

AUSTRALIA'S

HONEYBEE NEWS



“The Voice of the Beekeeper”
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Volume 15 Number 6
November - December 2022



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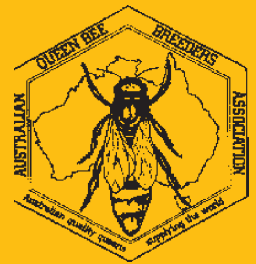
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Friday 20 January 2023**



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Hello to you all,

Just where has the year gone? With so much happening but not a lot of production coming out of it that the year has slipped past, and we are now looking at Christmas!

Firstly, I cannot go past the conditions that are happening within NSW at the present time. Unprecedented rain in most of NSW which is causing havoc for apiarist throughout NSW from not being able to get to your bees to roads that are completely washed away. When you can get to your bees, you cannot move them because where you would like to place them is to wet! Please remember, do not drive through flood waters, or even walk through them, usually flood water has a very strong undertow which is not obvious from the surface, remember, if its flooded – forget it, your life (and rescuers) is valuable! If you have been affected by these events, Rural Assistance Authority may be of some help, so call them and see what they can do for you.

On a lighter note, the rain has stopped in the north coast area for once and it starting to dry out and apiarist are making the most of it.

The Executive have been busy in many areas these past two months. Matt and I have had a very productive BIBCC meeting regarding biosecurity and compliance which we will bring you all up to date with when it is finalised. Zac has been involved with the checking of our Forests and National Parks for suitable usage since the bush fires and it is good to know that they are hearing what is being said about the damage done 3 years ago and are willing to listen. Some of this damage will take many years to recover.

Getting ready for next year's HONEYLAND is progressing nicely, and I would like to remind everybody that donations and volunteers are required for this to be successful, please contact Ray Hull or Debbie Porter.

With the new year fast approaching, I would like everyone to mark the date for our conference – **18 & 19 MAY at Penrith Panthers Rugby Leagues Club!** Therese has been working hard on this and I would like to see as many members as possible come along and enjoy the biggest honeybee conference in Australia!

What resources are producing? On the north coast there has been a bit of a surprise with the heat being turned on, at present there's white mahogany, grey ironbark, and a bit of spotted gum. I am told that the narrow leaf ironbark is well budded and may give a box or two, here's to praying. At present there is green mallee, a few patches of curse and bumble box flowering. If you are lucky to have sites in these locations make the most of it!

It is great to see that the DPI are getting on top regarding the VARROA MITE eradication. Almost 97% of all managed hives in the RED zones have now been eradicated. Baiting has commenced in a most areas now and a lot of surveillance continuing. A great effort by all involved.

ORCs are finally rolling out to those that have applied from the red zone and the purple zone ORCs are moving along with a purpose in mind. As always not all are going to be better off and if you are not happy with the outcome, you can always appeal their decision and have that reviewed.

I would also like to remind members that if they have an issue or feel that there is a concern, it needs to be in writing, either letter or email (emails get to us faster!). This way we can discuss the issue/concern and see what the best course of action is. When you call us, we could be busy running our businesses or driving or several other things (as we are volunteers) and then we may not get straight onto your problem or it gets forgotten, then members think we don't care. We do care and are there to represent members to the best of our ability but please work with us.

On that note, I would like to wish all of you a great Christmas time and prosperous new year – let's hope next year's weather is almost normal!

Happy bee times!

Steve Fuller
Your President

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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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**Stephen Targett
Chairman**



The CEO and I have attended a two day webinar training course titled **Making Decisions Under Pressure**. The course was funded by DAFF and coordinated by PHA. A worthwhile course that helps one recognize the pressures and our personal history that may be influencing our decision making.

The baiting of feral hives in the red zones which is the next stage of the varroa incursion response has started. This gives industry confidence that varroa can be eradicated. Given the accessibility of some of the country for feral hive baiting it will not be an easy task.

Rural Assistant Authority are processing beekeeper claims and making payments. Some beekeepers are claiming for higher rates than is in the schedule as is there right. AHBIC along with RAA are detailing what evidence is required to support these higher claims before the higher reimbursement rates will be accepted and paid.

AHBIC is very aware that many beekeepers are suffering losses through no fault of their own. Ones such as queen breeders, pollinators that could not travel to their orchards and those in the purple zone. Not to mention those that have their sheds in one zone and bees in another zone or bees in two zones. The PHA deed that AHBIC signed up to is very specific as to the rules around the owner reimbursement of costs. Unfortunately ORC's are not available activities such as commercial queen breeders and those that have foregone pollination contracts.

AHBIC has lobbied hard to get compensation for those beekeepers in the purple zone and recreational beekeepers. The National Management Group has finally approved an increased budget (total recreational costs) for recreational beekeepers and also for Owner Reimbursement Costs (ORC) for those beekeepers

in the purple zone. AHBIC is lobbying hard to have these purple zone ORC payments to be made as soon as possible – limited DPI manpower is slowing this payment process down.

AHBIC has been successful in a grant application for a Varroa Coordinator. The executive has determined the way forward with this and recruitment will start shortly with the position to be filled in the coming months.

Purchase of Surveillance hives to be used in the red eradication zone to prove that the baiting method will kill hives was done by DPI. AHBIC had no influence on the purchase process or who DPI purchased these hives from. The VARROA RESPONSE is beyond 100 days now. NSW DPI are close to finalizing a plan to present to the CCEPP and ultimately the NMG for approval that covers the next two years. The current plan will continue until the next plan is approved or not approved.

The Levy Sub Committee that was set up at the AGM recently met. Plan is to have recommendations to AHBIC member bodies well before the next AGM.

AHBIC and DPI were exploring an option to use nucleus hives to provide pollination for rubus crops in the Coffs area red and purple zones. Nuc's would have been euthanized at end of pollination. However due to circumstances this did not happen and those rubus crops will not be pollinated this spring by managed honey bees. Hopefully we can have plans in place to provide pollination to rubus crops for their late summer flowering.

Please be careful with all this wet weather.

Cheers
Stephen Targett





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Special Disaster Grants – NSW Severe Weather & Flooding February 2022 onwards

The NSW and Australian Governments have announced additional assistance measures to support primary producers who have been impacted by the floods and severe weather that occurred from February 2022 onwards.

Assistance is now being provided to 60 local government areas in NSW through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). Primary producers recovering from the devastating impacts of floods are receiving vital support, with **Special Disaster Grants of up to \$75,000 now available**.

Flood affected primary producers are encouraged to apply for Special Disaster Grants to access financial assistance to get back operating as soon as possible.

Once approved, eligible primary producers can access \$25,000 in assistance up-front, with a further \$50,000 in financial assistance available thereafter upon submission of valid tax invoices.



Plan Bee researcher profile: Emily Noordyke

Plan Bee is a national genetic improvement program using innovative breeding technologies to transform the performance of honey bees in Australia. The project team are located throughout the country and are experts on everything from genetics, entomology and beekeeping practices.

As the nationwide program rolls out, we will be introducing key members of the team to understand more about the people driving this program forward.

In this researcher profile we introduce Emily Noordyke from the NSW Department of Primary Industries. Hailing from the United States, Emily is the newest addition to the nationwide Plan Bee team. Emily joins the team fresh from the University of Florida, where she completed postgraduate studies in entomology and nematology before undertaking work in the fields of honey bee nutrition and behaviour.

