

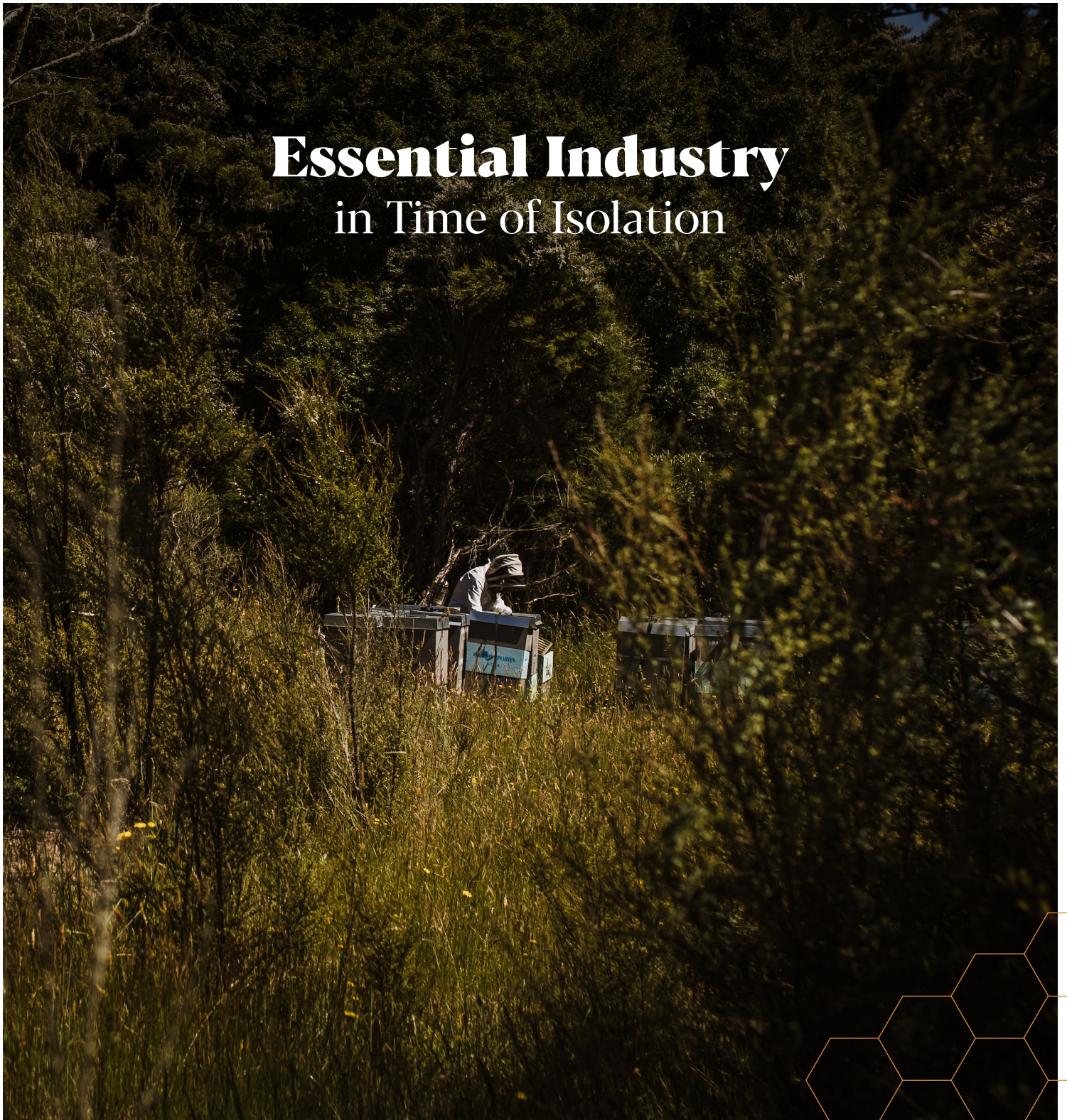
ISSUE 09, APRIL 2020

# APIARIST'S ADVOCATE



News, Views & Promotions - for Beekeepers - by Beekeepers

## Essential Industry in Time of Isolation





# Essential Industry Feels Wide-Ranging Effects of Virus



National beekeeping lobby groups Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ) and New Zealand Beekeeping Incorporated (NZBI) sprang into action on March 22, when Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced that New Zealand was to go into a minimum four weeks of “lockdown” in two days’ time. Covid-19 and New Zealand’s reaction to the global pandemic continues to affect beekeepers, with the situation changing day-to-day, the industry bodies report.

**Apiculture has been deemed an “essential service” by the government, allowing beekeepers to tend to their hives, despite much of the country being placed in lockdown. There was no guarantee that beekeepers would join other primary industries in being allowed to operate though, with ApiNZ and NZBI fighting for that right.**

The day following the Prime Minister’s announcement, and a day before the national lockdown was to take effect, a conference call was held between representatives from ApiNZ and NZBI, as well as Minister for Agriculture Damian O’Connor and Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) director general Ray Smith to flesh out if and how beekeepers could operate during the lockdown.

