AUSTRALIA'S

HONEYBEE NEWS



"The Voice of the Beekeeper" www.nswaa.com.au

Volume 16 Number 3 May - June 2023



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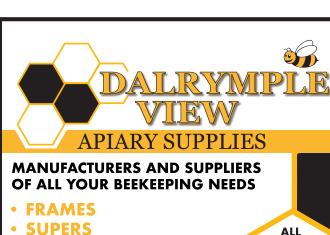
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NSW Apiarists' Association Inc. Executive Council



L-R: Sam Lockwood, Matthew Skinner - Vice President, Ray Hull, Neil Bingley - President, Zac Alcock, Insert: Candice Clifford - Secretary Treasurer

New Executive Council

At the NSW Apiarists' Association Inc. AGM held on 18 and 19 May 2023, new members of NSWAA Executive Council were elected by our members. We would like to introduce our new Executive Council for 2023 as follows:

Neil Bingley – President – neil.bingley@nswaa.com.au

Matthew Skinner – Vice President – matthew.skinner@nswaa.com.au

Ray Hull – Executive Councillor – ray.hull@nswaa.com.au

Zac Alcock – Executive Councillor – zac.alcock@nswaa.com.au

Sam Lockwood - Executive Councillor - sam.lockwood@nswaa.com.au

Executive Portfolios

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Biosecurity - Matthew Skinner
Conference - All
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AUSTRALIA'S HONEYBEE NEWS

The official Journal of the NSW Apiarists' Association (NSWAA)

www.nswaa.com.au

Email: honeybeenews@icloud.com

Published Bi-Monthly ISSN 1835 6621

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All Letters to the Editor to be submitted via email honeybeenews@icloud.com

Editor: Vikki Bingley PO Box 7425 Sutton NSW 2620

N.B New Ad setup \$50.00 alterations \$15.

Advertising Enquiries: Email: honeybeenews@icloud.com

Printer: Impress Printers 2/55 Townsville Street Fyshwick ACT 2609

Phone: (02) 6280 4238 Email: terry.impress@iinet.net.au

Copy Deadline for Next Issue of Australia's Honeybee News Friday 21 July 2023



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



What a busy few months it has been! I trust everyone had a great Easter.

Since our AGM and Conference was held last week, I would like to thank everybody who attended and enjoyed a great conference. Many people have come up to me or called me and were very impressed with this year's conference and speaker presentations. This I can not take all the credit for, and I must thank Elizabeth Frost for helping with contacts for speakers, Doug Somerville for giving valuable feed back when needed. Lastly a huge thank you to Candice for a massive effort in getting all the invites out and organising speakers to be here for us.

What an information overload this year's conference was! Yes, it was centred around Varroa Destructor but isn't that our biggest issue at the moment? Dr Samuel Ramsey was a highlight and gave us plenty to think about. Jesus! And I could continue the list on and still miss someone. The dinner's entertainment, Darren Carr, was a laugh, overall, everyone got something out of the conference.

Ray Hull is a true champion. Cutting his 40-year-old mullet off to raise funds for Beyond Blue was a highlight of the dinner. The hair cut does suit him though and if Dwayne had his way he may have shaved Ray in more areas, than he wanted! Thank you, Ray, for your commitment to helping Mental Health.

The Trade Show was a great success and a huge thank you goes to Therese Kershaw for her effort in organising and making sure it all came together. Thank you goes also to the partners and sponsors of the conference; you really are appreciated.

On to other things that happened over past few months.

The weather has been good to most of us, but Winter has really come. From snow around Bathurst to good sunny days in the north. Hopefully we will have a few good seasons coming up.

Honey has been scarce lately as well. There is good T-Tree flowering on the coast now but that is typical for this time of year. Red box is flowering in patches and a few other trees are out of season but are flowering. The Green Mallee is already flowering out West, but this is also out of season. Mugga is holding good bud.

Varroa incursion is now almost a full year since we have had to deal with it. How much is the cost to our industry, how much does the Apiary Industry have to repay, are the recreational beekeepers going to help repay this money after they were re-imbursed? These are just some of the questions I could not get answered by AHBIC or DPI. What about apiary sites in red zones, are these sites going

to be waivered for beekeepers who are able to use them? Hopefully the Apiary Industry is still strong after this is finished.

Honeyland was a success again this year. A big thank you to Debbie and Mal Porter for the effort they put in each year. I would like to thank those that donated honey for the Association to sell and those that volunteered as well.

I would like to thank the Executive Members that I have worked with over the past twelve months. I was not successful in being re-elected this time. I wish the new Executive Committee all the best for the future.

Sticky days ahead!

Steve Fuller Your Ex-President.



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Varroa continues to dominate activities. AHBIC hosted a successful webinar on 11th May to inform industry of the response progress. This was well received with nearly 500 participants on line and further 2,500 views of the recording. Big thank you to Bianca Giggins and the DPI public information team for pulling it together. April was Bee Pest Blitz month, an initiative of AHBIC and PHA to increase awareness of biosecurity and the importance of surveillance. Whilst rushed this year, the Bee Pest Blitz will continue into the future and will expand to include an update of the BeeAware website, videos and more awareness raising activities.

The federal budget was handed down in May with some unwelcomed surprises. In particular, the newly announced biosecurity protection levy. This decision blindsided all ag sectors with no discussion prior to the budget being handed down. The proposed additional levy (0.05 cents/kg honey) will contribute to the preborder surveillance activities, things like sniffer dogs, border force activities and the other activities carried out by the commonwealth. AHBIC is still chasing details, but it looks like this new levy will be implemented in July 2024.