Emily wasn't born into beekeeping but when she joined an amateur beekeeping club in her native Michigan it wasn't long before she was switching from her arts major to a biology major in order to chase a career in beekeeping.

The allure of beekeeping was hard to resist. After only scratching the surface of beekeeping and the limitless world of bees Emily knew immediately that this was something she was passionate about and a career that had real meaning.

That career led her to working for an organisation called the Bee Informed Partnership, in a role that saw her travelling across the United States collecting colony health data for commercial beekeepers. With several years' experience working in the field, Emily was alerted to an opening within the Plan Bee program as a technical officer.

Emily's appointment is a critical hire for the program. She will be working closely with Elizabeth Frost (DPI Technical Specialist – Bees), who currently heads up the NSW DPI Plan Bee program. Her role will be an active queen breeder-facing role where she will be on the road regularly meeting breeders, taking samples, inspecting hives and entering data collected into the national database developed by the University of New England's Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit.

Having started at a particularly critical time with the



Figure 1. Emily Noordyke working her University of Florida research hives. Credit: Humberto Boncristiani

varroa incursion, Emily is learning a lot about Australia's approach to biosecurity.

“Coming from the US, where varroa has been found since the 1980s, it's interesting to see the plans coming together to help mitigate and manage the incursion,” Emily explains. “It's also accelerated my interest in genetics, given that Plan Bee has the power to greatly improve the industry's potential to deal with incursions like this, through disease resistance.”

Breeding quality key to program success. Emily is looking forward to working with breeders to help provide them with the skills and knowledge to breed their own quality queens and select for traits that are important to them, such as pest resistance.

For the Plan Bee program to be successful, we need to collect as much data as we can, and I'm looking forward to hearing from breeders across the country.” Emily said. To get in touch with Emily about record-keeping for queen breeders and how to get the most out of your records and our geneticists, contact Emily.noordyke@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Plan Bee (National Honey Bee Genetic Improvement Program) is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as part of its Rural Research and Development for Profit program. The project is further supported by AgriFutures Australia, the Department of Regional NSW, University of Sydney, University of New England Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit, Better Bees WA Inc, When Bee Foundation, Costa Group, Olam, Beechworth Honey, Monson's Honey and Pollination, South Pacific Seeds, Australian Queen Bee Breeders Association, Australian Honey Bee Industry Council, and commercial beekeepers.



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18th & 19th May 2023

Penrith Panthers Rugby Leagues Club



Plant Profile

Plant Profile: Yellow box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*)

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>

Honey and pollen flora of South-Eastern Australia

Understanding the biology of flora and its value to honey bees is the foundation of successful beekeeping.

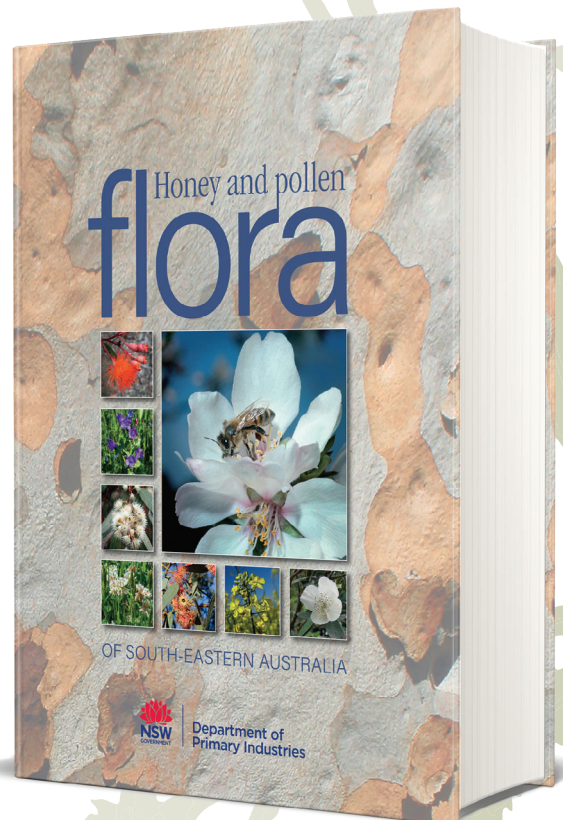
The flowers on which bees forage have a major impact on stocking rates and the level of nutrition available to the colony. Whether a beekeeper owns one hive or a thousand, the principle is the same.

The result of over 30 years of research, this book distills both scientific knowledge and the opinions of hundreds of beekeepers into a reference work that will be the cornerstone of floral understanding in apiculture for years to come.

The publication includes a star rating system to rate each flowering species for their value to bee nutrition. Plants are ordered in botanical family groups with annual flowering charts and geographical distribution maps.

The author *Dr Douglas Somerville has a master's degree in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development and a PhD in Honey Bee Nutrition and Floral Biology.*

**RRP \$175 available from
Tocal College www.tocal.nsw.edu.au**



Yellow box

Eucalyptus melliodora

For decades this tree has been regarded as of premium value and importance for beekeepers. Its unique flavour is usually considered highly desirable. It provides no pollen support for brood rearing and maintaining the health of a colony. Careful management of bee hives in relation to nutrient inputs needs to occur to ensure colonies are maintained in a healthy condition.

Considered excellent firewood, it is also occasionally used as fence posts. The majority of this species is found on private property. For many decades, beekeepers have witnessed the slow decline in the area and number of mature yellow box trees. Some have been removed for ease of cropping; others for firewood and a certain number continue to die of a mixture of causes. Most farm tree plantings do not favour replanting yellow box due to its slow growing habit. There are a number of woodland birds, particularly nomadic honey eaters, such as the Regent honeyeater, that rely on the flowering of this tree.

Habit: A medium sized woodland tree primarily found on farm land, with one of the widest distributions second only to River red gum (*E. camaldulensis*). It grows 12–30 m in height with a wide-spreading crown.

Tolerates frosts in winter and a degree of hot and humid conditions in summer. It is not found in high rainfall zones.

Bark: The bark is variable in colour and texture. The upper limbs are smooth and pale-coloured. The trunk can be box type fibrous with a yellowish appearance, or it can progress to a dark deep red-brown rough bark.

Leaves: These greatly assist in the identification of this tree. They tend to be small (6.5–13.5 cm x 0.8–1.8 cm) and thin. Leaves are grey-green to light green in colour.

Buds: Clavate or ovoid, sometimes glaucous, 5-8 mm long, 3-4 mm wide, no scar, calyptra conical, sometimes beaked.

Buds are initiated up to 12 months before flowering on new growth in summer. Not all trees will bud and flower. A proportion of a stand of yellow box may bud and flower, where other trees fail to bud. In other years, the majority of the trees in the area will produce buds.



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



Flowers: Flowering period is very variable based on locality and climatic factors. Where the tree flowers in late autumn or during winter, it is not likely to yield nectar of any consequence. The best nectar production occurs during summer. Flowering may occur in different months from region to region. There is some consistency in the months it flowers in a given region.

While it is possible for bees to work yellow box in the one apiary site from one year to the next, this is usually due to the bees working different trees. Flowering frequency is usually from 2–4 years for an individual tree.