Ensuring New Zealand had strong and abundant beehives for spring pollination made up the backbone of the argument for continued tending of hives, with animal welfare issues and honey collection also viewed as important.

“We let them know that beekeeping is an essential service, otherwise we will lose beehives and lose the ability to carry out pollination in spring time,” says Jane Lorimer, NZBI president.

“They needed a bit of convincing but between ourselves and ApiNZ, who were on the call, they have seen sense.”

ApiNZ chief executive Karin Kos, who is now carrying out her full-time role from home while three other part-time staff from the Wellington office do the same, was kept very busy in the 48 hours leading into lockdown, with the March 23 conference call paramount.

“MPI got it, but it was a matter of making sure the government did too,” Kos says.

“Clearly the government is putting safety first, and that is the right thing, but we need to be able to operate over that time too.

“The general messages to all primary sectors was, ‘you guys have been given the right to operate at this time, but you need to follow the rules and we don’t want to see Covid-19 coming out of your industry’. That was a strong enough message to know we all need to take it seriously.”

Beekeepers were initially asked to apply for permission to operate their business via MPI’s website by March 27, but up-to-date information on Covid-19 and the apiculture industry’s response can be found on a dedicated “Covid-19” page on ApiNZ’s website, [www.apinz.org.nz/covid-19](http://www.apinz.org.nz/covid-19).

Respecting social distancing and hygiene protocols is essential to continued operation through the lockdown, with businesses employing staff facing stricter requirements. Hobbyists can tend to hives at home and are allowed to work hives located away from their home properties, but visits to these should be limited to those that are essential to hive health.

Beekeepers expressed a variety of concerns should they not have been able to work their hives through the autumn, with many needing to feed and apply varroa treatments, others still with honey to take off and have extracted, and package bees to send to Canada coming due.

Lorimer has her own Waikato beekeeping business, with several staff members and package bee orders to fill. She has had to



Jane Lorimer, New Zealand Beekeeping Incorporated president.

change some operating practices and some staff have decided not to come to work, but they are making the changes required and operating as advised, she says.

The NZBI president says commercial beekeepers have been affected by Covid-19 influences in a variety of ways, with some struggling to get packaging materials for their honey and entire honey packing plants shutting their doors. Some of the package bee exporters she supplies are having difficulties securing flights to Canada.

"Even though the Canadians want the bees, those organising flights are struggling to get them. It is hugely stressful for the guys who have spent the time and money and done the paperwork to get clearance to send bees to Canada and they are now at a point where they stand to lose, possibly, millions of dollars," Lorimer says.

Honey processors, as an essential part of the food supply chain, have been allowed to operate, but they too must meet strict protocols.

"Processors usually have good safety practices in place anyway, but they are finding the two-metre rule challenging. Individual companies are working through what it means for them," Kos says.

"There is strong demand for honey and that is another good reason we need to keep operating and keep supplying people, both domestically and internationally"

*Karin Kos, Apiculture  
New Zealand chief  
executive.*



It was a hectic few days for Kos and the ApiNZ office leading in to the shutdown, and she has now set up an operations base from her Wellington home – balancing advocating for beekeepers with family life and a "household of young adults". Meanwhile, in the Waikato Lorimer has the concerns of her own business as well as fellow beekeepers on her plate.

Both leaders say their industry bodies are there for beekeepers at all times, and especially times of high need such as now. Beekeepers are encouraged to get in contact with either industry body for advice or assistance as required.

Apiarists will need to continue safe operating practices to limit the spread of Covid-19 for, at least, the duration of the lockdown if they want their industry to maintain its "essential status", but both ApiNZ and NZBI are confident that can happen.

"People adapt when they have to," Kos says, adding, "Things go on, we just do it differently." 🐝

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# Cancelled Conference Organisers Explore Work-Arounds



The biggest beekeeping event of the year has been cancelled amid Covid-19 disruptions, but organisers say they look forward to hosting the Apiculture New Zealand National Conference and Trade Exhibition again in 2021.

The national conference, which regularly brings around 1000 people from the apiculture industry together, was scheduled to be held in Rotorua from June 25-27. However, on March 19, three days before a nationwide lockdown was announced, interested parties were informed that the conference would not go ahead.

At the time it was a difficult call to make, but hindsight confirms it as prudent, says Apiculture New Zealand chief executive Karin Kos.

"It was the right decision to make, especially when you look at how things have developed, but it was a tough decision.

"Our industry does not get together very often and conference is an incredibly valuable place to get that social interaction as much as the information. Personally I find it disappointing and not something we wanted to happen, but we had international speakers saying they couldn't travel and suppliers and sponsors saying they were not sure they could attend," Kos says.

