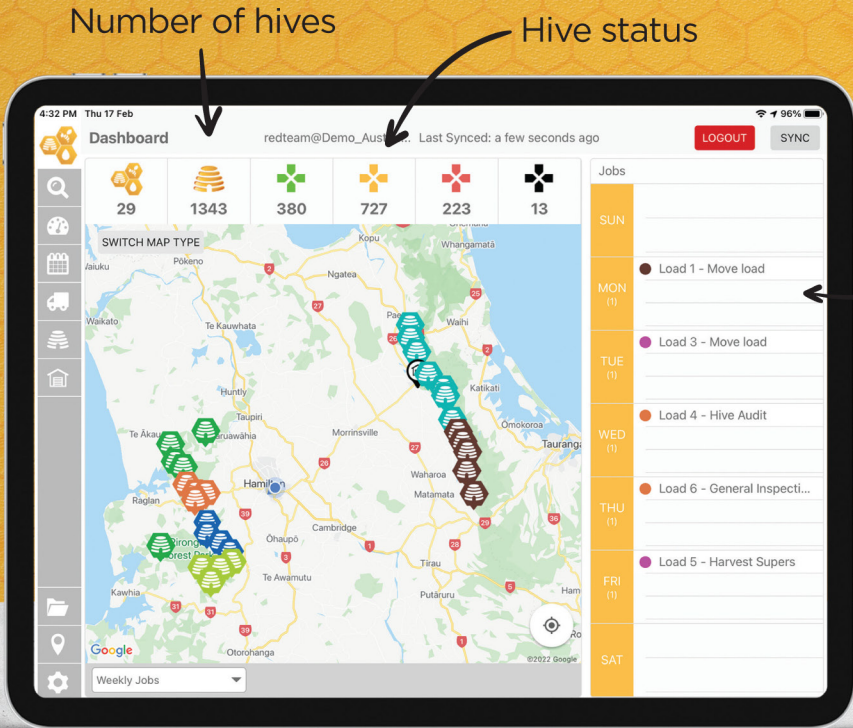
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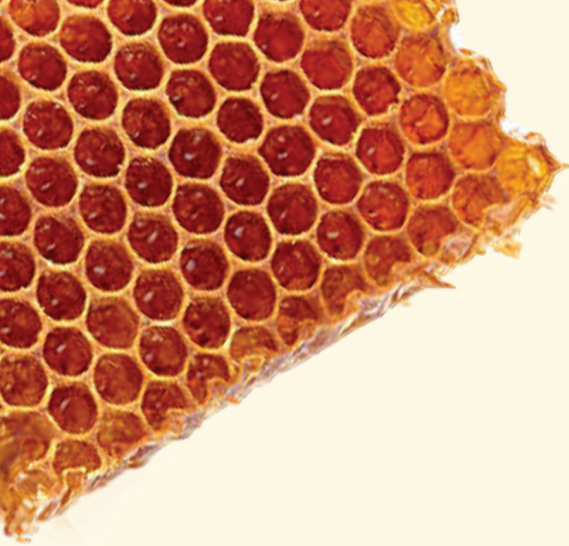


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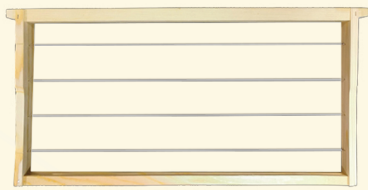
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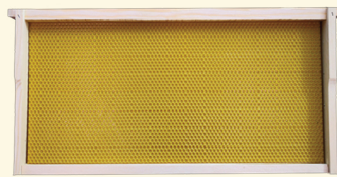
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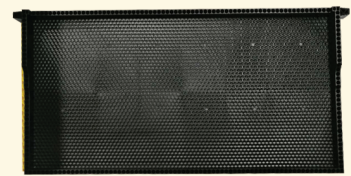
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Plastic Frame Full Depth

Plastic Beehive

Plastic Beehive with 10 Frames

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Facts About a Beekeeper

Hello

My name is Robyn Hawkins and I am the part owner of Cunial Beekeeping Pty Ltd with my husband Steven Cunial. Our homebase is in Griffith, NSW. We are first generation beekeepers.

I often say that we had the “mid life crisis without the crisis”. Steve became a fulltime beekeeper after a successful career in Plumbing and Project Management.

I joined him full time several years later after a career in Quality and Operations Management for a large Poultry Organisation here in the Riverina.

For most of the time there has just been the 2 of us with our son Charlie and his mates helping out on a casual basis when we needed them. Now days Charlie is a beekeeper, truck driver, extraction plant operator and everything else. The second generation? Maybe. A family business.

It has been quite the journey to turn Steve’s passion for bees into a thriving, successful business. It became my passion along the way. My contributions to the business have been many and varied and include hive inspections, requeening, swarm collection, working in the shed extracting honey and making the contents of the esky as interesting as possible!

Initially we did both pollination and honey production.

No job was too small and many nights were spent delivering small hive numbers to even smaller pollination plots in the original “putt putt” truck with no demister, the windows down, no radio and an original Mantis loader – it got us started. Outdoors, flexible hours, lots of them, working for ourselves – a big change in lifestyle and I love it! Now days - 3 trucks, a trailer, a pallet loader and another shed because when is the shed big enough - it is Almond Pollination and then honey production wherever it may take us. We don’t pack our own honey (we sell a small quantity locally) as it is not our core business. Neither is Queen Breeding. We are proud Capilano/Hive and Wellness suppliers.

Beekeeping each year is never the same. I enjoy, when we are moving, sleeping in the swag looking up at a clear cloudless night sky or listening to the frogs calling, watching the sun either rising or setting with the vivid colours on show is just magnificent. Wildlife abounds around the sites - deer, pigs, goannas in the water supply, kangaroo, goats, emus. I have learnt to appreciate the “land of droughts and flooding rain”. Meeting people from both the Bee Industry and landholders has been one of the major highlights of this journey – driving up a lane, knocking on a door, followed by a discussion on trees has made some wonderful friendships.



I don’t like being bogged **ever!**

The challenges have been learning experiences – going to a group of hives killed out by pesticide spraying is heart breaking, groups washed away by flash flooding and burning the remains, bushfires – what a scary experience that was getting bees out - what to do next and when seems to always be under discussion. The best lesson learnt is that just because it worked last year doesn’t mean it will work this year. Being flexible. Trying new ways of doing things has become the normal.

Pest and Diseases, land access and labour will continue to be challenges of the future.

My favourite honey is Christmas Mallee. A backpack blower the best piece of beekeeping equipment purchased **ever** closely followed by a pallet loader and going to pallets. I enjoy craft workshops but never seem to make the time to do the “craft” – maybe when I retire.

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Bushfire Industry Recovery Package (BIRP) Update

Honey Samples – Only 25 honey samples have been received by Jamie Ayton at NSW DPI Wagga Wagga for this project. Beekeepers are reminded that for parts of this project to be successful many honey samples are required – this includes mixed honey as well as pure lines (or close) of honey.

It is hoped that the Project can find some high active honeys in our eucalypt or other plant species other than leptospernums to increase the value of honey.