Varroa Response

Low level detections continue to slowly increase the red zones. The first round of surveillance is nearly completed. As a result, it is anticipated the detections should slow as they move into the second round of surveillance.

Baiting appears to be working across the zones with early efficacy trials showing good results. The public perception of baiting has continued to create angst in the community with misinformation gaining traction among the ill-informed.

I travelled to Canberra to attend the CCEPP face to face workshop to work through the response plan. We heard from several presenters that took us on a deep dived on different aspects of the response. The CCEPP and NMG have the response plan V3 before them which if agreed to will carry the response through the 3 years to completion.

AgriFutures Levied Industries Forum

Jon Lockwood and I attended the forum in Sydney which was an opportunity to provide feedback to AgriFutures and also to learn the breadth of work AgriFutures is involved in. Tony Mahar, CEO, National Farmer Federation provided an update to the forum on their strategic focus and issues they are working on. Presenters from a coupe of key AgriFutures projects also presented. It was a valuable 2 days with many take away messages for us.

The Month Ahead

The conference season will see AHBIC representatives at each state conference over the coming months. I will be in attendance Plant Health Australia (PHA) AGM in Sydney with a number of associated meetings around the AGM. I will also be attending a workshop in Dubbo "Agriculture Sector Diesel Transition Forum".

We also have meetings with the Federal Department of Ag to discuss imported honey, non-prescribed goods export and skills training.



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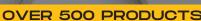
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NSW Apiarists' Association Inc 2023 AGM, Conference & Trade Exhibition 18 - 19 May 2023

Penrith Panthers Rugby Leagues Club, Penrith NSW

On Thursday, 18 and Friday, 19 May 2023 NSWAA held our AGM Conference and Trade Exhibition at Penrith Panthers Rugby Leagues Club. The event was well attended with over 280 people in attendance each day. The Conference featured presentations by 28 speakers, including international speakers Dr Samuel Ramsey and David Mendes. The Trade Exhibition sites sold out with 33 Exhibitors eager to attend to promote their businesses. We would like to thank our 2023 Partners and Exhibitors for their support and urge our members to support those who support us.

This year, the Keith McIlvride Award was presented to Wayne Hammond for his continuous contributions to NSWAA over the years, particularly after 40 years of assisting at Honeyland at the Royal Easter Show. Raelene Michie was also presented with an award for appreciation of her dedication to NSWAA. Congratulations to Wayne and Raelene, your efforts have certainly not gone unnoticed and we appreciate everything you have done.

We were fortunate enough to receive many donated items to give as lucky door prizes and also auction off at the Annual Conference Dinner on Friday night. Thank you to Lockwood Beekeeping Supplies, Frank Malfroy/Beeline Queens and Honey, Dalrymple View Apiary Supplies, Western Plains Branch, Whirrakee Woodware, Bunnings Trade, The Kershaw Family, Barbara Kershaw and Cathy Burridge for your kind donations. The auction raised \$9,560 to go back into NSWAA.

As most would know, Ray Hull has been raising money for Beyond Blue with a fundraiser he set up which resulted in the rights to shave his 40+ year old mullet being auctioned off also at the Annual Conference Dinner. The winning bid was a whopping \$6,000, with all funds going to Beyond Blue. Ray would like to extend his gratitude to everyone that has supported this cause and donated. So far, this fundraiser has raised \$12,350 for Beyond Blue. Well done, Ray.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank our wonderful volunteers who assisted at the registration desk, coordinated the Bee-Creative exhibit and the Honey Show and Apiary Related Products Competition, our conference wouldn't have been the great success it was without you.

Our 2024 AGM & Conference will be held in Wagga Wagga in May 2024. Details will be released closer to the date so keep an eye out to ensure you secure your tickets before they sell out.











Plant Profile

Plant Profile: spotted gum (Corymbia maculata)

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/BmT1kFkF0B

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.

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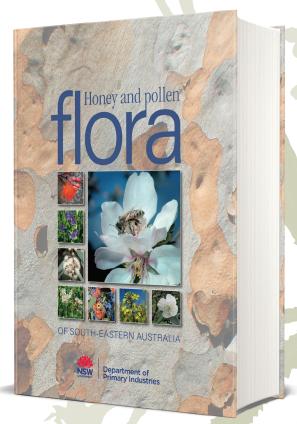
The result of over 30 years of research, this book distills both scientific knowledge and the opinions of hundreds of beekeepers into a reference work that will be the cornerstone of floral understanding in apiculture for years to come.

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.

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J22-050

Spotted gum

Corymbia maculata

A tree of significant importance, due to the flowering period on the South Coast of NSW (winter) and the high quality and abundant supplies of pollen. If honey bee colonies are tested for nosema disease during winter on spotted gum, it is not unusual for levels to be high. The high protein diet increases the longevity of the adult bees which counters the negative impacts of nosema. The combination of reliable nectar flows and high quality nutritious pollen ensures that beekeepers rate this tree highly.

As a forest tree, it is a desirable timber for a range of uses including construction and flooring. Generally, this is a quick growing tree.

Habit: A tall tree growing from 25-45 m in height.