Honey: Possibly the most important eucalypt to beekeepers in NSW. Honey crops from 30–50 kg per hive are considered normal, with an average honey yield of 42 kg per hive. The honey is light amber in colour, of good density and slightly turbid. It has a very distinctive pleasant 'yellow box' flavour that can dominate other milder flavoured honeys. A pure source of yellow box honey is said not to candy.

Pollen: Of no value, as the pollen is not attractive to foraging bees.

In some severe droughts, where there are little or no other plants in flower, the colonies can decline in population due to the shortage of pollen.



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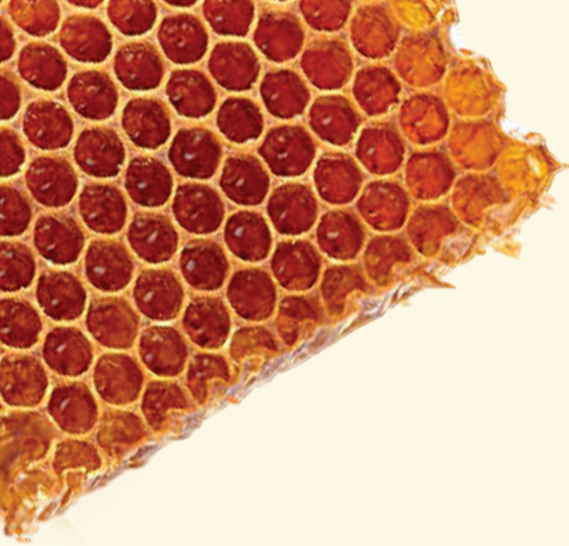


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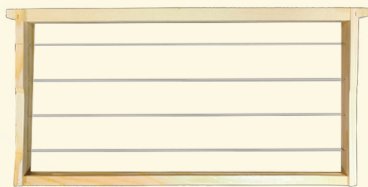
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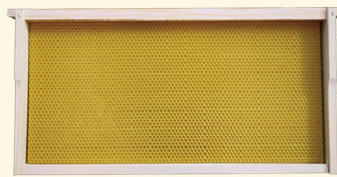
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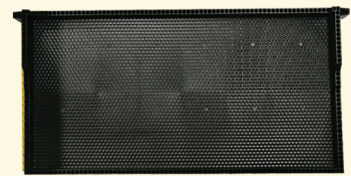
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T: 02 4939 8821 M: 0437 731 273 E: elizabeth.frost@dpi.nsw.gov.au



Does Australia have useful predators of Varroa mite?

Authors: Dr. Mary Whitehouse (NSW Department of Primary Industries/Macquarie University), Elizabeth Frost



Caption: A honey bee next to an adult *Chelifer cancroides* (pseudoscorpion). Image courtesy Robert Lamberts, PFR.

With the threat of Varroa mite looming large, it might be helpful to see what defences our bees may have in or around their hives. Overseas where insecticide resistance in Varroa mite is a concern, researchers have been testing Varroa mite predators that are compatible with bees.



Caption: A very young pseudoscorpion eating a varroa mite. Image courtesy of Sam Read, PFR.

One candidate is the pseudoscorpion *Chelifer cancroides*. This critter has been studied by New Zealand bio-protection researcher with beekeeping experience, Ron van Toor (Plant & Food Research, NZ (PFR)). The pseudoscorpion isn't an actual scorpion (it has no sting) but it is a distant relative, and readily attacks Varroa mites – even when it is a small juvenile.

Ron's work has shown that pseudoscorpions have no interest in honey bee adults, pupae, larvae or eggs, and live comfortably in modified hive bottom boards from where they enter the hive to search for mites. Honey bees tolerate their presence. The questions are, could they be a tool to counter Varroa mites and where are they in Australia?

Ron is linked to an international group led by Dr. Mary Whitehouse (NSW Department of Primary Industries / Macquarie University) interested in identifying tools that could be used against Varroa mite in Australia should the unthinkable happen and Varroa become established. This team includes Elizabeth Frost (NSW DPI), Juliana Rangel (Texas A&M), and Mark Harvey (Western Australian Museum). Mark, who is a world expert on pseudoscorpions, said that *Chelifer cancroides* are in Tasmania, but haven't yet been reported from the Australian mainland. Our next step is to see if these critters are on the Australian mainland, or if other Australian pseudoscorpions could be effective against Varroa mites.



Caption: An adult pseudoscorpion eating a varroa mite next to a parasitised honey bee drone pupae. Image courtesy of Robert Lamberts, PFR.

This is where you could help.

If you find a pseudoscorpion near your hive (or your house or chicken pen as they hang out there too) please photograph it with your phone and send the picture to Mark Harvey (E: mark.harvey@museum.wa.gov.au; or 0407 553 567). If you find one:

1. Capture the critter (it won't bite or pinch)
2. Put it in a zip-lock plastic bag or small jar (labelled with date and location where you caught it)
3. Pop it in the freezer

Freezing it means that later, if it is a relevant species of pseudoscorpion, it can be formally identified and have its DNA assessed. The photographs will help us find out if these critters are on the mainland, or if there are other useful pseudoscorpions out there that could be called into service if necessary as a biocontrol agent in Varroa management.

Managing Varroa mite, should it evade eradication in Australia, will require a range of tools. Predators that take out Varroa mites could be part of the pest management toolbox. This survey is an initial step to increase our preparedness. Happy pseudoscorpion hunting!



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the 2023 Award winners will be announced at an exclusive event at Parliament House in Canberra during June, incorporating a networking event, and a live outside broadcast of ABC Rural's nationwide Country Hour radio program.

Nominations open 1 December 2022.