The next national conference is now planned for June 24-26 2021, again in Rotorua, with some of the 2020 bookings able to be transferred over. In 2022 the conference is scheduled to be held in Christchurch.

Those who had registered to attend this year's event can either transfer their registration to the 2021 conference or cancel and receive a full refund. Anyone who booked accommodation in Rotorua through the registration process is also eligible for a refund, while those who have booked their own accommodation and/or travel arrangements are advised to get in contact with the providers and seek a refund or credit.

Kos says her office is working through methods to bring certain aspects of the conference to beekeepers remotely. There are things that are unlikely to be sufficiently replicated in this manner though, such as the numerous competitions, including the honey awards.

"Part of the whole conference is getting your industry in a room and congratulating them with the appropriate audience, so I would prefer to wait until next year, but we are still working through that," Kos says.

Now the decision has been made to cancel the 2020 gathering, attention moves to the work-arounds and the 2021 event.

"I am focused on, what can we do now? We need to keep in touch with people now and we are looking into different ways of doing that," Kos says.

"Conference will happen next year in Rotorua and that will be a great gathering because we will be desperate for one by then." 🐝

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# Uncertainty Plagues Propolis Market



While many Kiwi beekeepers are struggling to find a market for their honey, some have seen another revenue stream taken off the table. A disconnect between consumer demand and production levels of New Zealand propolis has meant reduced buying interest from the country's main propolis exporters in recent months, alongside the closure of a specialised extraction facility. Some of the would-be buyers explain the factors influencing the market.

**Comvita has put a "temporary halt" on receipt of raw propolis and closed an extraction plant; an Arataki buy-up last season has left them well stocked; Manuka Health is continually seeking to evenly-match consumer demand with supply, and Propolis NZ are advising beekeepers to contact them direct.**

In total, those factors have left some beekeepers still seeking a buyer for their propolis.

However, buyers say the market situation is regularly assessed and changeable.

"It could change, absolutely, but we would have to have significantly increased sales before we can justify going out and buying more product," Arataki Honey director Russell Berry says of his company's demand for propolis.

"We bought a lot of stock last winter, about three times more than normal. That injected money into the beekeeping industry. A lot of beekeepers survived because we bought their propolis. We have to make some decent-sized sales to get rid of some of that propolis before we can start buying again."

Arataki has sourced propolis from over 500 beekeepers, based across New Zealand, in past seasons. Storage, extraction and processing take place at their Rotorua base.

Berry cites increased testing demands from several countries as throwing up barriers to markets over the past year, with some tests challenging and time-consuming to complete.

Comvita have also put a hold on propolis purchases, having been a significant buyer and exporter in past seasons. An email to suppliers in February stated

Comvita were undertaking a review which would take "several months", but that they remain "committed to the propolis category".

Also in February, Comvita announced their Nelson extraction facility would be closed by the end of March, citing a need for further investment to bring it up to standard.

Conversely, Manuka Health general manager apiculture Dave Campbell says they still may accept propolis from regular suppliers.



*Full propolis mats are backing up in some beekeeper's sheds.*

"From our perspective we haven't really changed the amount of propolis we are taking from suppliers or for primary processing in the last 18 months. We have been working with our suppliers and there hasn't really been any change in the last five years," Campbell says.

Campbell says the industry faces a challenge common to most processors of primary produce – that of matching processing capacity and demand to production.

"We can only buy what we have demand to sell. As our operations and sales team say they have demand, then we up our supply to them. It doesn't make sense to buy ever drop of honey and gram of propolis we are presented with from beekeepers. Instead we look to the future and try to match supply with demand," he says.

The global Covid-19 pandemic is increasing demand for propolis, due to its immune support.

Berry, and Manuka Health's general manager of marketing, research and development Kate Kember, say that could benefit the New Zealand producer.

However, Kember says there is more work that needs to be done to grow high-end markets for New Zealand propolis.

"Globally propolis is a large category and there is some growth in the market, but scale-wise it is predominately led by low-grade propolis which does not come from New Zealand. If you look on the shelves or online much of the propolis you see in capsule form

will be low-grade, using off-shore propolis ingredients," Kember says.

That off-shore propolis does not have the same bio-activity as Manuka Health's products, the majority of which include New Zealand propolis. China, Japan and south-east Asian countries often understand the bio-activity of New Zealand propolis better than other consumers, and there is growth potential there, Kember says.

"It is a similar story to our non-MGO floral honeys. We have a superior product in New Zealand, but it comes with a price-point which often makes it more expensive than competitors' products. That can limit demand.

"Our focus is to grow the market and build the proposition around high-grade, high-quality, New Zealand propolis," she adds.

Campbell says that while Manuka Health seek to educate and grow those international markets, back home honey and propolis producers need to more effectively match supply with demand.