Occurrence: It is a forest tree, its range extending from Tathra on the NSW South Coast to the North Coast into South-Eastern Qld, usually found in the ranges. Young saplings are prone to frost damage, which restricts its range on the South Coast. It also tends to be found on the poorer soil types. Two-thirds of the apiary sites accessed by beekeepers for this species in NSW are located on government owned lands with only one-third of the sites on private property.

Bark: The tree has a very typical motley appearance, which invariably relates to its common name of 'spotted gum'. Some trunks are relatively clear of spots, whereas other trunks are heavily spotted. The bark is shed periodically and the tree generally has a very attractive appearance due to the variations in the bark pattern.

Leaves: Adult leaves are lanceolate to narrow lanceolate 12–21 cm \times 1.2–3 cm, of dark green appearance, often with the underside slightly paler in colour.

Buds: Buds are initiated and carried for 18–24 months before flowering. A few months before it flowers, some trees may shed excess buds. This gives the impression that there may not be sufficient blossom available. This is rarely the case and generally the density of blossom is still satisfactory.

Flowers: In some locations where rainfall is not reliable, periods between flowerings may be up to 10 years. Most flowering occurs every 3–4 years.

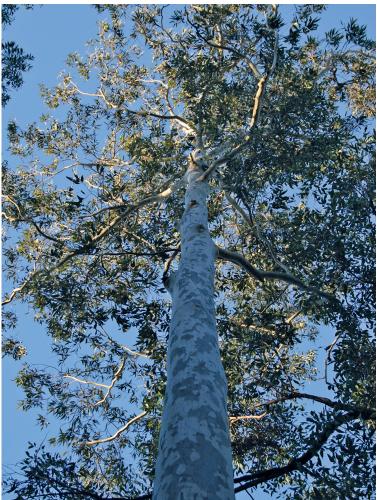




Flowering period												
Months	J	F	М	Α	М	J	J	Α	S	0	Ν	D
Response Level												







Flowering varies according to the location. Flowering on the North Coast of NSW at the end of summer, in the Hunter Valley in autumn, whereas on the South Coast flowering is not expected to start until May and could extend to September. Trees in the same forest tend to flower in the same sequence in subsequent years. Larger mature trees may flower over 3–5 weeks, whereas young trees, if they do bud and flower, usually flower over a shorter period of a few weeks.

Honey: Good, heavy nectar flows are experienced every second flowering. High yields are associated with warm days and cool frosty nights in the NSW South Coast forests. Prolonged poor weather may reduce the ability of the bee colony to properly ripen the honey. The honey is medium amber in colour and has a distinctive caramel-like flavour.

Mean honey yields of 35 kg per hive were reported in a 1999 study.

Pollen: The crude protein levels vary from 25%–33%. While many of the samples tested indicate a deficiency in the amino acid isoleucine, the high protein levels eliminate this fact as a nutritional issue. The fat content of the pollen varies from 1%–2%, which is also desirable. Bees that are raised on spotted gum pollen are long-lived.





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Facts About a Beekeeper Pat Roberts

When did you become a beekeeper?

I grew up helping my father, who was a beekeeper. So you could say I have been a beekeeper all my life. At age 4, I remember that Dad used to wheel a wheelbarrow while working on the bees & I sat in the barrow with a bee veil over my head. We were at Bermagui & I said to Dad, "I don't have to go to school anymore", & he said "Why?" so I said "Because I can tie my own shoelaces now".

I guess I became a beekeeper because Dad wanted us to help out, & I fancied life as a beekeeper.

Who inspired you?

My father was my inspiration through his example, teaching & showing.

Apiary home location?

Originally we worked out of Goulburn, then moved to Cootamundra. From there we moved back to Goulburn then to Batemans Bay before going to Temora. Temora was not too far from most of the bee sites where we had bees.

Favourite honey?

Iron Bark or Yellow Box because they both have a good flavour, & neither will go candied very quickly. Favourite trees are all the trees that yeild a lot of honey, especially Spotted Gum, Red Stringy & Mugga Ironbark.

Do you do pollination, if so what?

I did pollination for 20 years until I sold the bees. It was fairly easy work except for the truck driving.

Are you a queen breeder?

I was not a queen breeder. I found you need good eyesight & nimble fingers.

Do you pack your own Honey?

Yes, I packed my own honey. The brand was 'Austalian Rainforest Honey'.

We exported to England, Germany & Japan. In fact in 2001 we won an Australian Export Award.

Locally, we sold honey to Capilano, then later to Woolworths & finally to Aldi.

Before we sold the business, we had 20 on staff. Some were Filipino & some were Australian. One son, Steven, was the Field Manager & another son, Ian, looked after the extraction & packing & took responsibility for the depot.

Favourite honey recipe?

No favourite, just when making cakes, instead of sugar replace with honey.



What else do you do besides bees?

In the early days, I wanted to get some winter work, so I worked on the council in Goulburn driving trucks; & at Cootamundra I worked for the Water Board driving around looking for leaks. At Goulburn, I also worked for Supertex.

I have recently retired from full time work, but you never really fully retire from beekeeping, so I still keep an interest in beekeeping generally.

Family History

My grandfather kept bees as well as my father. Some of my brothers also keep bees, & most of my children are also involved in beekeeping. My daughter, Therese, married into a beekeeping family, & she is on the board of AHBIC. Now some of my grandchildren are also involved in beekeeping.

What roles are you involved in within the honey bee industry?