Project Updates

Profiling NSW honey chemical composition

25 samples received, and all analysis and QC done on these samples. **Next challenge is collecting further samples.**

A good range of results across the board, plenty to derive correlations with bioactivity from.

MGO testing isn't part of the suite of tests, it would be expensive to set up a methodology at NSW DPI at Wagga Wagga. This is being investigated.

Audit of government-owned lands

Crown lands tenure - appointed a GIS team member and identified and described criteria for identifying suitable lands. An initial map is incoming.

Legal team sent permit issuing brief to Crown solicitors – expressed concerns about how the permits might be administered.

Snowy Hydro workshops completed, managed lands are very limited due to restrictions around public access. Some apiarists are already using Snowy Hydro land.

Water NSW discussions still underway, changing their current lease agreements

Establishing pollinator-friendly plants

When Bee Foundation tasks tracking well, guides are up on the website.

Already published 6 of 10 guides, more currently with graphic designer for later publication. One guide is still with the researchers. Guides were very well received at the Landcare conference

Newsletter coming out for the SE corner of NSW.

Workshops impossible due to COVID, webinars being run in their place at various conferences.

Postcode geofencing work underway for social media integration.

5Bees (bringing technology to beekeepers) five participants funded by BIRP money, currently awaiting feedback from participants and deliverers.

Bee-friendly farming – 3,000 hectares of NSW land is currently certified bee friendly.

Upskilling beekeepers

A large number of NSW DPI (including TOCAL) staff have been pulled into the Varroa response network, stalling progress.

TOCAL have requested a variation to push back end date for training to June 2023.

Some training sessions have been run and have been very well-received – 43 beekeepers trained in Orange.

Current restrictions in NSW (due to varroa detection) have created issues transporting AI equipment.

Online training is underway, a fully supported learning network which can then be supported with practical face-to-face hours.

Currently re-evaluating how to increase engagement of beekeepers.

Honey as a health food

Antimicrobial and antioxidant testing performed for honey samples.

Kat has performed phenol equivalence assays on received honeys, which showed approx half have some antimicrobial activity. No non-peroxide activity was observed.

Pending total antioxidant assay kits arriving in mail.

Total phenolic compound assays performed on honeys at 10% dilution, some showed high concentrations of phenolic acids. Most fall within the expected range.

Animal ethics application (mice) awaiting final approval.

Bacterial strains for colony count work have been received, including common probiotics, potential pathogens and gut commensal bacteria. Some strains struggling to grow due to strict anaerobicity.

Forest and bee health for medicinal honey

Honours students recently completed their thesis.

Bridie examined the relationship between hive stress, honey bioactivity and bee microbiome using resources from the Tocal college training hives.

Honey's total activity (peroxide-based) was similar between healthy and stressed hives for Gram positive bacteria, while non-peroxide activity differed greatly, with healthy hives producing more active honey than stressed hives. There was a significant difference between total phenolics and antioxidant activity in healthy and stressed hives.

Bridie also looked at the microbiomes of three sections of the bee gut, where alpha diversity was variable in the crop, but more consistent in the distal gut sections. Hive stress did not seem to affect compositions of the microbiome in forager bees.

Daniel worked on developing a proof-of-concept bioassay for on-site honey testing.

Many honeys from the diverse flora in NSW are untested, could be missing many samples that are high-value due to antimicrobial activity. **THIS IS DUE TO LACK OF HONEY SAMPLES SUBMITTED BY BEEKEEPERS.**

Stephen Targett
Dec 2022

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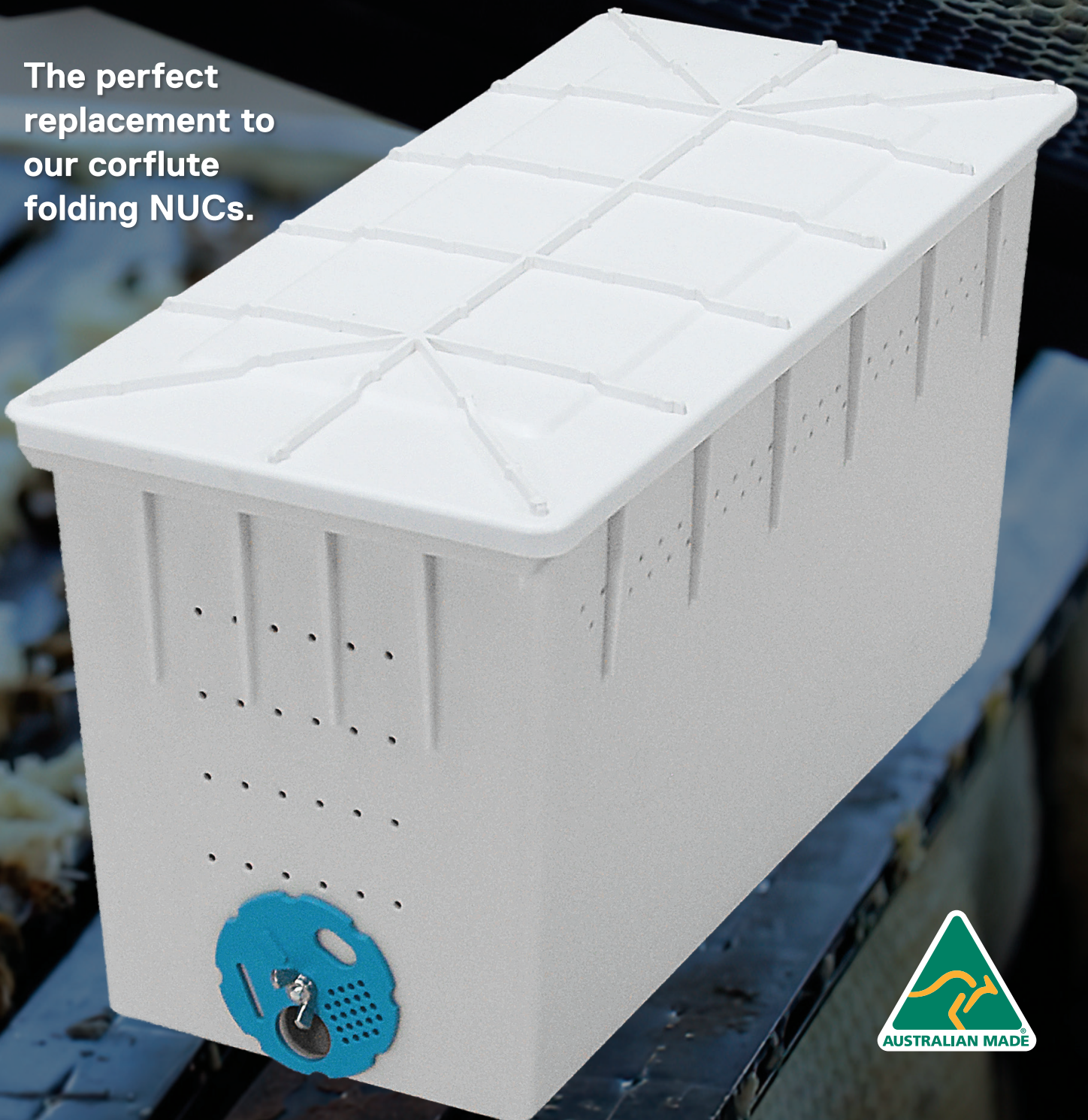


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What is a parasite?