"As producers we – because I am a producer too – need to look ahead and make sure we have a processor or packer in mind and talk to them so that we can forecast and make sure we have an outlet for our product. It is not great business for us to over-produce, then cry foul if someone is not there the day we want to sell it," the Manuka Health general manager says, adding, "It is about maturing as an industry and how we are behaving with each other in the supply chain." 🐝

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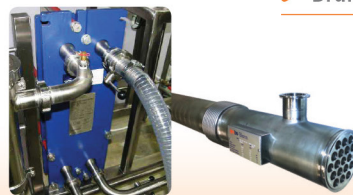


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# Covid-19 Not Likely to Sweeten Honey Prices



Reports of increased manuka honey sales into Asia (as touched-on in the March *Apiarist's Advocate*) might have piqued Kiwi beekeepers' interests and given renewed hope for the honey industry. However, two major honey traders warn that any optimism around a Covid-19 related bump in sales should be cautiously held.

**The days prior to New Zealand's minimum four-week lockdown saw major domestic supplier Airborne Honey busy filling orders as supermarkets sought to restock, while some exporters reported an increase in high-activity manuka honey sales internationally.**

Neither occurrences are likely to have a significant impact on the price offered to Kiwi beekeepers though, especially those looking to sell non-manuka honeys, warns Airborne Honey managing director Peter Bray and 100% Pure New Zealand Honey chief executive Sean Goodwin, both spoken to on the eve of New Zealand's Covid-19 lockdown.

"In the medium to long term I am positive around honey generally," Goodwin says.

"In the short term, yes it [Covid-19] might move some manuka honey, but it is not doing anything for the non-manuka market."

There has been some clear buying patterns emerge following the Covid-19 outbreak, Goodwin says.

"It is really affecting the mid to higher range manuka. There is no real increased interest in multifloral manuka, the lower-end, or non-manuka honeys. Everyone is looking for the [UMF] 15+ type things."

That aligns with an announcement from Comvita, on March 23, that they have put capital-raising plans on hold following an increase in demand for many of their wellness products, including manuka honey, over the previous month. Goodwin, who has experience working in fast-moving consumable goods, says producers should not rush to conclusions around how markets will react going forward.

"I am trying to keep a lid on things because I

have seen this in other industries. Yes, there is a bump in interest right now, particularly in Asian markets. There have been a few articles and some television shows where so-called experts have said manuka honey is a good thing. Those markets are predisposed to increased interest, but how long that goes on for remains to be seen."

There is a risk that following an initial surge, wholesalers will now be well stocked for a number of months and there could be a



Sean Goodwin,  
100% Pure New  
Zealand Honey  
chief executive.



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*Peter Bray,  
Airborne Honey  
managing director.*

drop in demand as the northern hemisphere moves into summer. Longer term, if the effects of Covid-19 are still being widely felt in six months' time, then manuka honey sales could again be strong as major international markets enter winter, Goodwin says.

The 100% Pure NZ Honey general manager and Apiculture New Zealand board member says marketers should be cautious about promoting honey in the fight against a deadly virus.

"This has potential to put renewed interest on food products, natural foods, honey generally and perhaps manuka more specifically. But, some of that we have to be a little bit cautious about and continue as normal."

In New Zealand supermarket sales of honey have increased. That is not likely to be because of perceived health benefits, but more through motivation to "stock the larder", Bray says.

Airborne Honey is a major supplier to the domestic market, and saw a surge in demand prior to lockdown. Predicting how domestic sales will be affected going forward is difficult though.

"At some point they are not going to need to stock much more and the sales will go back to normal," Bray suggests.

"Every minute there is new information and something is changing. We haven't been through this before and who would have predicted this two months ago. In two months' time, what is your prediction? Good luck with that."

Airborne Honey has not seen the same impact on international sales as what Comvita has reported, and there are a lot of unknowns internationally, such as the risk of border closures, trade disruptions and concerns around the effectiveness of supply chains in many countries, Bray says.

The bigger issues for New Zealand honey producers is the large volume of non-manuka, multifloral honey in the market and both Bray and Goodwin say Covid-19 will be no silver bullet for selling those stocks, either internationally or domestically.

"To put our honeys out there to existing markets we don't really need a Covid-19 bump," Goodwin says.

"I think the longer term game is to promote our strong bio-security, our good beekeeping practices and the health of our bees. We just need to get our honeys on the global stage at a fair price." 🐝

## Honey Backlog Unmoving

An increase in domestic sales is only a small chip in the "plug" of honey stored around New Zealand and export figures show little evidence of the backlog being moved offshore either, warns Peter Bray.

A drop in the shelf price has seen Kiwis buying more honey over the last six months, but the increase in sales is minimal and in the range of hundreds of tonnes, the Airborne Honey managing director says.