At one time I was on the board of B-Qual, an agency which seeks to accredit & adopt a quality assurance program for production from the Australian honey bee industry. I served in this role for four years.

Why are you passionate about beekeeping?

Well I really enjoyed the work, & it helped to pay the bills.

What are some challenges you think the next generation will face?

We all know about the increased use of pesticides which adversley affect bees, but there are diseases & viruses as well as threats from such pests as the varroa mite.

What is something you could teach people about? Maybe I could write a book

Favourite hobby?

I enjoy the Bathurst races. At one time I sponsored Dick Johnson's car. I also enjo cricket & watching West Tigers play NRL football.

What is the most useful bee equipment you own?

The hivwe tool without a doubt. Not only to get frames out but for scraping & levering jobs.

What is your favourite season?

Springtime. Lots of work to be done.

What makes you laugh?

Jokes. And also playing jokes on people. I feel that I generally have a happy disposition.

Favourite holiday destination?

I did like cruising but now I am content to look at tress & bee sites.

Favourite honey flow?

See favourite honey.

Best bee lesson?

Don't take truck up mountain roads in wet weather. I had two trucks come to grief this way.

Favourite quote?

"Bee yourself".

Where do you learn the most about bees?

Learnt most from Dad but also by trial & error & also conferences & seminars.

What honey flow do you avoid?

Most people say to avoid Grey Box, but the Grey Box gave me a good honey flow when I needed it. I would avoid the Coastal Bloodwwod. The flowers stand straight up & look like cauliflowers, but when there is moisture or rain, the flowers fill up with water & that slows down the bees.

Weirdest encounter?

A few years ago someone poisoned three truckloads of bees - 240 hives. The police never caught the culprit, who went to great lengths to cover his tracks. A few other beekeepers were also targeted.





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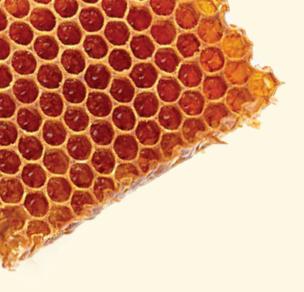
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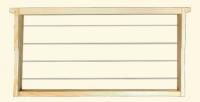


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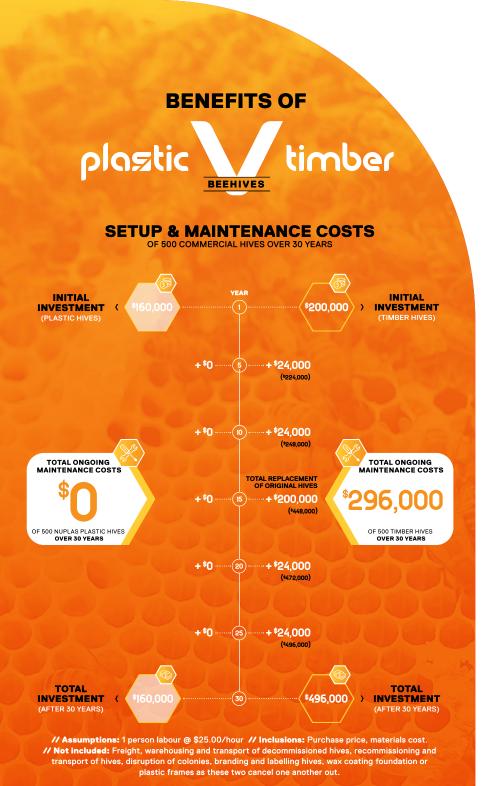
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Elizabeth Frost

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Goodacre Award and recipient Shirley Stephens (TAS)

The Goodacre Memorial Award is the peak national award bestowed upon individuals who have provided significant service to the Australian beekeeping industry. The Goodacre Award was created to perpetuate the memory of the late Bill Goodacre who provided 35 years of meritorious service to the beekeeping industry in his employment with the NSW Department of Agriculture.

Thirty-eight recipients, beekeepers, bee researchers and dogged industry advocates among them, have been awarded this recognition for their significant, meritorious service to the beekeeping industry from around the nation, starting in 1956 with Morris Morgan and most recently with Shirley Stephens at the 2023 Tasmanian Beekeeping Association (TBA) Conference. Shirley's nomination was organised and submitted to the Goodacre Award Committee by Stanislav Nenov and presented by TBA President Lindsay Bourke in Hobart on 27 May 2023.



Shirley Stephens with Lindsay Bourke after Goodacre Award presentation at the TBA Conference in Hobart 27 May 2023.

Speech awarding Shirley Stephens

The individual whose service to industry is being recognised has devoted her lifetime to the betterment of both the beekeeping industry and Australians' understanding and appreciation of it. Her strong voice and intelligence has been put to good use as past President and Committee member of the Tasmanian Beekeepers Association for many years. Her role in the Australian Honey Packers and Marketers Association brought her forte in product development, diversification and marketing to benefit industry at the national level.

Embodying the spirit of the Goodacre Award, this individual continues her relentless dedication to the production and promotion of Tasmania's finest and Australia's rarest delight, leatherwood honey. Her drive and passion put leatherwood honey on the world stage. Just as importantly, she ensured leatherwood was in supermarkets across Australia, available to everyday Australians.

Over the decades, Shirley and her family have kept meticulous hive production, health and management records. These records are globally significant in their detail and volume. Shirley and her family have also mentored and encouraged many beekeepers and educated thousands of Tasmanian school children at their traditional, yet innovative, purpose-built honey processing facility in Mole Creek. From schoolchildren, researchers, and beekeepers, every interaction has been grasped to engage and educate others about the beekeeping industry.