Varroa is the parasitic mite on everyone's minds, but what is a parasite? A parasite lives on or in a host organism. It gets its food from the host body directly or at the expense of its host, and a honey bee hive is the hostess with the mostest. Varroa mites are parasites of honey bees, living in the hive and obtaining food mainly from the fat body of developing brood and secondarily from adult bees. Varroa belongs in the ectoparasite class of parasites, meaning it lives on the outside of the host's body, like fleas and ticks.

In its native range, Varroa lives in balance with the honey bee species *Apis cerana*. Because *Apis cerana* and Varroa evolved together, they co-exist and Varroa does not kill *cerana* hives. Unfortunately for us *Apis mellifera* beekeepers, the parasite jumped from *cerana* to *mellifera* and quickly showed that *Apis mellifera* was both an incredibly suitable and vulnerable new host species for Varroa. There have been Varroa introductions to honey bee populations now in all continents, save Antarctica, making it a globally invasive parasite, causing economic and environmental damage in most native ranges of honey bees.

The best strategy for a parasite is to weaken its host slowly, feeding, reproducing and finding new hosts all the while. This strategy allows the host to survive for a time without beekeeper intervention. What this 'life with parasites' looks like depends on the severity of the parasite's effect on the host, whether it transmits pathogens while feeding on the host, and whether the beekeeper proactively manages and treats to prevent Varroa levels from getting high enough to kill the hive. If a parasite kills a host quickly, it has less time to reproduce and fewer chances of spreading to a new host to continue its life cycle.

If you're a Varroa mite in a *mellifera* world however, you're one of the most invasive parasites going, with many ways of travelling between host hives which are aided by beekeepers and honey bee behaviour. The most common Varroa transmission routes between hives are strong hives robbing out weakened or dying hives with high Varroa populations, drifting workers with Varroa hitchhikers from hives with high mite numbers, and transfer of infested brood frames, bees or support nucleus hives between hives and apiaries.

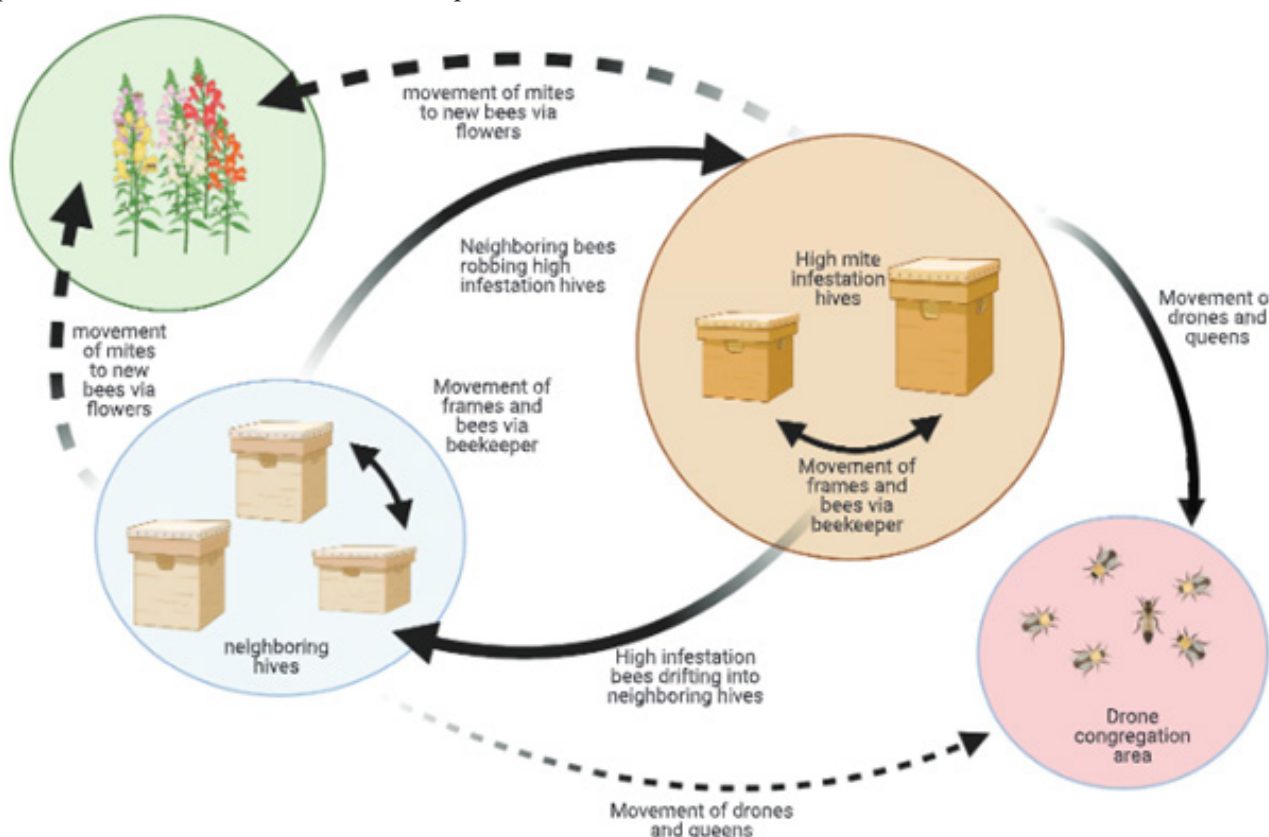


Figure 1. Ways Varroa can move between honey bee colonies. Solid arrows are proven movement pathways. Dashed arrows are suspected, but understudied Varroa movement pathways. Credit: Reams, T. and Rangel, J. (2022).

This summer I started reading *The Art of the Bee: Shaping the Environment from Landscapes to Societies* by Robert E. Page, Jr. The name may ring a bell as Page is the co-author with Harry H. Laidlaw, Jr. of *Queen Rearing and Bee Breeding* and spent his prolific research career mainly studying honey bee genetics with a focus on the pollen hoarding trait and inbred line selection for low and high expression of the trait. Page, like a bee is a generalist and covers many bee topics in this beautifully written book, from foraging behaviour and the unknowns of nutritional needs of the hive to the US Varroa incursion.

Page reminds us of the natural order, that “wild” and feral hives in trees, old buildings or other cavities are spread out, not grouped together in large numbers in a single commercial apiary or every other backyard in a suburb. In abnormally high groupings of hives, when a hive is weakened small hive beetle (SHB) pests find it for example, reproduce and quickly move onto the next weak, poorly managed or poorly protected hive against SHB, lacking prevention measures such as Chux cloth and SHB insecticide harbourages or traps. Or, in the case of American foulbrood (AFB), if an infected hive gets weak enough, nearby bee hives will come to call, robbing stores and carrying spores of AFB back to their strong hive, starting a new infection by unknowingly feeding AFB spores to developing larvae.