With over 40,000 tonnes of non-manuka honey, at best estimate, held in stock around the country international markets must be sought, but Bray says this isn't happening fast enough.

"The last export stats for January, and for the whole of last year, show we are still selling in excess of 85 percent of our honey as manuka. We are not selling the honeys we need to, in bulk, to get this 45,000 tonne plug of honey out the door."

Working against that goal is an objection, from international buyers, to the price of New Zealand honey. Adding to the issue, much of the honey is polyfloral, and therefore gathered from a variety of different floral sources. This makes it difficult to maintain a consistent product to offer buyers, Bray says.

"There is a price objection out there to our polyfloral honey and the honey price is low in the world market at the moment."

Nations with a reputation for honey adulteration have honey priced at around \$2/kg, while smaller amounts of New Zealand honey has been sold at \$4 to \$5/kg. Bray says the price for the rest of the polyflorals and non-manukas is therefore somewhere between \$2 and \$4.

Domestically Airborne are buying honey from beekeepers, to serve their primary markets in North America and Asia as well as New Zealand, which they are growing.

"In a nationwide sense we are buying more and more honey because sales are increasing, simply because we are now more competitive. We have been on the back foot for the last 10 years as prices have risen against world markets. Our sales into our export markets have been hanging on by our fingertips, now we are back to normal. In all of those markets we have developed, we are able to ramp up volumes."

Sometimes the price available is not to the New Zealand beekeeper's liking, but Airborne, like any packer, are only one part of a larger market dynamic, Bray says.

"I really feel for the producers at the moment, but our job is to reflect the market signals to them. We have to make a profit to stay in business and, ultimately, without us there as a conduit to the market, they would be in a worse position.

"The returns are as good as any out there."



# No Going Back



Despite being from a long line of beekeepers, James Schmidt found there was plenty to learn in the hives when he arrived in Northland seven years ago. The South African emigrated as a 23 year-old and quickly set about learning the Kiwi way of keeping bees, going from aggressive African strains to placid European varieties, fynbos shrub to manuka, a dying industry to the world leader — and somewhere he plans to stay.

**Imagine opening a hive and 70 percent of the bees rearing out to attack you. That is the reality of beekeeping in South Africa, where the Cape honey bee (*apis mellifera capensis*) and African bee (*apis mellifera scutellata*), a close relative of the killer bee, prevail.**

"Day-to-day beekeeping in South Africa is very different to New Zealand because you are not able to do as much brood checking over there due to the high aggression levels of the bees," Schmidt says.

"It doesn't bother the beekeepers too much. Yes it is annoying to get stung, but you dress really well for it. However, when you open up the brood chamber 70 percent of the bees come up to sting you and so every time you go in you kill a lot of bees, just through them stinging your gloves."

The calmer bees and thus more intensive style of beekeeping in New Zealand was just one of many lessons which Schmidt has had to learn since landing on our shores in 2013. He has adapted well though, going from an assistant beekeeper with Comvita based in Kerikeri to field manager for Manuka Mountain and now a new role in 2020, Northland apiary manager for Manuka Health.

Political instability in South Africa saw him follow his brother, David Schmidt who heads Comvita's queen rearing operation, to New Zealand, leaving behind his own beekeeping business in a country his great-grandfather, grandfather and father had all kept bees.

"I had to relearn a lot of beekeeping things when I came to New Zealand because it was so different," Schmidt says.

"When I first came over I called it babysitting. There is a lot more work involved in caring for the bees, especially making sure



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James Schmidt, happy in the hives without a veil, a practice he would have been unable to undertake in his native South Africa.

you are on top of your disease checks and varroa mite. That was interesting for me, because we just don't have issues like that in SA. The South African bees are just so hygienic. They basically naturally coexist, even with small hive beetle."

Schmidt, from the southern Cape of South Africa, kept Cape bees (*Apis mellifera capensis*) and says there is a natural buffer zone between that strain and the African bee (*Apis mellifera scutellata*) which is kept in the north of the country. However, when beekeepers from the north bring their bees south for pollination they can often suffer a clever trick of the local bees.

"The Cape bees have a high tendency to swarm in the spring and their worker bees can mimic queen pheromones. A capensis will invade a scutellata hive, the workers will mimic the smell of the queen, confusing the hive, and they will then kill the queen and put their queen in. Over the course of a month the whole hive changes to capensis. It is quite a sneaky bee and they are not the most favoured bees in the world," Schmidt says.

There were various eucalyptus varieties from which Schmidt's hives produced honey, as well as the native fynbos shrub.

"A lot of people in South Africa do believe it has medicinal properties, but there is no scientific backing for that because nobody is doing research into that kind of thing," Schmidt says.

Beekeeping in South Africa is largely uneconomic, with human intervention a large factor, he says.