It is with great pleasure that the Goodacre Memorial award is now awarded to Shirley Stephens.



Goodacre Award recipient Shirley Stephens with Slavi Nenov, former employee and organiser of Shirley's nomination, in Hobart.

Nominations

Nominations can be submitted by individuals to the Goodacre Award secretary/treasurer by 1st of April every year. A nomination must have six supporters who are willing to provide evidence preferably in the form of a support letter or reference on the merits of the nomination. The person coordinating the nomination should compile a citation of the nominees' attributes clearly providing evidence of the reasons why the award is deserving. The submissions should be written with the

presumption that the committee making the decision does not have a complete prior knowledge of the nominees' achievements.

The nomination process is confidential and any persons other than the referees are not made aware of the proposed nomination. A committee of three comprising the President of the NSW Apiarists' Association, Chairman of AHBIC and the Chief Apiary Officer in NSW will make the decision. This panel is accountable to the Australian Beekeeping Industry and as such the citation associated with any award is required to clearly reflect the depth and commitment to the beekeeping industry of the nominated person or organisation. In other words, the award will not be granted to persons unless the committee is satisfied the nominee is of an extremely high calibre.

If you've read this and had a light bulb moment about someone whose service to the beekeeping industry fits this bill, I encourage you to organise six letters of support or references and send them to me as the Goodacre Award Secretary by 1st of April any year.

For those interested in the award constitution, please find it for your reference below:

Goodacre Memorial Award Constitution

- Name: The name shall be the Goodacre Memorial Award
- 2. Purpose: The purpose of this award is to preserve the memory of the late William Alexander Goodacre by way of recognition of persons who have rendered meritorious services to Australian apiculture. The late William A. Goodacre served the beekeepers of New South Wales as apiculture officer of the Department of Agriculture for thirty-five years.

3. Awards:

- a. An award shall be the conferring of an honour and may take the form of a permanent sign of the making of the award and, or a badge.
- b. Awards may be made from time to time to persons, firms, organisations who have rendered meritorious service to Australian apiculture.
- c. These services may be in any category relative to Australian beekeeping.
- d. In considering the making of awards, the beneficial impact of the person or services upon the industry should be a first consideration. After recognition of this factor, the contribution made in relation to production, marketing, economic value, research and invention, dissemination of information, organisation, long service, beneficial results for those engaged in the industry should be considered.
- e. Any person may make a nomination and submit a case supported by six persons (referees). The Administrative Committee may make such enquiries as it wishes and make its decision on the basis of its enquiries, the

- submission and the reports of the six persons (referees) who also sign the nomination.
- f. Nominations must be sent to the Secretary by 1st April for consideration by the administrators.
- g. Awards should be made at intervals of not more than four years and as frequently as annually.
- h. Awards may be made to persons, firm or organisations anywhere in the world, providing their efforts have shown beneficial impact upon the Australian Honey Industry.
- i. The names of those considered for the award, apart from those to whom an award is made, shall not, in any circumstances, be revealed.
- A person whilst currently in office as an Administrator may not be a recipient of the Award.
- k. Those making a nomination must provide any details required.

4. Administration:

- a. Administration of the Award shall be solely by an Administrative Committee, which shall consist of a representative of the New South Wales Apiarists' Association INC., a representative of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council and the principal or senior apicultural officer of the New South Wales Department of Agriculture or his/her nominee.
- b. The Administrators shall elect at the annual meeting which shall be during the first five months of the calendar year, a chairman, an honorary secretary and an honorary treasurer from amongst their own ranks and an auditor from elsewhere.
- c. Funds shall be invested; bank accounts operated and payments made as directed by the Administrative Committee and any two members of the Committee shall sign all cheques and financial documents.
- d. The financial year shall conclude on the 31st day of December in each calendar year.
- e. Thirty days' notice of any meeting shall be given by the secretary, the meeting date to be subject to the approval of the Chairman or failing this approval, by the other Administrator except that if there is unanimous agreement by the members of the Committee, the notice of a meeting may be less.
- 5. Amendment of Rules: These rules may be amended by agreement between the New South Wales Apiarists' Association INC., the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council and the Administrative Committee but any requirement not provided for in the rules may be the subject of a rule or rules by unanimous decision of the Committee but if such are to become permanent they shall become subject to approval by the bodies represented on the Administrative Committee.

6. Termination: This Award may only be dissolved by recommendation of the Administrative Committee which has the agreement of the two organisations represented on the Committee and the New South Wales Department of Agriculture and any residue funds at such time shall be distributed in supporting dissemination of useful technical information to the industry. (End).

The Goodacre Memorial Award Honour Roll was transferred from the previous Secretary/Treasurer Dr. Doug Somerville to the current Secretary/Treasurer Elizabeth Frost in 2020. The Honour Roll currently resides at Tocal Agricultural College and is displayed at beekeeping conferences where possible. Current administrators of the award, as dictated in the constitution are the NSWAA President, Australian Honey Bee Industry Council representative, and NSW DPI lead apiary officer/Technical Specialist.



Goodacre Memorial Award Honour Roll Part I.



Goodacre Memorial Award Honour Roll Part II.