Unfortunately, with the huge proliferation of beekeepers in Australia we’ve got an unnatural situation, a high density of honey bee hives in many urban areas east of the Dividing Range along the eastern seaboard. The Varroa Emergency Response Eradication Zone contains a perfect example of beekeeping on steroids, with an unnaturally high density of managed hives in the greater Newcastle area as one example.

Beekeeping is also trendy in the US where I’m from, but because Varroa is never going away there, hive numbers in urban areas are typically lower compared to Australia. This is in part a result of many beekeepers allowing their mite levels to pass the threshold at which point their hives dwindle and die. After experiencing hives die from Varroa due to the beekeeper’s ignorance or negligence, some give up the hobby altogether or scale back their numbers, ideally until they figure out how to suppress Varroa to manageable levels. Nearby managed and feral colonies are a constant source of re-infestation outside of the beekeeper’s control, requiring proactive testing of mite levels in one’s own hives.

When Varroa came to the US, Page notes, “Surveys of feral honey bee colonies in California demonstrated the devastating effects of *Varroa* on colonies. It was discovered in California in 1989. A 1990 survey of 208 wild, cavity-nesting colonies distributed broadly throughout California did not detect any colonies with *Varroa*. A second survey in 1993 showed that the feral population had been decimated, especially in areas that had significant commercial beekeeping nearby, reducing the population of feral colonies to 13% of its original size. The empty nest sites contained the smoking gun of destruction, *Varroa* skeletons. Prior to the arrival of *Varroa*, the life expectancy of a feral nest (continual occupancy) was 3.5 years; after its arrival, it was between 6 months and 1 year.”

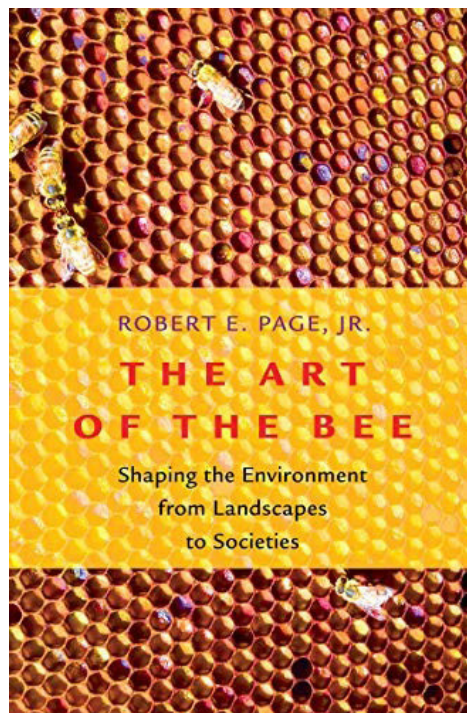


Figure 2. Robert E. Page, Jr. *The Art of the Bee: Shaping the Environment from Landscapes to Societies*.



Figure 3. Four *Varroa* mites, lower two upside down showing underside and legs, with matchstick head for scale. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

Take heed to the California feral hive life expectancy of 6 months to 1 year with Varroa, without management. Like Australia, California has a long beekeeping season, with brood year-round in most places, providing no break in the bee brood cycle or Varroa reproduction cycle. Because of this, mite levels must be monitored and actively suppressed if they reach up to 1 mite per 100 bees found in an alcohol wash. That is, if the US beekeeper wants to make a living from their hives, starting with California almond pollination and honey production or other pollination contracts afterward.

I'd encourage every beekeeper in Australia to seek out science-based and industry-backed resources to study such as the US 'Honey Bee Health Coalition Guide to Effective Varroa Sampling and Control' honeybeehealthcoalition.org. Keep monitoring for Varroa in your hives and scenario plan for how you would manage Varroa if it established in Australia. I'll be speaking about Varroa biology and integrated pest management at the NSWAA Northern Tablelands Branch meeting, NSWAA Executive meeting and NSWAA Conference at Glen Innes, Dubbo and Penrith coming up. Hope to see you at one of them. Until then, get studying the invasive parasite *Varroa destructor* by correspondence!

References

Page, R.E. *The Art of the Bee: Shaping the Environment from Landscapes to Societies*. Oxford University Press, 2020.
Reams, T., Rangel, J. (2022) Understanding the Enemy: A Review of the Genetics, Behavior and Chemical Ecology of *Varroa destructor*, the Parasitic Mite of *Apis mellifera*. *Journal of Insect Science* 22(1): 18; 1–10.



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110th Annual Conference
18th & 19th May 2023

Bee-Creative 2023

Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life

– Pablo Picasso

Introduction

Welcome to the 2023 NSWAA Bee-Creative Exhibition.

A creative outlet can help deal with anxiety and stress and is a lot of fun. Bee-Creative is designed to showcase the artistic benefits for those not just in the beekeeping industry but also any bee themed art and craft. Everyone is welcome to share their interests.

Certificates will be awarded for most popular display as voted by delegates and trade exhibitors. Voting to commence Thursday morning, finishing Friday morning of the conference day.

Winners will be announced after lunch on Friday 19th May 2023.

General Conditions

- Submission for entries must be received by **Sunday 30th April 2023**.
- Entries must be delivered to the Conference located at Penrith Panthers Rugby League Club on Wednesday 17th May 2023 from 3-00 pm to 5-00 pm or by appointment.
- Commercially obtained items are not allowed. Completed items are to be hand made
- There is no limit on the number of entries from one person
- Items to be clearly marked and labelled on back
- All Exhibits must be suitably presented in a clean and neat manner.
- Craft exhibits are to be no longer/heavier than one person is able to carry.
- Framed exhibits must be presented ready to hang.
- Quilts must be able to be displayed.
- Exhibits to be displayed at the discretion of the organisers.
- Exhibits are not to be removed during the Show.
- All exhibits shall remain the property of the exhibitor.
- Permission is assumed to reproduce any exhibit for publicity purposes.
- Every care will be taken with exhibits but no responsibility will be accepted.
- Exhibits to be collected on Friday 19th May 2023 during the lunch period.
- All craft types are encouraged
- If submitting a junior category please indicate age
- Bee Creative.

For further information please contact Janine Rudder 0428 431502 or jbrbees@gmail.com



110th Annual Conference
18th & 19th May 2023

Bee-Creative Entry Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

If Junior/Age: _____

Email: _____ Contact Phone: _____

Brief description and size of item:

Story about item (no more than 200 words) Note this may be printed and displayed with item

I agree that I have read and understood the above conditions

Signature: _____

Dated: _____

Please submit entries to jbrbees@gmail.com. All entries will be notified of acceptance

Beekeeping during bushfire periods

Use of Smokers in NSW

Beekeepers should use extreme caution when using a smoker at all times. In times of a Total Fire Ban you should avoid the use of smokers except in emergency situations. Bee smokers are exempt from a Total Fire Ban only if they are used under very strict conditions including only lighting the smoker in a safe location. These are outlined in the NSW Rural Fire Service schedule of exemptions (See extract below from November 2019):

Bee hive smokers

Fire lit, maintained or used in connection with the management of bees and bee hives, provided that:

- the fire is lit, maintained and used in a bee hive smoker that is commercially available, made of metal and designed to prevent the escape of fire, and
- the fuel for the bee hive smoker is lit inside a building or vehicle by a responsible adult person and the smoker is sealed prior to leaving the building or vehicle and being taken to the hives, and
- fire is not permitted to escape from the bee hive smoker, and
- the bee hive smoker is under the supervision of a responsible adult person at all times while it is alight, and
- the fuel for the bee hive smoker is totally extinguished inside a building or vehicle by the responsible adult person at the completion of use of the smoker.