"There is 60 percent unemployment over there. A large percentage of your hives end up getting vandalised just because people are extremely hungry. They take the whole thing, the honey, the brood and all. They even eat the brood. The lids, chains

and locks are taken for scrap metal.

"You go to extreme lengths to protect your hives, but it is a futile effort and, as such, beekeeping in South Africa is a dying industry."

That is in stark contrast to what he has found in his seven years on these shores, spent largely in Northland.

"South Africa is 30 or 40 years behind New Zealand in terms of the beekeeping level. New Zealand is the leader in beekeeping, from what I can see, and manuka oils this massive machine of commercial beekeeping."

The fourth-generation apiarist, and now New Zealand resident, is glad to have found somewhere where he can make a go of beekeeping.

"Beekeeping is a bit of a legacy and must be in my blood because I ended up doing it. I love it and couldn't imagine doing anything else."

The Kiwi way of life and people are also agreeing with him and Schmidt says he has no intention of going home, if he can help it.

"There is so much political instability over there that I am much better off here," he says, adding "South Africa is a beautiful place, but I could never go back to live." 🐝



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# Thinking Inside the Box



Years of research and development have come to fruition over the past 12 months for Kyle Atkinson and his innovative hive attachment for controlling hive intruders, HyfeGate. Despite decades working in often dangerous and exciting jobs as an animal wrangler, launching his invention to the world has seen the Auckland hobbyist beekeeper face his biggest challenge. Having recently finalised a distribution agreement with a major beekeeping supplier in New Zealand and positive feedback coming in from beekeepers around the world, HyfeGate is a product you are likely to hear plenty more about.

**"I stuck my neck out to have it chopped off," Atkinson says of his efforts to bring HyfeGate to beekeepers over the last year.**

"I had a plan, and it was to go to events, put my neck out and if it got chopped off I would have gone and hid. It hasn't, so I have carried on."

Atkinson has journeyed around New Zealand, and the world, presenting his invention – which fits inside the hive entrance to aid bees in their defence against intruders – to beekeeping meetings, conferences and field days. The major launch took place at Apiculture New Zealand's national conference last June, where with only a couple of days' preparation Atkinson took the stand to present his research and product to an auditorium of hundreds of beekeepers.

"I have done all sorts of stuff, but the hardest thing I have done is stand up on that stage," he says.

That is despite decades of dangerous work as a horse farrier, as an animal wrangler and working on movie sets and in stunt work. On the movie set he could perform dangerous work and then clock out, go home for the day and bank the cheque, but with HyfeGate he has had to communicate the effectiveness of a new product to people with much more experience in beekeeping than himself.

Atkinson has full confidence in HyfeGate's ability to save hives and save beekeepers money, but less confidence in public speaking and effectively communicating how the hive and beekeepers will benefit. Luckily, the bees can do much of the talking for him.

"You get people coming at you with 40 years' experience. Some come in pretty hard, but then after I have finished talking, I say, 'don't take my word

for it. Look at the bees'. The bees do the talking, whether you understand animal behaviour or not."

Understanding animal behaviour was crucial to his previous occupations and when a serious injury limited his ability in those roles, he put his skills to use by solving some of the problems in his small, but growing, collection of beehives.

The result, after several years of research and various prototypes, was HyfeGate. It is a tunnel like device fitted inside the hive, onto the base. One end becomes the external hive entrance.



*HyfeGate founder Kyle Atkinson with his innovative design to prevent hive robbing.*

The other end becomes the internal and now the actual hive entrance, positioned under the bee cluster. The design of this new entrance aids the bees' defence by directing intruders to where the largest amount of bees are active as well as making the journey into the hive more difficult.

Atkinson has about 60 hives which were used in research and development of HyfeGate, as well as ongoing projects under his Bee-IQ Solutions business. Some of the hives were fitted with internal cameras to show the effectiveness of the tunnel system in preventing robbing from wasps. That footage is used in his presentations and on the Bee-IQ Solutions website.

"HyfeGate deals with the robbing issue and the lack of engagement or urgency of the bees to deal with the problem, created by the commercial hive design that we as humans have given them. They seem to have been doing ok before we commercialised their world. So there has to be answers that address the needs of both bees and beekeepers," he says.

In September Atkinson travelled to Apimondia in Montreal, Canada, where he says his invention drew a lot of attention.

"It is such a big industry, but there is so little that is new, especially something that thinks out of the box, or, in this case, inside the box."

Suppliers from many countries have shown interest in stocking the product, and researchers from different parts of the world are now using HyfeGate to assist and extend their projects, Atkinson says. However the success for HyfeGate was always going to be

when he received confirmation from other beekeepers that it was assisting their operations. So, when, following sales at Apimondia, positive reports from beekeepers from all over the world came in, it was a relief.

"That was what I was waiting for, that third party confirmation that it works. So, at some point I should go out and have a beer to celebrate, I suppose."