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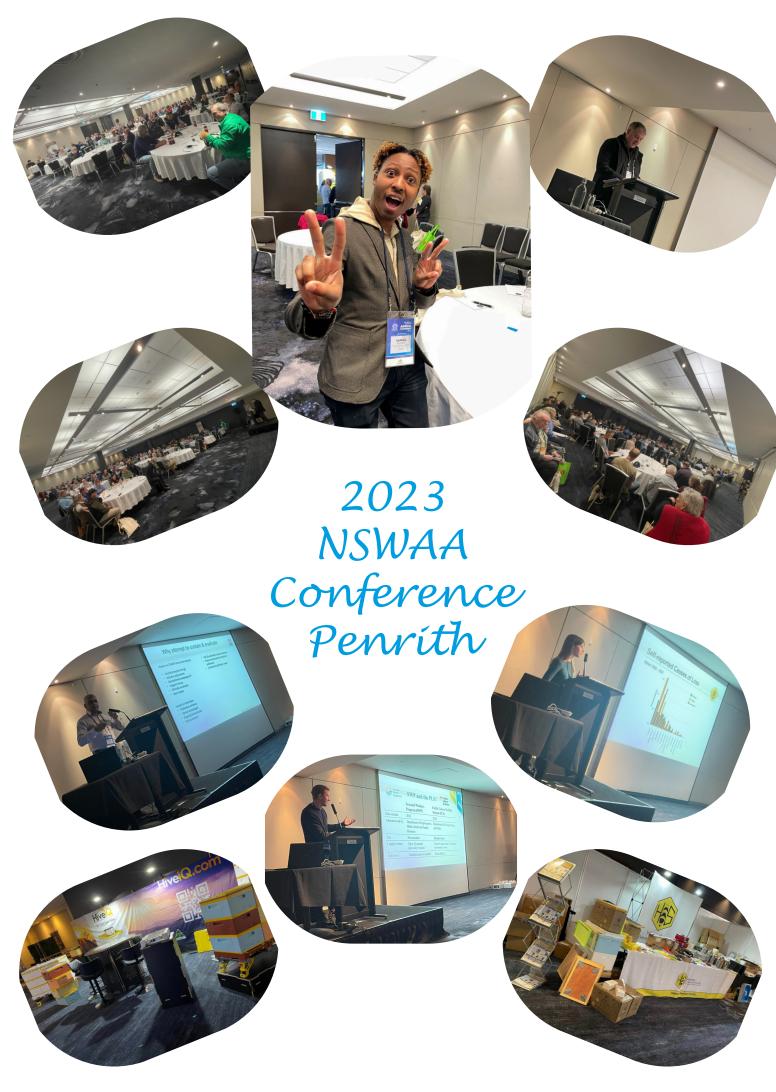
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Why we need to euthanise hives in the varroa red zones

PROGRAM

There is much debate, misinformation and emotion regarding the euthanasia of seemingly healthy bee colonies in varroa eradication (red) zones. My views are based on many long hours and very hard work being done by so many personnel working diligently on the DPI Varroa Response in NSW.

In some other countries around the world, varroa is relatively easy to control (anywhere with a cold winter). However, this would definitely NOT be the case in most of Australia, except possibly the tablelands in southern Australia. Therefore, all parties involved in the Varroa response (State/Territory and Federal Government departments, AHBIC, state beekeeping bodies, pollination reliant industries etc.) were unanimous in deciding that the first aim for this response should be eradication of the varroa mite. At the time of writing this article 11 months after the first detection, all parties still agreed that it is technically feasible to eradicate the mite.

In reality, the process needing to be undertaken is quite straightforward to achieve the desired result of eradicating the mite. Eradication requires removing the natural host of varroa mites from an accepted area surrounding an Infected Premise (IP) where the mite has been found, without any exceptions. Luckily for us in Australia, that host is the European Honeybee, which is a non-native insect that is extremely replaceable (there are literally thousands of different native pollinator insects) and which is distributed widely around Australia. The European honeybee is not at all endangered in Australia and we can easily replace the lost colonies. However, in some other parts of the world, varroa mites and their associated viruses cause ongoing major death rates amongst beehives. Also, the varroa response is only active in a tiny section of NSW so the number of beehives being impacted is comparatively small and losses to the eradication program are sustainable for the industry.

The current response identified the "red zone" as the high risk area for varroa eradication. When cleaning out varroa from a red zone, that process must always start with removal of the managed colonies. Generally, these colonies are easy to find if their owners are registered beekeepers. The quick removal of managed beehives greatly reduces the bee density and rapidly slows the natural spread of mites in that area.





Euthanasia team working under red lights and switching to white when wrapping hives. Not a nice job, but an extremely important one in this eradication response.

Many people have posted on social media or said "my hives were clean but DPI killed them anyway", and herein lies another point that should be accepted by the impacted beekeeper. It only takes one mite to remain alive and to start breeding up again. It is critically important that ALL bee colonies within an established red zone around any IP must be euthanised. Colonies may have been alcohol washed and appeared to be "clean" but these tests are only indicative. These tests do not necessarily mean that the hive didn't have any mites, it simply means that there were not enough mites present for an alcohol wash to find any of them.

An alcohol wash tests around 300 bees from a colony (and these should be nurse bees from the brood area, not field bees). New DPI video available at https://youtu.be/ITYEx5vvEsY Therefore, for an average hive of 30 000 bees that test is only sampling 1% of the hive population. I recently undertook some additional sampling on an Infested Premises with Mark Page (BBO Surveillance) and we found the following:

(1)-A hive that showed 3% mite infestation on brood bees (9 mites on 300 bees in an alcohol wash) had only 0.22% mite infestation on field bees (1 mite found on 450 bees) which is a density of around 13 times less.