In addition to these mandatory precautions, having water or a fire extinguisher close to hand is critical in case sparks escape from the smoker. Further advice on the safe use of smokers is available on the [Professional Beekeepers community of practice website](#).

Visiting National Parks or State Forests

If you have a permit or license to keep bees on an apiary site in a National Parks NSW (NPWS) park or reserve or Forestry Corporation NSW (FCNSW) forest, you may need to visit your bees during the bushfire season.

Before travelling to the site:

- Check for fires in the area on the [RFS website](#) or 'Fires Near me' mobile app.
- Check fire danger ratings for the area on [the RFS website](#). Consider these ratings carefully and whether your visit is essential considering the risks involved. In times of an extreme or catastrophic fire danger rating, forests are closed and should not be visited for the safety of you and of firefighting personnel.
- Follow RFS advice such as [their advice on travelling in a bush fire area](#).
- Check for Forest or Park closures. During a closure you will not normally be allowed to access your apiary site. Closures of FCNSW Forests are listed [on the FCNSW website](#) and on their [Visit NSW State Forests Facebook page](#). Closures of NPWS parks and reserves are listed [on the NPWS website](#).



Visiting National Parks or State Forests during a closure

During a closure if fires are located near your hives, call the Rural Fire Service to discuss safe access to your hives on **1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737)**.

Forestry Corporation

If there is not a fire near your hives but you need access to remove your hives or to provide water during a Forestry Corporation Forest closure, [contact your local Forestry office](#) to request access. (Details are listed under “Contact us” on their website). NPWS does not permit any access during a park closure.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)

In times of a fire emergency, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) will close some national parks and reserves, including tracks, trails, campgrounds and picnic areas. Park closures in all areas across NSW will be reviewed on a daily basis with additional closures implemented if conditions deteriorate. Parks will only reopen when considered safe.

- Park Closure means the entire park cannot be accessed by anyone, including commercial operators. A closure includes all tracks, trails, campgrounds and picnic areas.
- A Closed Area means that specified sections of a park cannot be accessed by anyone, including commercial operators.

Apiarists are not allowed to enter a Closed Park or Closed Area unless they have specific permission from the relevant NPWS Area Manager ([Contact details for your local office are on the NPWS website](#)). This means apiarists cannot enter these areas to place or retrieve hives, or to put out water for bees.

- Fire can move extremely fast through the landscape with new ignitions possible so every precaution to protect people is necessary.
- Apiarists are encouraged to make and implement plans to remove hives early if there is a risk of fire damage.
- The NPWS and RFS may not be in a position to respond to requests for access during park closures (your request may be a low priority) and there may not be any capacity to respond or escort you out of a fire affected area.
- Parks can be closed at very short notice i.e., within hours when weather or fire behaviour changes unexpectedly or quickly.
- The risk of treefall is significant after a fire and all parks remain Closed following a fire until they are assessed as safe.



HONEYLAND VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR 2023 SYDNEY ROYAL EASTER SHOW

VOLUNTEER FORM

THE SHOW DATES ARE THURSDAY 6th APRIL 2023 TO MONDAY 17th APRIL
2023

There are two shifts AM 8.30-2.30pm and PM 2pm-8.30pm

I/We can work at the Show on the following days and shifts:.....

.....

Second Preference:

I/We require accommodation for the nights

.....

Be specific with your dates for working and accommodation

***VOLUNTEERS NEEDING ACCOMMODATION PLEASE RETURN YOUR
FORM ASAP AS ACCOMMODATION IS LIMITED***

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS – WHERE TICKETS WILL BE SENT

Name/s:

Address:.....

Email:.....

Phone:.....

PLEASE RETURN FORM NO LATER THAN 14th February 2023:

Debbie Porter, NSWAA Show Coordinator, 135 Eusdale Road Yetholme NSW 2795

Email: debbie.porter3@hotmail.com

Thank you for your time and dedication to the NSW Apiarists' Association and Honeyland.
Your efforts make Honeyland run more smoothly and efficiently.

Honey Bee Industry Development Officer Report

Madlen Kratz

Honey Bee Industry Development Officer
Tocal Agricultural College, NSW Dept. of Primary Industries
T: 0427 348 521 E: madlen.kratz@dpi.nsw.gov.au



Honey bee nutrition project going full steam ahead!

A good start to the new year...

Mel Brown our 'DPI Technical Officer Honeybees' and myself are now on a new start with a newly established apiary in the General Biosecurity 'Blue Zone' about 2hrs from Tocal Agricultural College. We felt the loss of our DPI research hives at Tocal along with many other beekeepers affected in the eradication zone but are determined to keep on.

The project

The project is investigating supplementary feeding strategies to improve colony and business performance. Not only are our floral resources becoming ever less predictable, beekeepers have been struggling through drought, bush fires, floods and of late with high diesel prices making shifting bees more expensive than ever. The need for pollination services is increasing at a fast rate too! Supplementary feeding as a management tool is more important than ever.

The field-based research includes 50 experimental production hives and 20 support hives. We are looking into using sugar syrup and pollen as a supplement to stimulate and build colonies for production but also to maintain hives for when it is needed and will be manipulating how much and how often we feed. The project is funded between AgriFutures Australia and NSW DPI for beekeepers in the Australian environment and will continue to run over the next 3 years.

We prepared the new apiary site early January and welcomed our bees on site on the 19th of January as small nucleus colonies (5-frames).



Figure 1. Apiary site about 2hrs from Tocal Agricultural College. The site wipper snipped and hardwood pallets ready to go.

With our brand new 8-frame hive and nucleus hive gear on board, there was nothing to stop us, including bumpy rain-damaged and windy roads, it just made the trip a bit

longer.



Figure 2. Eight frame boxes with pollen traps and ventilated nucleus hives ready to go.

Once at the bee pickup location, we completed alcohol washes of all colonies as part of the new varroa regulations, which came back negative.

A bit about the genetics of our colonies

All queens from our colonies are sisters and were mated in the same apiary (as closely related as possible in an open-mated yard). This allows us to reduce the impact of an additional variable (genetics) that could potentially influence the results of the study and we will get a 'clearer picture' of the effect of supplementary feeding (our goal).

On our way...

We transferred our bees into our new boxes, loaded the truck and off we were again to the new apiary site.

The weather was on our side too, as it only just started raining once all the bees were unloaded. The neighbours across the fence (cattle) had a good look too at the new arrival!