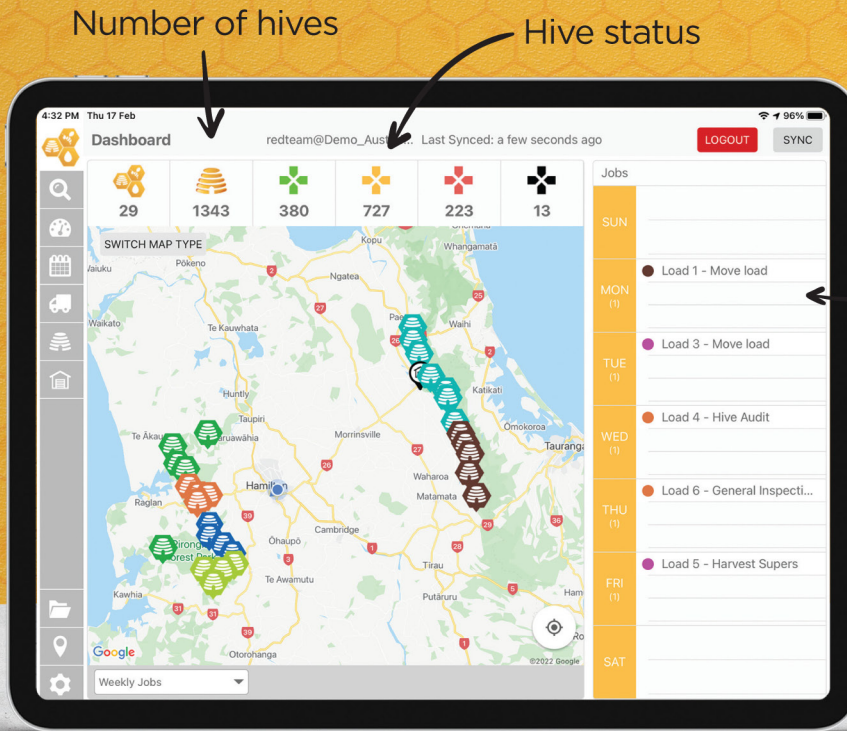
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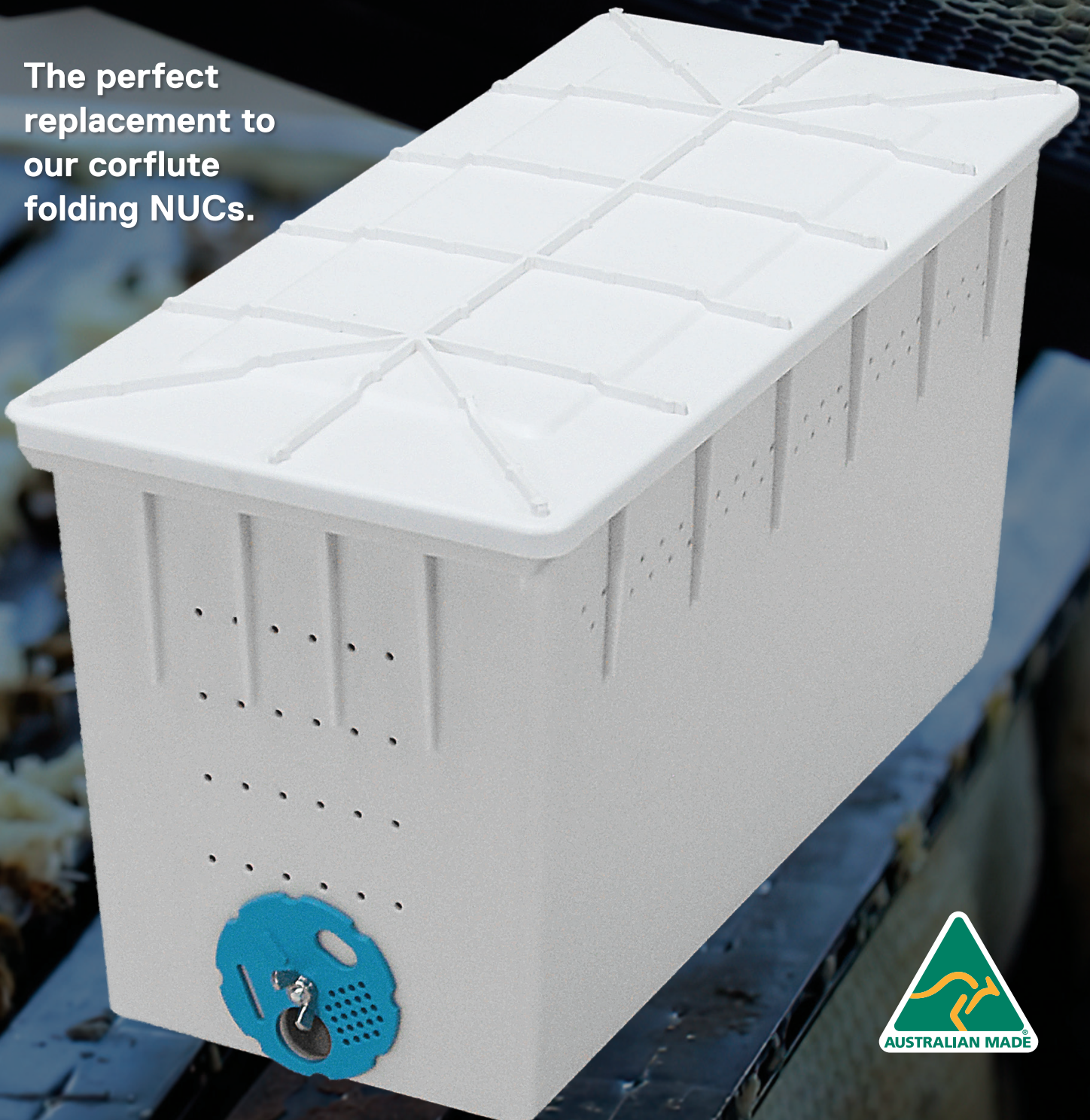


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Ask An Expert

Questions put to Dr Diana Leemon about Small Hive Beetle



Where do SHB come and how did they get here?

Small Hive Beetle (SHB) are native to Sub-Saharan Africa. We do not know exactly how they came to Australia, although there has been lots of unsupported speculation. We do not even know precisely when they entered Australia, only that they were first positively identified in Australia in 2002.

How do beekeepers manage SHB?

Beekeepers use a variety of methods for managing SHB, most methods involve trapping and killing adult beetles inside a hive. These range from commercially available traps through to home-made jobs. Methods for managing outside the hive involve treating soil around hives to kill the larvae (the only registered approved product is Permethrin) or trapping adults before they fly into a hive. A selection of methods, though I am sure I have left some out:

Commercially available traps

Black flat plastic cassette type traps that use the insecticide Fipronil to kill SHB using the cassettes as a harborage to hide from bees. These traps are either placed on the bottom of a hive or just under the lid.

Trench type traps that hang/sit between the frames, these traps can be filled with either cooking oil or DE (diatomaceous earth). The SHB use the traps to hide from bees. (Note in some states DE is not allowed, but has that ever stopped a beekeeper?)

Bottom Boards with a variety of designs from vented open, vented with tray filled with oil or DE, or with only one or two gridded vents with a tray for oil or DE inserted under them.

Home Made Jobs

Vinyl mats that have a “fluffy”/fibrous underside, they are folded in half with the vinyl side facing out and placed on the top of frames under the lid. Bees chase SHB into the folded mats and eventually the SHB get caught in the fibers. The vinyl material can usually be bought from suppliers such as Spotlight as material to protect polished tables. I trap more SHB in my fluffy mats which also stop burr comb, than I ever do in my Apithor traps!

Cleaning cloths such as the Chux brand (every beekeeper seems to have a preferred brand). The cloths are folded over to form a small square, often placed just under a queen excluder. Bees chew up the cloth making it easy for SHB to get trapped. (Be aware that some hives will chew up and remove the cloth within one – two weeks rendering it useless, other hives might not chew up much but instead cover with bands of propolis, also making it useless).

External traps for intercepting adult SHB before they fly into a hive around dusk can be made up in the morning and hung 1.5 – 2.0 m off the ground between 10m to 200m from the apiary. Buy a lantern type fly trap and add 1 cup of water, 1 teaspoon of dry yeast plus 3 tablespoons of sugar or honey or combination. This should be bubbling away by the evening. SHB fly don't fly when it is raining, or the temperatures are below 16°C, but often many will fly the first clear evening after a day of more of rain in mid-late spring and summer. See the youtube video for more information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHUmK5SlzXU&t=>

Various home-made bottom boards, some of excellent design but too expensive to be made commercially. Home-made harborage traps made from Corflute with interior treated with “Cockroach bait” – despite these giving your state apiary officer conniptions, I have lost count of the number of times beekeepers have told me they use them!