(2)-A strong colony had no mites found in a large alcohol wash of 500 bees, but had 8 mites drop on a sticky mat after 5 days of miticide treatment.

The claim that your hives are clean and free of mites is absolutely not enough to warrant their "saving" if they reside in a red zone. These apparently "varroa free" colonies remain a biosecurity risk and like every other beehive within the red zone, these colonies definitely need to be euthanised. All mites and their host bees need to be removed from an area to achieve eradication. So, it is vitally imperative that ALL bee colonies be euthanised and NONE are allowed to remain alive. More importantly, these colonies must not be moved elsewhere.





This beekeeper lost her entire business of over 150 hives, but she fully understood the great importance of eradication as the first approach.

A classic example of a similar approach is with Foot and Mouth disease in livestock in the UK. In that example, a seemingly severe approach needed to be taken and all livestock (healthy or diseased) culled and burned. Subsequently, the industry rebounded quickly and today enjoys freedom of this costly and debilitating disease.

The big picture is that all parties concerned would prefer that *Varroa destructor* is eradicated from Australia, and the reason for that is so simple. If varroa were to become established in Australia, then the following would occur.

- (1) -The mites would spread and start impacting most bee colonies
- (2) Varroa mites will feed on bee pupae and adults. This feeding is an additional stress to the colony and

- will cause a build-up of immunocompromised bees with physical and mental defects. There will also be spread of bacterial and viral illnesses (think of varroa being similar to mosquitoes as a vector of disease).
- (3)-This combined effect of maladies will lead to higher impacts from small hive beetle (meaning more slime-outs), brood diseases like chalkbrood and European foulbrood, and adult bee diseases like Nosema. This will further impact the performance of bee colonies (meaning less bees in a colony), reducing honey production and pollination performance. The final result will be a far higher rate of sick and dead bee colonies for the owner.
- (4) -The amount of time spent managing each bee colony will increase and the number of hives each beekeeper can manage will go down (or more staff required). At the same time, the honey production of each hive will also likely drop.
- (5) -The economics of beekeeping will change. There will be far more costs associated with managing each beehive and a need to pass on those costs to the farms that are pollinated or in the honey produced. Then, those costs will be passed on to the end consumer and will be seen as higher prices in the supermarket for EVERY food item that is reliant on honeybees for pollination. Consumers may replace honey in their diets with other forms of sweetener.
- (6) -If Varroa becomes established in Australia, it is estimated that around 30% of commercial beekeepers will leave the industry, mostly for economic reasons or the need to undertake additional hive management on a new pest.
- (7) -Many recreational beekeepers would also likely exit. Those that stay may not upgrade their varroa management education and as a result experience high hive losses and breed up many mites that will then spread to other hives nearby (along with American foulbrood and small hive beetle). Any commercial beekeepers that were on this same management path will be increasingly challenged and potentially become part of the 30%.
- (8)-At some point during this entire process, the major viruses that are associated with varroa mite (including Deformed Wing and Acute Bee Paralysis Virus) will also arrive into the country. They will likely arrive either through legal or illegal imports of queen bees or drone semen to use in genetic breeding activities etc.
- (9) -Once the viruses arrive, then the initial "varroa honeymoon period" is over. Catastrophic bee colony losses would be experienced whilst these viruses spread through the environment, and we would be living the varroa nightmare.
- (10) -Once viruses are part of the varroa situation, then it becomes critically important to manage mite numbers and keep them low, otherwise the viruses kill your hive (or small hive beetle slimes it). Learning to manage virus loads in hives is another level again above learning to

manage varroa. Is this an additional level of management you want for your economic survival?



It only takes ONE female mite to restart the entire problem, so every single one needs to be dealt with.

I have listened to bee keepers constantly throughout the varroa response since 22 June 2022. I have heard people saying "why don't we just manage it like they do overseas". This comment just blindsides me that people are so poorly informed on the potential impacts of varroa and have such a poor understanding about the reality of its "management". In many countries, there is illegal use of various unlicensed (for use in beehives) chemicals that results in many residues in both the honey and wax that comes out of the hives. Additionally, some of these chemicals adversely affect the bee's health too. Some of these chemicals are even smuggled in as they cannot be legally obtained within that country.

Some other chemicals used to fight varroa are harmful to humans and can cause skin burns and respiratory impacts. Due to their cost per treatment, some beekeepers decide to reduce the dose per hive and subsequently they do not effectively kill mites and the mites may even become resistant to the product. Other chemicals may kill queens or even the entire colony if they are not used within the right temperature ranges. These limitations mean that much of Australia could not use these chemical treatments for large periods of the year.

Managing mites is not just about putting a miticide strip in for 6 weeks and thinking that it is "mission accomplished" for the season! For much of Australia, the bees do not get a "brood break", as the queen is laying eggs and the bees are raising brood all year round. This means that varroa mites become very hard to control, as mites continue to breed all year round too. Whenever there is brood, then varroa are in a "reproductive" phase, with roughly 60-70% of the mites sitting under capped brood. Varroa mites feed on the bee pupae while laying their eggs to produce more mites. Most varroa treatments do not harm mites that are under capped brood, meaning that only the exposed mites on adult bees are impacted with most treatments.