Figure 3. A- Bees unloaded. B- Madlen Kratz (left) and Melinda Brown (right).

Feeding sugar syrup

Two days after drop off, the bees received their first sugar syrup feed after a stressful move and to get the colonies stimulated, plus they will appreciate the sugar syrup for building up those 3 bare wax foundation frames after being transferred from a nucleus hive. All our hives are fed individually with top sugar feeders, so that we know exactly how much each hive is being fed from our different treatment groups and we can measure the consumption of feed.

How we will monitor and manipulate incoming pollen

All our 8-frame hives are fitted with bottom board pollen traps. These were custom designed based on pollen traps commonly used in Western Australia by commercial beekeepers for the collection of mostly Eucalyptus pollen such as Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) pollen and from a Corymbia species Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*). In this project the pollen traps will allow us to monitor the quantity of incoming pollen, the diversity but also help us to manipulate how much pollen the bees will have access to, so in other words we can mimic 'poor pollen conditions' and study the benefits of supplementary feeding protein.

Supplementary feeding of sugar syrup and potentially pollen will continue over the coming months and we will

monitor their consumption, effect on colony productivity and health status, such as disease (chalkbrood, nosema etc.). We are also keeping records for the costs and benefits of supplementary feeding. Our goals until the end of the season are to build the hives up to full strength with plenty of stores to be overwintered successfully and ready to go for next spring.

The project's support team

As always, behind success there is a team of people, and I would like to acknowledge everyone that is providing input and a helping hand in making this project work, including family, friends, contractors, colleagues and the industry advisory committee!

For more information about the supplementary feeding project please visit:
<https://agrifutures.com.au/related-projects/feeding-strategies-for-sugar-syrup-and-protein-supplements-its-implications-on-hive-strength-and-performance-with-a-focus-on-financial-costs-and-benefits/>



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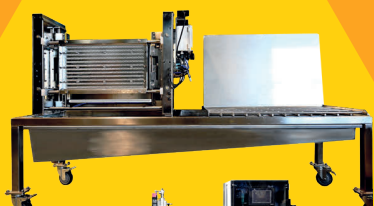
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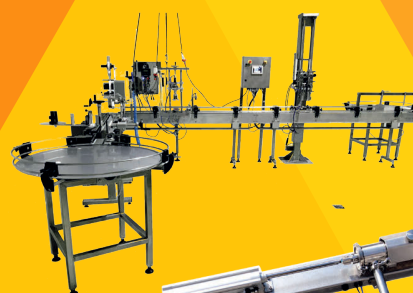
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Step 3. You are ready to go!
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Nick Geoghegan, Apiary Sites Program Coordinator, NSW DPI

Public Apiary Sites Update.

Reminder: Signage required on Public Lands sites.

Tourist visitor numbers to National Parks and State Forests are recovering strongly post-pandemic¹ and operational staff are busy making sites safe and repairing infrastructure after the various natural disasters that have occurred across the state. With resources recovering in many forests there is also a lot of beekeeping activity on public lands sites occurring.

Ensuring that all visitors are aware of apiary sites and have a contact in the event of an issue is critical to sharing these public spaces. It is also extremely important in times of fires or other natural disasters to provide immediate beekeeper contact information to operational staff.

Recently the land managers have noticed a lot of sites and apiaries that are not identified and have asked apiarists to be reminded of their obligations:

Appropriate signage is a requirement in the terms and conditions for all public apiary sites. (It is also a recommendation in the Australian Honeybee Biosecurity Code of Practice for sites in any location).

Not displaying approved signage is a breach of your apiary sites terms and conditions and can result in loss of your apiary permit.

Warning signs must comply with Australian Standard 1319-1994 (AS 1319) - *Safety signs for the occupational environment*. In addition, the signs must carry the Apiary registration number and the Authority holder's contact phone number. These are available from beekeeping supply companies and sign-makers.

Fire waivers extended for selected sites for 2022/2023 financial year.

To assist in recovery from the damage caused in the 2019/2020 fire season NSW government extended waivers to certain heavily damaged sites initially just for the 2021/2022 permit year. To review recovery of resources NSW DPI staff and NSWAA executive members visited sites on the North Coast and the South Coast. While some sites showed good signs of recovery, the majority of sites did not show sufficient recovery to be productive this season. As a result the DPI secured funding to extend the existing fire waivers to annual payments for the 2022/2023 permit year for the heavily damaged sites originally identified. Recovery progress will be reviewed again later this year with a regard to the 2023/2024 permit year.

November Expressions of Interest

In November DPI published over 60 recently vacated sites via the Expressions of Interest process. This allowed beekeepers across the state to apply for sites after determining the suitability for their operation. Further sites will be published during 2023. To hear about new EOI's send an email to apiary.sites@dpi.nsw.gov.au and asked to be added to the email list for apiary sites updates.

Example for a site with hives present:



Examples for an unoccupied site:



¹ <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-re-serves-and-protected-areas/park-management/park-visitor-survey>

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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



2023 and how to make it a great year

Many beekeepers are looking back at 2022 and viewing it as a particularly tough year, with some of the main negative events being;

- floods taking out many hives or making apiaries extremely hard to access and manage for long periods,
- excess rain and soil moisture impacting many nectar flows and pushing trees back to growth (which really impacts us now, but should be good for honey later),
- higher amounts of small hive beetle (SHB) impacting hives in many areas,
- Detecting Varroa and all the movement restrictions and additional monitoring work associated with it,
- Some lower honey prices, harder to sell, or having no honey to sell.

Some operators have been majorly impacted by one or more (or all) of these events, whilst others have been extremely lucky and fared much better. Even for those who have had minimal impacts it should be a time for them to assess the potential weaknesses within their own operation and consider how they can improve to minimise losses that may occur from these threats. For those that have suffered those losses they need to determine which ones they could have likely prevented, or minimised through different management or operational actions. There are some things that there was no easy way of avoiding, so don't beat yourself up over that, and instead try to move on and upward with everything instead of spiralling around that unfortunate event.



Losing your hives in this way (as I did) is a totally unforeseen and tragic event, but instead of feeling anger it should be viewed as “a big bump in the road” and a

necessary outcome to protecting the entire industry.

But, for the preventable losses you need to notch them up to experience (especially if they have never happened to you before, and doubly so if this is a repeating experience for you) and adapt your ways to minimise their future occurrence, as that directly impacts both the efficiency, profitability and consistency of your operation.

There are many, many variables within beekeeping, so the challenges that everybody faces, or areas that need to be improved on are different for every single operation. For some that live in certain regions they always need to deal with it (such as SHB on the coast), but that only ever impact (or decimate) other regions when their numbers increase, as those operators are not as used to dealing with it. Then there are other issues that are the same wherever you go, such as dealing with disease, managing weak hives, site selection and overstocking of sites (too many hives for the area to support).