Further success was achieved in March when a deal was struck with New Zealand Beeswax to stock HyfeGate for Kiwi beekeepers.

There is still plenty of work to be done though Atkinson says, with proving HyfeGate's effectiveness against not just wasps, but also robbing bees, a priority.

"Wasps are an apex predator. So if it can stop wasps it can stop bees. Proving that is another thing altogether."

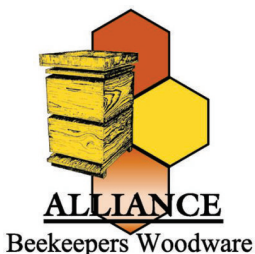
After a year where he put his neck on the line, he still has it firmly in place and is set to carry on spreading the word about the benefits of using HyfeGate.

"We need people to know about this, because we have done it for a reason. It is going to save hives, full stop. It is also going to save beekeepers pennies, which can be put back into their hives," Atkinson says, adding "I want people to use it because it is going to make a difference." 🐝

*The HyfeGate as fitted to a traditional wooden base.*



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# Hive Levy to Bolster Agency Coffers



Beekeepers will now pay a per-hive levy, rather than per-apiary, to fund the agency tasked with eliminating American Foulbrood in New Zealand. The Management Agency National American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan announced the changes in March, following two rounds of consultation with beekeepers, in 2018 and 2019, and then government signoff. The new levy rules are expected to net an extra \$500,000 for the Management Agency in year one, but what will beekeepers get for their extra spending?



Clifton King.

**Achieving the correct balance between dipping into beekeepers' pockets and being adequately resourced for essential tasks is difficult, Management Agency national compliance manager Clifton King says.**

"These are tough economic times for beekeepers and they will not be thrilled about the increase in levy, but as the Management Agency we are doing our best to get the balance right," King says.

"I think the average beekeeper will look at the work we have proposed and think, I am really pleased the Management Agency is doing these things. While they are tough times, AFB also causes a lot of problems now and in the future."

The annual levy, invoiced to beekeepers in April, will include a \$40 base levy then \$1.35 per hive on top of that, plus GST. In 2019 the base levy was \$20, with each apiary levied at \$15.17, plus GST.

Two rounds of consultation with beekeepers showed a desire to move from the apiary levy to a hive levy, King says.

"It was seen as unfair to beekeepers with low numbers of hives per apiary and it encouraged high concentration of hives and the disease risks that go with that."

Beekeepers expressed concern that some might under-declare hive numbers though, so measures have been put in place to help prevent that. Beekeepers must complete a Colony Return, which is a statutory declaration of their hive numbers, and the Management Agency will be monitoring colony numbers over autumn, with those who report a sudden drop in colonies investigated.

There are a number of areas in which the additional revenue the levy generates will be put to use. They include a revamp of the ApiWeb database for recording hive information, additional staffing including a second AP1 operations manager, a doubling of the amount of apiaries inspected from 1200 this season to 2400

in 2020/21, along with considerably more honey sample testing for AFB, going from 60 samples this season to 1000 next season.

The funding not only allows the Management Agency greater resources to police beekeepers who are flouting their requirements around managing AFB, but puts those people on notice too. That should result in greater levels of compliance as the risk of getting caught for non-compliance becomes much higher, King says.

"The chances of those guys getting caught has increased and we would much prefer that, rather than catching them and going

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through the enforcement process. It would be much better for the industry if they just realised it was time to get with the program and do what is needed to eliminate AFB from their hives."

Currently the Management Agency employ one operations manager, Marco Gonzalez, but they are now going through the process of employing a second. The roles will be split geographically with one AP1 covering most of the bottom half of the North Island and South Island, and the second AP1 the northern third, or thereabouts, of the country. Two apiary coordinators are also to be employed as the Management Agency brings work previously carried out by AssureQuality in-house.

They are also working through a tender process to determine who will carry out the ApiWeb upgrade.

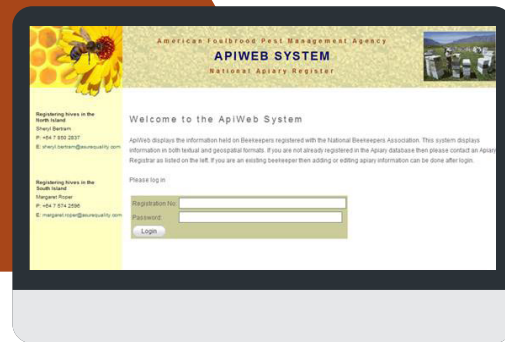
"Since I started in this role, two-plus years ago, there has been a consistent message from beekeepers that the Management Agency needed to do more. Of particular concern to most beekeepers was that they were aware of beekeepers who were flouting the rules and the Agency wasn't doing anything about it.

"There were a number of reasons for it and one was, we didn't have the resources to know who wasn't following the rules. We needed additional funding to monitor beekeepers AFB elimination performance," King says.