Natural biological control: Chickens have been shown to be good at digging up larvae in the soil around hives or honey houses (Bandicoots might also be good). In Queensland cane toads are rather partial to SHB larvae emerging from hives at night.

Quick hand eye co-ordination with a hive tool or fat fingers can squash an awful lot of SHB dashing for cover in a newly opened hive.

Local beekeepers have sworn that adding the peppermint humbug bullseye type lollies to hives repels SHB (I am getting this tested in the laboratory!)

What is the life cycle of SHB?

The four stages in the small hive beetle life cycle with approximate times for each stage (warm temperatures – cool temperatures) is shown in the diagram below:



What do SHB do to a hive?

Adult SHB are opportunistic feeders in a hive feeding on bee eggs, pollen and rubbish, they also create a stress on the hive with bees spending time chasing SHB and trying to remove them that could be better spent on other tasks. Larvae are the most damaging stage as they need to feed on protein to grow, which is either pollen, dead bees or brood. Larvae also carry a yeast which ferments the honey. When large numbers of SHB eggs are laid the fermentation caused by young larvae and yeasts will generate large amounts of alcohol and carbon dioxide, both of which will make the hive very sick. If the bees cannot overcome this early stage the hive collapses with a mass of developing larvae (maggots) in a stinking slimy mess – called a “slime-out”. Small Hive Beetle can cause the same type of slime-out in native stingless bee hives.

Is honey that is slimmed by SHB edible?

No, it **should not** be consumed as it is likely started to ferment with large numbers of yeast cells

What is *Kodamaea ohmeri*?

Kodamaea ohmeri is a yeast that has evolved an association with Small Hive Beetles. Though this yeast has been isolated from many different habitats it seems to have found a special place with SHB. It has been isolated from all life stages of the SHB and appears to be passed from one generation to the next in the coating around SHB eggs. However, when SHB larvae overwhelm a hive and cause a “slime-out” this yeast plays a special role. The slime is caused by yeast fermenting the honeycomb, from looking through a microscope and laboratory isolations we confirmed that the slime is mostly cells of *Kodamaea ohmeri*. The reason slimed honey is not edible!

One very concerning thing about *Kodamaea ohmeri* is that in the world of medical mycology (concerning human diseases caused by fungi), this yeast is seen as an emerging opportunistic pathogen of immunocompromised and immuno-suppressed people. My concern is that though *Kodamaea ohmeri* is normally found in a wide range of habitats it is usually in low numbers. But, the slime from a “slime out” is mostly cells of *Kodamaea ohmeri*. There is a possible risk in breathing in yeast cells caught up in droplets of water as destroyed hives are hosed clean. Thus, caution should be taken when cleaning up a “slime-out”. **The standard method of cleaning up a “slime-out” should first include treating with diluted bleach (1 in 10 dilution of retail bleach) and wearing both gloves and a mask to minimize exposure to living yeast cells.**

Could SHB be eradicated from Australia?

Impossible, the only main beekeeping areas of Australia we don't think SHB has yet established are Tasmania and SW Western Australia. In the rest of the country, SHB can happily live in managed hives and feral hives with the density affected by climate cycles. During El Nina hot dry periods numbers decline, during La Nina wet periods numbers increase.

The window for eradication closed back in the early 2000s, particularly during the drought years.

Do you know of any research that is being undertaken at present for the control of SHB?

AgriFutures Australia has just contracted a project to take the External Attractant trap into Phase II, aiming to develop a highly attractive synthetic lure for SHB to be used in a purpose designed SHB trap. An external trap to intercept and stop SHB adults entering an apiary is the best hope for the economic management of SHB for commercial beekeepers.

About Dr Diana Leemon

Dr Diana Leemon is a research scientist who has been associated with small hive beetle almost since it arrived in Queensland in 2002. She has conducted research into the non-chemical control of small hive beetle leading three AgriFutures Australia (formerly RIRDC) funded projects. Diana now acts as a private research advisor after retiring from the Qld Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in 2021. She has been a member of the AgriFutures Australia Honey Bee & Pollination Advisory Panel since 2017.



The face of the monster rampaging through apiaries, destroying hives – and it is not Varroa



Damage done by SHB

Small hive beetle

What is small hive beetle?

Small hive beetle (SHB) (*Aethina tumida*) is a small (0.5 cm long 0.3 cm wide) brown-black beetle with clubbed antennae. The larvae of SHB cause the majority of damage to honey bees by burrowing into combs, eating brood, honey and pollen. Whilst feeding, the larvae also carry a yeast (*Kodamaea ohmeri*) which contaminates the honey, causing it to ferment. Heavy infestations cause the hive to become 'slimed out' and may cause the colony to die or abscond. In Australia, SHB has the greatest impact in the warm and humid coastal strip between Victoria and North Queensland.

What does it look like?

Adult SHB are brown-black. The eggs are tiny (about 1 mm long) and are pearly white. In strong colonies, eggs are laid in the crevices of the hive, while in weak colonies eggs are laid directly on brood comb. Larvae are white, 10 mm long with three pairs of prolegs near the head. Once they mature, larvae leave the hive and burrow into the ground surrounding the hive to pupate.

What can it be confused with?

SHB larvae look similar to wax moth larvae. To distinguish between the two pests, SHB cause the honey to ferment and the hive to become 'slimed out', while wax moth larvae leave behind webbing mass and tough white cocoons on frames.

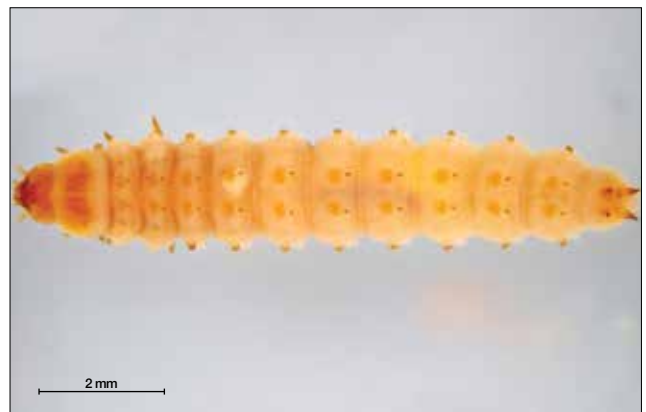
What should beekeepers look for?

Beekeepers should look for the adult SHB in the darker parts of the hive. Adult SHB avoid light and will seek refuge quickly when the hive is inspected. Inspect underneath the hive lid, as well as the brood box and bottom board. Weak and stressed colonies with a low bee-to-comb ratio are considered the most susceptible. Also look for larvae on frames in the brood box and in the above honey supers.