It may not seem so, but **site selection** is an extremely important aspect of beekeeping that regularly gets overlooked by beekeepers, and in turn causes poorer productivity and health of hives, and therefore profitability. A good site in the summer (or winter) could also be a terrible site at other times of the year, so think about this and don't be reluctant in moving bees off a degrading site if you have a better place to go. Poor sites often put increased stress upon colonies due to both the environmental and nutritional deficiencies (often not enough good pollen per hive), which in turn increases the presence and severity of brood diseases such as European foulbrood (EFB) and Chalkbrood, as well as the highly debilitating adult bee disease Nosema. When these diseases impact the health of colonies they weaken hives and make them far more susceptible to the highly opportunistic pest SHB, which will take full advantage and overrun afflicted colonies and cause slime-outs.

For the beekeeper the end result of a slime-out is a dead hive (=lost production and income), a lot of contaminated equipment to clean up or burn (=time, wages and new equipment), needing a replacement colony (=time, wages and a new queen) and a HUGE increase in the numbers of SHB in your area (=increased biosecurity risk and further SHB pressure). This domino effect means that the beekeeper starts losing more and more money and honey as the increased SHB numbers start taking out more and more hives. To protect your profitability (and stock) you need to PREVENT this from occurring, which means you need TIME.

Some operators really don't realise how much they lost until it's almost too late!



When this oozes out of one of your hives you have just made your SHB beetle problem bigger, plus cost yourself a lot of money. Better to invest more time in hive management to prevent the problem ever occurring than use that same time to clean up a costly mess afterwards.

Another impact of disease weakened hives is minor to major losses of honey production, colonies that are simply not appropriate to use for nuc, split or package bee production (you only ever use HEALTHY colonies to propagate new ones) and a greatly increased cost to the beekeeper to nurse weakened hives back to health. The risk of robbing also increases, which provides an excellent opportunity for all those suffered diseases plus American foulbrood (AFB) to be spread further as robber bees take them back to their own colonies. If you ever want to fix this problem then the very first thing you need to do is break this cycle, by improving the health of your hives!

Improving your own Bee Biosecurity is therefore an excellent way to reduce your biosecurity risk whilst also improving the efficiency and profitability of your operation. Profitability is the main goal of any business, it allows your operation to purchase all the things needed to run your business properly.

Therefore there are a number of points that you need to assess about your current beekeeping practices and how much money they either make or cost.

The first point is how many hives you run and how many experienced full-time beekeepers manage them. A full-time beekeeper is classed as a person who's main role is working and managing bees, and not also being sidelined and distracted with extracting honey, managing other aspects of the business (financial, marketing, HR etc.) or other things that keep them out of a brood box. Many sole operators are actually 0.2-0.5 full-time beekeepers and can spend far more time on other aspects of their business than managing hive health.

The less you put into managing a brood box then the less you get out of the whole hive! Healthier hives make for a far healthier business, reputation and bottom line, so it makes sense to direct a lot of attention towards that aspect of your operation.

Undermanaged bee colonies are the single largest cost

to many bee businesses, as they simply do not deliver as much productivity and income into that business as they easily could if they were better managed.

The ability of a well-managed hive to produce enormous amounts of honey often only occurs because the operator manages them well and has the time to be there frequently enough to under-supply, remove ripe honey or undertake other management activities (even including tightening them up or removing them from a hard wearing honey flow before they collapse etc.). Running your business on luck is far less reliable than managing hives well.

Maintaining hives within a certain bandwidth of health and colony strength is a skill, which also requires available time on the part of the beekeeper. Keeping those hives within that zone actually makes the beekeepers time efficiency much better, as they can spend more time “beekeeping” and less time “chasing their tails” to clean up hive failures (disease, slime-outs, swarming/queenless hives, robbing and dead-outs etc.) that occurred as they “didn't have the time” to do everything that was required to manage their hives properly. Whilst it is almost impossible to have 100% success with every hive that you run the simple fact is that the further you drop away from that perfect score the less chance that your business will be successful.

The numbers of hives that some operators “manage” are actually far in excess of what they should be running, and their volume of dead wood hives will always be costing them money. When the going is good they may be lucky and have a reasonably easy run, but when things get tough their losses can be eye-watering and threaten the financial viability of the entire business. Often the answer for them to improve their business is actually to be running less hives (and run them better), but unfortunately they often think that they need to “get bigger” to do better. The bigger some operators get the less efficient and effective their business operates, plus the more stress they are put under personally and financially.



This colony started costing you both bee and honey production (which both equal money) many months before it ended up becoming a weakened drone layer.



Unmanaged disease costs the honeybee industry millions every year. This colony most likely spread AFB to many others when it was weakened enough to be robbed. Well managed colonies do not end up like this.

When you assess how many hives you should (or could) be running then the LAST THING you should probably consider is how much money you could earn if you sent all of those hives to almonds! Whilst the almond pollination income can be an important financial portion of your business it generally SHOULD NOT be used as the main driver of determining your businesses operation size (unless your business is predominantly a pollination business). For most operators a portion of your hives do almonds but much of your business revolves around honey production etc. Therefore you need to determine how many honey production hives you should be running, and finding sites for over the 11 months that are not spent on almonds.



Only colonies with sufficient bee numbers should ever go to almond pollination. That requires the beekeeper to have adequate time available to manage those colonies and pull out any weak ones before loading up the trucks. Saying you don't have "enough time" to do that actually means "you don't have enough beekeepers!"

So, to start improving on the overall profitability of your business start assessing how you are currently REALLY going and look at ways that you could do better. And not be a slave to keeping things afloat when you are haemorrhaging money with an inefficient business.

Sometimes it takes a set of different eyes to see the problems, because you cannot see them yourself. If you would like me to have a look at your operation, assistance with improving the disease management, record keeping, Bee Biosecurity training, submitting a Honey Culture Test or fulfilling other conditions of the Code then please contact me on 0438 677 195 or rod.bourke@dpi.nsw.gov.au for a confidential discussion on your own beekeeping situation.



The National Bee Biosecurity Program is funded by the honey bee industry through a component of the agricultural honey levy, with state governments contributing in-kind resources. Plant Health Australia manage the program on behalf of Australian Honey Bee Industry Council.



Do you have photos that you would like to see published in NSWAA Calendar?
Send photos to info@nswaa.com.au

Cover Photos

Do you have a bee related photograph that you would like to see on the cover of Australia's Honeybee News?

Email it to honeybeenews@icloud.com

New digital beehive monitoring system improves efficiency of managing remote beehives

Multiple features in an affordable, flexible and intuitive system.

Many beekeepers travel long distances to visit their apiaries. If that's you, you'll appreciate how valuable it would be to have an insight into the health of your hives and the needs of your bees, before you make the trip to check on them. Just imagine how much more enjoyable and efficient beekeeping could be if there were no surprises when you arrived at the apiary.

That's where Hivemate steps in. It's like having an extra pair of hands in the apiary, helping you keep an eye on your hives, even when you're not there.

Hivemate's digital beehive monitoring system allows you to work smarter, saving you time and money by ensuring you only make the journey out to the apiary when your bees need you. By simply checking the Hivemate app, you'll know in advance when the flow has dried up and it's time to move the hives, and you'll never lose bees to swarming again because Hivemate will let you know when it's time to harvest your honey.