Now with that funding on the horizon, it makes for a positive time within the Management Agency, King says.

"The team and I are really excited about the future and are looking forward to making a difference in the AFB space for beekeepers." 🐝

*The ApiWeb system is set for an upgrade, with funding from a rejigged levy system to help cover the cost.*



## AFB Board Vacancies

The AFB PMP Management Agency is seeking two new board members, with the deadline for applications 5pm on April 6.

John Hartnell, the current chairman, and Kim Poynter are stepping down from the six member board.

In their replacements the Agency is seeking applicants with proven governance experience, strong strategic thinking and relationship skills, as well as the time and energy required to commit to the role.

The board meets five times a year in Wellington, as well as at the ApiNZ national conference.

Anyone wishing to obtain a full copy of the job description is advised to contact Clifton King via email at [manager@afb.org.nz](mailto:manager@afb.org.nz).



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# Weather Anomalies: March



These maps provide readers an insight into climate conditions for the calendar month just been, as compared against the long term average. Between them they provide an indication of the level of soil moisture entering the current month, and the conditions that were faced in the previous month. From left to right, the maps are:

- **Soil Moisture Anomaly**, captured on the last day of the month and expressed in millimetres above or below the long term average soil conditions for that date.
- **Rainfall Anomaly**, percentage of rainfall capture for the calendar month just been as compared to the long term average.
- **Sunshine Anomaly**, percentage of bright sunshine hours recorded for the calendar month just been, as compared to the long term average.
- **Temperature Anomaly**, degrees Celsius that the mean daily temperature differed, above or below, from the long term average.

Data provided by and more detail available at [www.niwa.co.nz/climate/daily-climate-maps](http://www.niwa.co.nz/climate/daily-climate-maps) 



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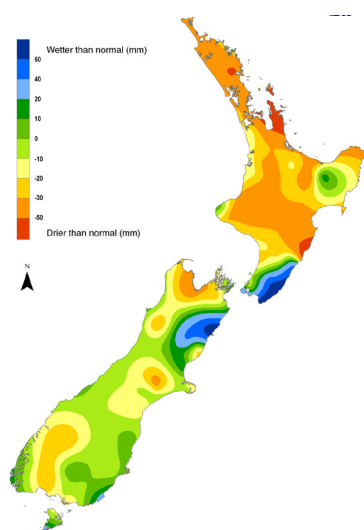


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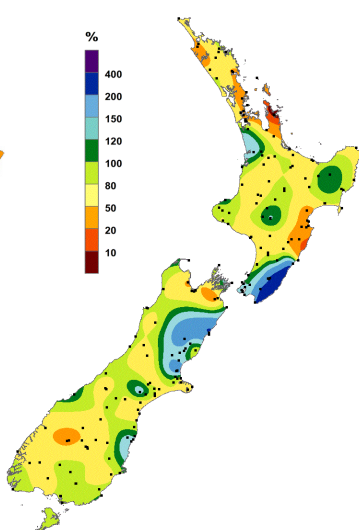
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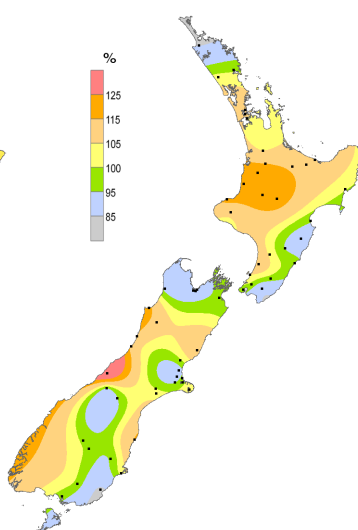
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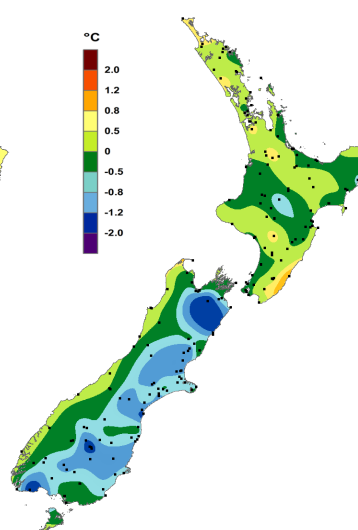
Soil moisture anomaly (mm) at 9am on 31/03/2020



Rainfall anomaly, 9am 01/03/2020 to 9am 31/03/2020



Bright sunshine anomaly, 01/03/2020 to 30/03/2020



Mean temperature anomaly, 9am 01/03/2020 to 9am 31/03/2020

*Apiarist's Advocate* is brought to you by Patrick & Laura Dawkins, Marlborough beekeepers.

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## Creative

**Design:** Ashleigh Ryan

**Cover Image:** Cornege Photography

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