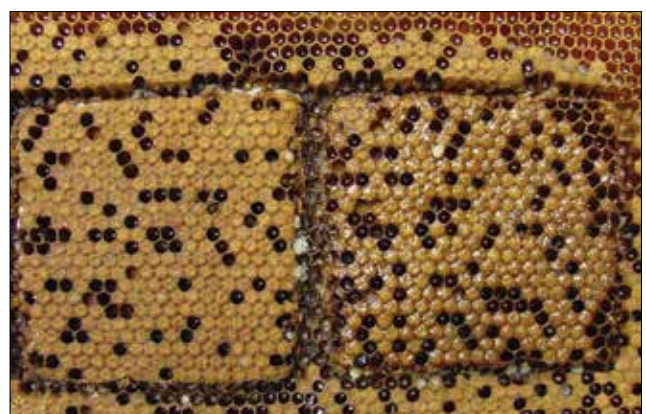
Adult SHB are brown-black with clubbed antennae

James D Ellis, University of Florida



Larvae of SHB are pearly white and about 10 mm long

Ken Walker Museum Victoria, PADIL



Cells infested with SHB (right) show a slimy appearance when compared to healthy unaffected cells (left)

Kieith Delaplaine, University of Georgia

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Honey Bee Industry Development Officer

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Clover4Bees in Wagga

The Clover4Bees project team met in Wagga on 17-18th November to inspect one of the first field experiments that is comparing different forage legumes for honey bees. The meeting was attended by DPI staff and by the industry advisory committee (IAC) members that oversee the project to guide direction and provide honey bee industry input into the research (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Clover4Bees project team meeting at the Wagga research trial. Back row left to right: James Kershaw (IAC), Jamie Ayton (IAC), Richard Lowrie (DPI), Andrew Price (DPI), Dr Richard Hayes (DPI), Dr Doug Somerville (IAC), Matthew Newell (DPI), Binbin Xu (DPI); front row left to right: Laurie Kershaw (IAC), Kimberley Beer (IAC), Therese Kershaw (IAC), Melinda Brown (DPI), Carol Harris (DPI), Dr Madlen Kratz (DPI).

The Clover4Bees project is a joint initiative between Agrifutures Australia and NSW DPI to undertake a preliminary assessment of over 20 forage legumes for their potential value to honey bees.

Dr Richard Hayes, a Senior Research Scientist with NSW DPI at Wagga, leads this two-year project. Dr Hayes has evaluated pasture legumes for over 20 years, but this is the first time that researchers have paid close attention to the legume flower for honey production.

“Usually, we are concerned with other agronomic traits in legumes, such as biomass potential, persistence or nitrogen (N) fixation. Examining legume flowers is new to all of us, so we are all having to learn new skills” Dr Hayes said.

James Kershaw, 5th generation bee and sheep farmer from Gundaroo, sits on the Clover4Bees industry advisory committee and has had a long interest in exploring the potential of forage legumes for honey bees.

The Kershaw family have planted legume species in their sheep pastures for many years now, including balansa

clover, arrowleaf clover and purple vetch. But until now, there has been no scientific evaluation of the potential of these species for honey bees.

The experiment at Wagga, or ‘flower garden’ as researchers loosely refer to it, is one of 4 established in 2022 across NSW and compares 22 annual or short-lived perennial legume species. It includes species that are familiar to many honey producers, such as white clover, balansa clover, and arrowleaf clover, but it also includes other clovers that are not so well known. “Species such as gland clover, bladder clover or eastern star clover are relatively new to agriculture and are probably underutilised by farmers” Dr Hayes said.

But clovers are not the only species being tested in the Clover4Bees project. Other species such as biserrula and serradella are also included, as well as 3 types of vetch; woolly pod vetch, purple vetch and common vetch.



Figure 2. Vetch flowers. From left to right: Woolly pod vetch, purple vetch and common vetch.

“It is too early to draw conclusions about which species offer most potential to the honey bee industry. In fact, there are a handful of species that have not even started flowering in the field experiments, and this is just the first year of evaluation” Dr Hayes said.

Yet, there is great optimism among everyone involved. One of the most exciting parts of this research is being able to work across two industries, pastures/ grazing and honey bees, to achieve joint industry outcomes.



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The Australian Honey Industry owned QA and Food Safety program

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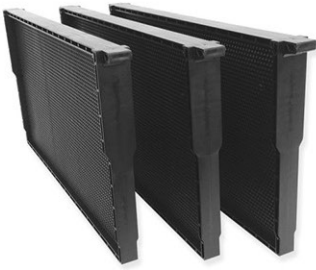
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Apimaye Thermo Hives

7-Frame Nucs, 7-Frame & 10-Frame Hives



Beemax Full Depth Plastic Frames

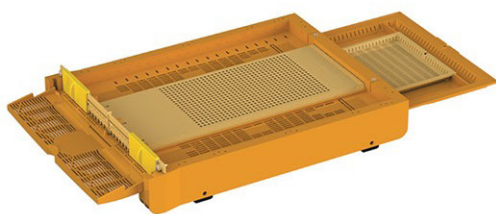
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BEE BIOSECURITY OFFICER REPORT



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



Using irradiation to get the best outcome for your beekeeping business.

Irradiation is a very valuable tool and NSW beekeepers are extremely lucky to have access to it. Used correctly, it is a cost effective process to remove American foulbrood (AFB) and other diseases from used equipment. This enables good equipment to be safely reused, as opposed to simply burning everything.

But, just because equipment gets irradiated does not mean this will immediately solve all of its inherent problems and that you can just put everything straight back out on to the bees. Some see irradiation as a silver bullet that makes everything that is touched by it shine, but it cannot work miracles on absolutely everything, especially junk! That goes for both the frames in those irradiated boxes and the hives they are going back into.



This is not worth irradiating.

Irradiation and AFB

The process of irradiation is a mystery to some, who think that it will melt wax combs and immediately destroy plastic frames and boxes, whilst those that use it generally love it. It is actually a “cold” process, with little change in temperature during exposure to the radiation (Gamma or X-ray types) and it does not change the appearance of most things that pass through it (some plastics are discoloured and honey will foam up, but wax comb and timber is fine). Often the only way that a beekeeper actually knows that items were irradiated is by the red dot on the outside of the box or pallet (that changed colour during exposure to radiation).

As such the physical appearance and smell of both fresh and irradiated AFB looks exactly the same. Both will look, behave and smell like AFB in brood frames, test positive in an in-field AFB test or if put on a slide and seen under a microscope at the lab. The one major difference is that the DNA in irradiated AFB has been broken down and rendered unviable, so the AFB spore cannot germinate and grow (so it is no longer infectious). This means that irradiated AFB brood frames could easily be mistaken for a fresh AFB outbreak, when in fact they are a “false-positive”.

Preparing equipment for irradiation.

It has always been best practice for beekeepers to cull out any brood frames which have visible signs of AFB (eg. infected brood or scale) from boxes BEFORE they get sent to irradiation, as well as removing any frames that are past their prime and not worth reusing. This same principle goes with all your dead-outs and other diseased equipment that you are sending to irradiation. You should firstly go through every box and determine which frames are worth reusing, and only send those in. Destroy the rest!

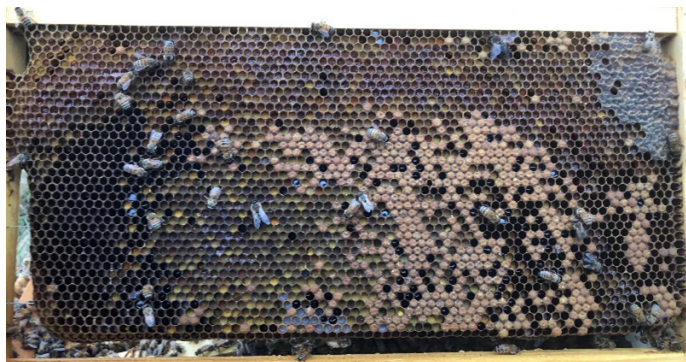
Irradiation is an excellent procedure, but it doesn't work miracles on the appearance of dirty old brood combs! All infected material (frames with infected brood and scale) should be burned in a pit along with the dead bees and any other unsuitable frames, boxes and slimed equipment etc. that is past its prime and would not be worth reusing if you did irradiate it. Same goes for old comb full of pollen, honey or slabs of brood...it is often more desirable for bees to draw out a new foundation than clean out thousands of dead bees and other junk to clean it up for egg laying, so why make them work harder than they have to (or attract attention from hive beetles that love the smell of dead brood).