The Hivemate system can be used on wooden or plastic hives and sits underneath the box, replacing the original base. Hivemate records the hive's weight, temperature, humidity, and exact location, providing updated data every 30 minutes between 4 am and 10 pm, every single day.

This allows you to monitor and track the honey output and the box entrance temperature during the bees' active hours, and enjoy peace of mind knowing that your hive is where you left it. You can even opt for sound monitoring as an added extra, so you can listen to your bees no matter where you are.

Hivemate can run off Wi-Fi, 4G, or a combination of both, to ensure instant access to your data as soon as it's recorded. The Hivemate unit is fitted with a solar charging panel, meaning it'll charge itself automatically for long, uninterrupted battery life.

All the data will be recorded and kept within the Hivemate app on your smartphone, computer, or television, meaning you won't have to worry about taking hive notes ever again.

Whether you keep bees as a hobby or have a large commercial apiary, Hivemate has been designed for you. Our system can be customised to suit your needs, to ensure that you'll get the most out of working with Hivemate.

With our world-class beehive monitoring system on your team, you'll be able to watch over your bees no matter where you are – even when you're on holiday. Hivemate gives you all the information you need to keep your bees happy, healthy, and productive, leaving you to focus on the rewards.

With Hivemate by your side, you don't have to do it all on your own anymore.

Work smarter with Hivemate. Contact us today!

For more information about Hivemate, including all the technical specifications, available packages and products, and answers to our most frequently asked questions, head to our website at www.hivemate.com.au or get in touch at sales@hivemate.com.au or (03) 8401 4248. Distributors and retailers wanted!



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Whether you keep bees as a hobby or have a large commercial apiary, Hivemate has been designed for you. Our system can be customised to suit your needs, to ensure that you'll get the most out of working with Hivemate.

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Central Tablelands Branch

Central Tablelands Branch of NSWAA held their quarterly meeting on Saturday 22nd October in Lucknow, followed by a BBQ lunch.

Approximately 25 members were in attendance.

Alex Lloyd from the DPI Varroa emergency response team joined us and reported to members on where things were up to with the response and the action plan going forward. Members had many questions for Lloyd and suggestions regarding movement permits, that were taken onboard. We thank Lloyd for his time.

Many of our members attended the recent pest & disease course hosted by NSW DPI education team in Orange. Members reported that it was a very successful and worthwhile couple of days.

The branches annual involvement in the Royal Bathurst Show was discussed and plans put in place.

Jon Lockwood, branch member & executive member of AHBIC was our guest speaker. Jon spoke on all aspects of AHBIC including the work put in by AHBIC's new CEO Danny Le Feur in the fight to eradicate varroa mite.

Jon expressed that more funds and support was needed for AHBIC to run at its full potential. A very productive and informative meeting.

Claire Bennett - Secretary



Branch

North Coast Branch

On the 2nd of December, North Coast branch held a general meeting at Casino RSM. This time we did not have a guest speaker as we had a lot of general business to get through.

About 25 members and interested people turned up for the night and we all had fun. Tony you have got to stop winning the raffle!

We have applied for a Cert. 3 chemical course to be free for all members of the branch, this course is a 2-day face to face course and will allow members to safely handle chemicals that they need to use or encounter, especially when doing pollination work.

Several members have put their names forward as volunteers if emergency services ever need the help of experienced beekeepers in the case of an accident or if other circumstances arise. I would like to thank these members as we never know what is around the corner and knowing they are willing to help is very satisfying. I don't need to name you all but a big thank you for stepping forward.

Our next meeting is pencilled in for the 3rd February 2023 and we will have a guest speaker there, it will be held at Lismore Heights Bowling club, trust you all have had a great Christmas break and into the New Year we go!

Cheers for now,
Steve Fuller
President North Coast Branch

BEEKEEPING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WEST

With the incursion of the mite in the Hunter region I thought there maybe beekeepers looking for another place to start up again well away from the present mite problem.

My wife and I have been major honey producers in the channel country in NSW for around 50 years, but because of age and health reasons we wish to sell our home and move closer in for medical specialists.

Available is a full brick home and bee sites, subject to the owners approval.

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Regards
Bruce & Lee Hughston

h News

Southern Tablelands Branch

An impressive opportunity to visit Hive IQ headquarters.

Late November, HiveIQ invited our members to hold the Southern Tablelands Branch meeting at their premises.

HiveIQ kindly provided everyone who attended a delicious banquet lunch.

Members were inspired with the excellent presentation of their products, software development and the production capability.

A special thankyou to Victor Croker and your team at HiveIQ for your very generous hospitality.

Our next meeting is in the planning for March 2023.

Laurie Kershaw
President Southern Tablelands Branch



Western Plains Branch

At our recent meeting there were discussions of varroa mite and possible treatment methods.

We discussed the trip some members of the western branch attended Gosford for the varroa response.

We also touched on flood affected beekeepers in the central west.

We spoke about getting some honey together for the donation to honey land for the Royal Easter Show.

Keiran Sutherland spoke about his recent trip to Peru along side Randy Oliver and the impact his foresees with varroa in Australia and the impact it had in South American and the types of treatments they used .

Zac Alcock gave an executive report.

After the branch meeting was over we had a pig on a spit and a few briskets following by some cold beers, we were happy with the turn out.

Looking forward to the next one and a possible golf day suggested by Gary Kenny.

Dwayne Sykes
Western Plains Branch



For those pining for the past at the Royal Easter Show when Branches competed with each other with their displays and themes!!!!

*Cheers
Mike Fogarty*



Meeting / Conference Dates

BRANCH

Sydney Metro

First Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm at Chifley College Bidwell Campus, Daniels Road, Bidwell.

Central Tablelands

January - third Tuesday
April - third Tuesday
July - third Tuesday
October - third Tuesday

Riverina

Our meeting dates are usually in the first week of February, May, August, and November each year.

Lately our meetings have been held alternatively between Wagga Wagga and Griffith.

Usually on the first Monday, when held in Wagga Wagga and on the first Thursday, when held in Griffith.

The venues change to suit availability.

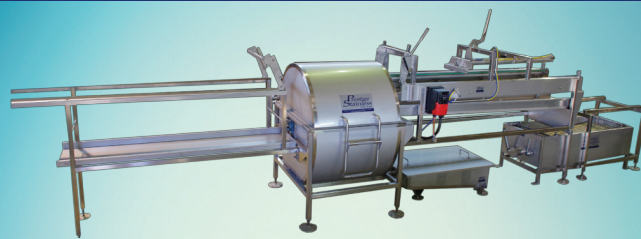
North Coast

Meetings are generally held on the last Friday of January, March, May, July, September & November

CONFERENCE

WA - 28, 29 & 30 April 2023 Claremont WA
Crop Pollination Assoc AGM -16 May 2023 Penrith NSW
NSWAA 18 & 19 May 2023 Penrith NSW
Tasmania - 26 & 27 May 2023 Hobart TAS
QBA - 15 & 16 June 2023 TBC
SAAA - 22 & 23 June 2023 Clare SA
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Note: Rates from 1 March 2017

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