In many major beekeeping regions such as the Northern parts of United States, China, Canada, Argentina and Europe, there is a definite and pronounced winter (often sub-zero temperatures and much snow). These extreme temperatures result in hives completely stopping brood production and overwintering in a broodless cluster. At such times, 100% of the varroa mites within a colony are vulnerable, as they are all phoretic (ectoparasites living externally and feeding on adult bees). Therefore, mites are fully exposed to miticides or other treatments added to the hive. This makes managing varroa easier.

From personal experience, I know that even in Tasmania (the most southerly part of Australia and having the longest and most miserable winter in the country) beekeepers struggle to get all colonies becoming broodless over the winter period (especially with Italian queens). This makes the task of reducing the mite numbers a major challenge because if you don't have low mite numbers by autumn or in winter, then the mites will outcompete your bees in spring.

In some other parts of the world, it is relatively straightforward to manage varroa mites but that would not be the case in Australia. This is because we have such a diverse range of climates and the commercial sector moves vast distances between areas to pollinate or chase floral resources. If various varroa treatments need to be considered, then this will complicate and disrupt movements of beehives onto their next site. Unfortunately, many products cannot be used when a honey flow is on (as it contaminates the honey), or will kill brood if the hive has any. Often, commercial beekeepers are planning their moves around the range of short, medium and long budding eucalypts and seasonally available or weather event stimulated ground flora. This is to either build up bees on pollen or wear out bees on honey production, or if they are lucky have both good pollen and honey happening at once.

If your hives experience high mite numbers and need to be treated then that throws a big spanner in the works. This situation may even require that hives be pulled off a heavy honey flow, otherwise risk losing colonies of bee's altogether. If you leave them untreated to get another few boxes of honey then the increasing mite numbers can cause them to collapse.

At the end of the day, all Australian beekeepers would be far better off by not having to deal with varroa, and EVERYBODY would pay less for bee reliant foods at the supermarket. We recognise that a small percentage of Australian beekeepers need to make the ultimate sacrifice and have their hives euthanised. These sacrifices will be for the benefit of the ENTIRE Australian Bee industry, and safeguard our industry for the future.



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.

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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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.

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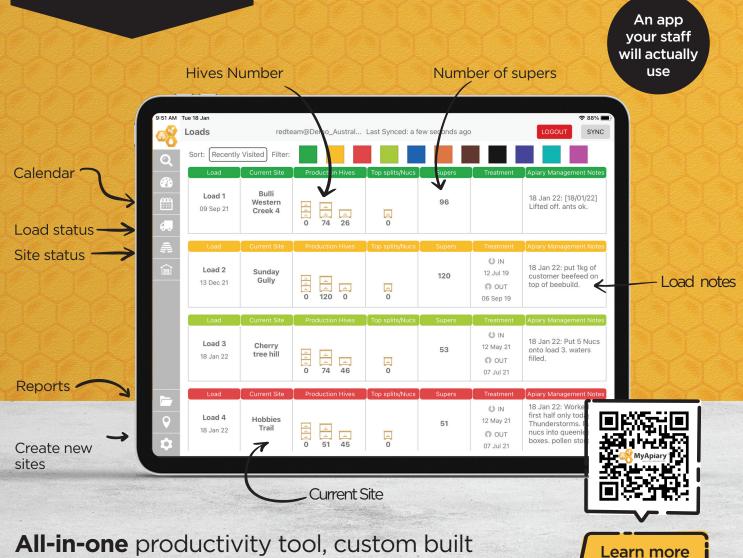
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Branch News

North Coast Branch

On the 24^{th of} March, the North Coast Branch held another meeting at Casino RSM club. This meeting was well attended by about 30 members and interested beekeepers.

Firstly, I would like to pay my respects to a member who passed on the 29^{th of} April. Len Bryant was a true gentleman and always helpful when asked. Len will be missed but never forgotten.

We also held our AGM on this night and office bearers are as follows;

President Steve Fuller
Vice President Troy McWhirter
Treasurer Tony Hannah
Secretary Col Maloney

This meeting we did not have a guest speaker as we have had a full-on month with Easter coming up and getting ready for Primex. Primex was another hit with the public and as usual we get bombarded with questions about flow hives, unregistered hives and wanting to keep bees for the first time. Expecting to be hammered over the Varroa incursion and the DPI response never materialised, meaning that people are unaware or not listening to the news about the situation, this could be concerning.

I would like to thank Geoff Manning for his time that he devotes to making sure that we get a spot at Primex and that the gazebo is set up right. Thanks also goes to the volunteers that man this booth over the three days that Primex is on.

May the sun keep shining and the bees keep making honey!

Until next time. Steve Fuller North Coast Branch President

Hair sure does grow back fast when you're a beekeeper!







Cover Photos

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

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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 Saturday 22nd 10:30am Orange area

July Saturday 22nd 10:30am Bathurst area

October Saturday 21st 10:30am Orange area

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

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Hunter Valley	Col Wilson	02 4930 4950	Contact President		h
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Riverina	Stephen Targett	0428 649 321	Matthew Skinner	0427 651 360	ri
Southern Tablelands	Zac Alcock	0422 750 629	Garth McClay	0400 989 115	so
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- Support beekeepers in all regions through 9 NSWAA branches
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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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The Association Membership year runs from: 1 March to 28 February

Note: Rates from 1 March 2017

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