To send heavily infected equipment to get irradiated also poses the small, but still possible risk that because such a high concentration of disease was present that a small amount of it may not actually get fully deactivated. Much research has shown that AFB spores exposed to a direct dose of 10 Kilo Grey will become non-viable (meaning they will never germinate in a bee gut and cause an AFB infection). But, if a beekeeper sends large amounts of diseased brood as well as old brood combs full of honey or pollen (that may shield inner combs from receiving an adequate dose of radiation) then that increases the risk that not every AFB spore will be neutralized properly. It is therefore very important that beekeepers prepare their equipment properly before sending it in. Steritech can guarantee that the equipment will get exposed to an adequate dose of radiation, but if you choose to send improperly selected equipment or heavily infected brood material then you may not get the best result.





Don't irradiate brood frames like this...it's best to burn them in a pit!



Don't send this to irradiate.



Sending the wrong frames for irradiation can be a costly mistake.

So, when you are preparing a batch of equipment for irradiation you are best advised to go through it all first (wearing disposable gloves, plus breathing protection if required) in a bee-proofed area to sort it out. Determine what gets melted and/or burned, and only send in frames that you really consider being suitable to reuse after irradiation. Generally speaking most operators send in their extracted "sticky" frames to be irradiated and reused, but rarely send used brood comb unless they are reasonably new and still in good condition.

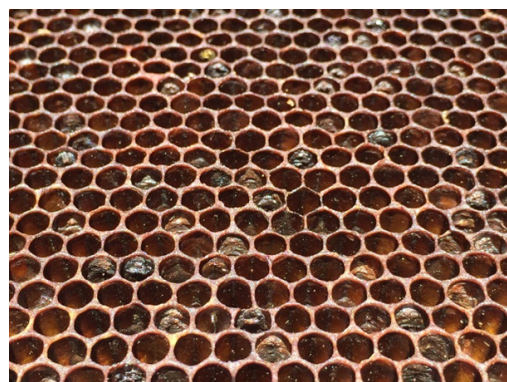
If you are irradiating and reusing frames from your dead-outs then they will vary greatly in quality, as they have died from a wide variety of reasons including AFB, other brood or adult bee diseases, failing queens, starving, old age, robbing, agricultural chemicals and/or beetles. They really should be thoroughly sorted before sending off and don't bother sending combs which are dark, have old or mouldy pollen, dead capped brood and visible signs of disease, or wood rot.

There are so many good reasons for doing this, especially having better bees in your boxes.

Irradiated AFB in a frame.

Because AFB retains its smell after irradiation this may be repulsive to bees, and as a result they may move away from those areas. You may also smell AFB when you open that hive! Adding these poor quality frames into colonies also means the bees need to work hard to clean it up, remove and rebuild those diseased or damaged cells, or alternatively they will simply avoid using them altogether, which reduces productivity. That means your colony does not do as well as one getting fresher drawn comb or new foundation to build on. That also means that when you come back later you may see signs of AFB, but you wouldn't know if it is new AFB or old irradiated (dead) AFB.

Getting a "false-positive" result from previously irradiated comb (that had AFB cells in it) has happened a number of times in the past, and it is very frustrating and confusing for all involved. To reduce that confusion it is better to just not irradiate frames with visible AFB signs (brood or scale) in them. Some operators mark irradiated AFB frames before returning to hives, but after a few months uncertainty can arise as to whether this is still that old AFB or new stuff. Also, it's a lot of work to mark each frame and worse if somebody forgets to mark some of them before they go back out and confusion reigns!



Is this scale fresh or irradiated? To avoid this confusion (and major stress) it is recommended to not irradiate any frames with visible AFB

If you are putting poor quality irradiated frames back into brood boxes then you will NEVER achieve as good a result as using new or good quality comb. The quality of combs makes a huge difference in brood rearing, so only put the best frames in there.

Economics

The brood box is the foundation of a healthy, productive and profitable bee colony (the motor that runs your honey pump), so only the best frames should ever be used in it. The brood box (management and equipment used in it) is the major investment in the ongoing future of your business. The brood frames themselves are a disposable item within that box and they have already paid for themselves within months of adding into it by breeding up lots of big fat healthy bees. By the time you pull them out after 3-4 years they have paid for themselves many times over, so best not to think they still hold much residual value at that point. Using old, poor quality irradiated frames in a brood box is far less profitable (or it could even cost you money).

If you are irradiating and reusing frames from your dead-outs then they could have died from a wide variety of reasons, one being agricultural chemicals. If you undertake pollination or have hives close to agriculture (like most of us), then the bees will regularly be exposed to chemicals and will also collect pollen and nectar that contains them (which are stored in brood frames). These may have built up to dangerous levels over time. Tests done on old brood comb wax have also shown very high amounts of various farm chemicals, which can negatively affect the health of bees reared in that wax. Farm chemicals could possibly be a big reason for a colony doing poorly or dying out. Therefore, adding those contaminated frames back to a hive (even after irradiation) could be risky, cause such issues to continue and cost you much honey production due to poorer bee health.

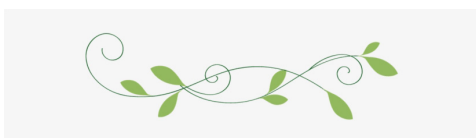
Again, if the timber frame is worth keeping then melt all the wax out before sending it off to be irradiated. If hives were poisoned, then burn all the frames!

Same goes for any hive which has died and been slimed out by beetle, as bees often find the residual slime smell off-putting. Some operators just burn all frames, or if the timber frames are worth reusing then melt out all the wax first, along with giving them a good dose of steam/very hot water to remove much of the slime smell. Once irradiated a new wax foundation can be added later.

The same wax melting and cleaning process could be used with any disease infected combs, pollen bound or mouldy frames (if they are worth reusing), but at the end of the day you, as the beekeeper and business owner needs to determine what is the most economical way to achieve your desired outcome. Sometimes burning everything and buying new is the easiest, fastest and cheapest option for you, because wasted time is wasted money.



Irradiated or not, you don't want poor quality frames like this in your brood box!



Good foundations make for a strong hive.



Junk in equals junk out...

Disease control.

Irradiation is a great way to reduce the overall level of AFB spores and other disease in a hive, but just using irradiation by itself will not get rid of your internal disease problems. It should be used in conjunction with regular and thorough brood checks, a yearly Honey Culture test (HCT) for each load (only taking honey from clean hives after first removing any colonies with visible AFB) and the removal of old brood combs regularly. You should also prevent disease spread by managing weak hives (find them early and turn them around before they collapse) and stop the robbing of weak or diseased hives in your apiaries. One of the major steps in disease control is to prevent robbing of weak or dead outs, instead of just chasing your tail and picking these dead hive bodies up every time you find them in an apiary.

Biosecurity assistance

A big part of my role is to assist commercial beekeepers with their pest and disease management, and I have spent a lot of time in the field with beekeepers to look at ways that they can modify their current processes to clean up disease and achieve better results.

If you would like a confidential conversation (and visit if that helps) so that we can both collectively look at and discuss your current disease challenges then please call me at 0438 677 195 or rod.bourke@dpi.nsw.gov.au

There are many easy modifications that could be made to achieve a better result for you and I am happy to spend as much time as required to help you clean things up (your bees, not your shed and yard!).

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.

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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.

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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.

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.

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Junior Beekeeper Club

Are you an aspiring beekeeper, written a story or poem, taken a photo or painted a picture about bees or beekeeping? Then we want to hear from you! All you need to do is get permission from your parents to have it published & send it to info@nswaa.com.au

Participants will receive a certificate from NSW Apiarists' Association



*L-R Top: Izabella | Josh | Henry, Billie & Max
Bottom: Addizon | Mackenzie & Addizon | Mackenzie*

North Coast Branch

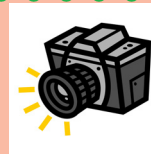
On the 7th of October, the North Coast Branch held a general meeting at Casino RSM. We did not have a guest speaker this time as time did not allow us to organise anybody. It was good just to have a general catch up with the 20 odd members that turned up for this meeting.

We have arranged with Tocal to do a chemical course early in February 2023. This will give all members a full understanding of chemical use when they have completed this course.

I would like to thank Geoff Manning for his effort and time in arranging our stand at Primex again this year (10-12 November). Geoff is always willing to organise with Primex and local Amateur clubs to make this possible. I would also like to thank all those as well that volunteered over the three days which this is held, without you all it is possible to do. A big **THANK YOU**.

Our next **MEETING** is on the **2nd DECEMBER 2022**, all are welcome and if you are in the area come along!

Steve Fuller
North Coast Branch President



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

Letter to the Editor

I am so proud of and glad that our Association headed by Steve is taking our battle to reinforce our industry's ability to defend itself from overseas incursions of pests and diseases finding their way onto Australian soils.

To all those beekeepers out there wondering how they can assist please lodge your Volunteer Resonse Form with DPI giving them your details and availability. It would be good if we beekeepers could all find a week to Fight the Mite!

My experience last week was excellent servicing all those responsible beekeepers who 100% supported our efforts and in some cases assisted our team with appropriate access to difficult or remote locations and on one site the owner provided us all with cold drinks when we finished his sites.

My teams which literally changed in composition every night meant that you worked with different people from various backgrounds every night.

The average day started at 300pm with each team provided with materials to carry out worksheet for that night including all PPE.

The AO/Authorised Officer would then contact each client to confirm their availability and advise est times for our daylight surveillance of sites to be serviced later that night.

The assigned beekeepers in the team would consult with AO in the presence of the client to determine condition of hive boxes (lids,boxes & bases) together with night time access routes.

Upon finishing this physical survey of all assigned sites AO determines order of execution and team settles down for a late afternoon feed with dessert (catering also for special needs) provided by DPI via Tocal.

After completing their meals beekeeper advises AO when

his team can commence at the first site on their list.

The beekeeper using an appropriate length of a sponge 'stick' approaches each hive in turn pushing in entrance bees and using hive tool inserts sponge 'stick' to close off each entrance. Any bees left free are treated with ethanol spray bottle once the entrance is secured. The beekeeper then advises that the hive(s) are ready for euthenisation and two other members of team attend with a petrol soaked microfibres cloth and a measured quantity of petrol. The beekeeper then 'cracks' open the lid with the cloth laid out on top of frames quickly followed by pouring remaining petrol around the edges of the cloth finally emptying onto cloth.

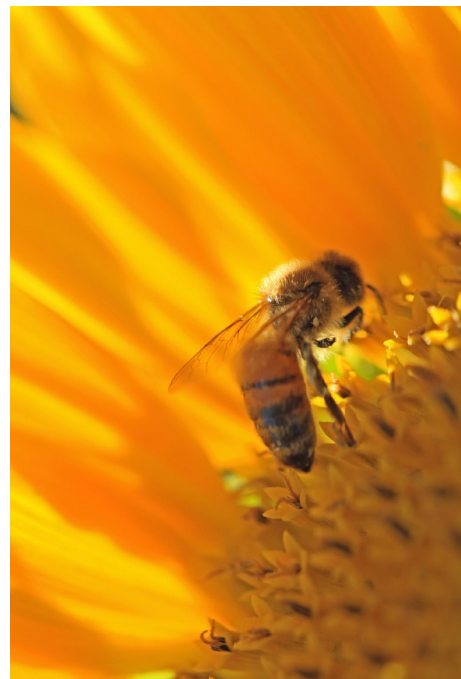
As hive temp is about 32-35 degrees C the petrol quickly evaporates and fills the void inside the hive boxes from bottom to top as petrol vapour is heavier than air it is this vapour which euthanises all the bees within two to three minutes - this is the reason why it is important to have the hive secure with no escape holes!) It should also be noted that when dealing with top bar or 'coffin' box hives after they have been soaked with petrol the team members have to ready to quickly wrap the 'tube' so creating a void for the petrol to be effective in euthanising the bees.

Once the bees are dead the hive bodies wrapped and taped with AO placing ident sticker and photographing hive bodies treated then we move onto next site.

I am glad to have supported this activity and met and spent some time with other people sharing in the camaraderie such events nurture!

Cheers
Mike Fogarty
Beekeeper

PS All our clients shared our love of bees and what they mean in our world and respected the fact that this process was necessary to secure our bee futures!!



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

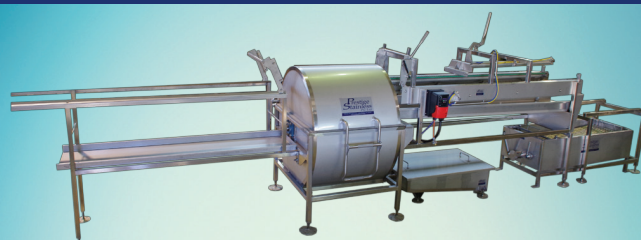
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AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL (AHBIC)

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Mailing address: PO Box 42 Jamison Centre Macquarie ACT 2614

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- WFI - Insurance for Rural Business, Business & Strata - 1300 934 934. WFI provides commission to NSW Apiarists' Association (NSWAA) to help member benefits. Please let your local Area Manager know you are a member to receive this benefit for the Association - Ms Jane Jones Mob: 0417 943 451 E: jane.jones@wfi.com.au
- Discounts available through Bee Hive Incentive Program
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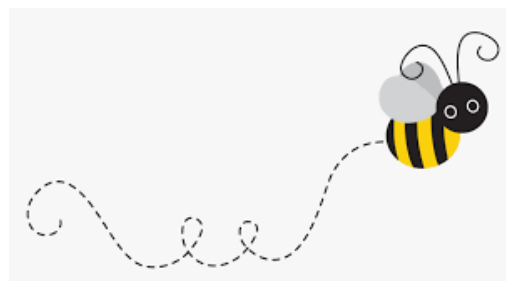
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