

ISSUE 13, AUGUST 2020

APIARIST'S ADVOCATE

News, Views & Promotions – for Beekeepers – by Beekeepers



**Conferences,
Festivals,
Field Days,
Symposiums
and Open Days**
Get the Green Light

Mini-Conference Will Help Fill Gap in Calendar



In a year when a global pandemic, national lockdown, restrictions on gatherings and economic upheaval have wreaked havoc on the events industry in New Zealand, apiculture appears to have weathered the storm. A variety of conferences, field days, open days and symposiums catering to beekeepers have taken place, or are scheduled to, in July and August. Despite its title, the largest of the events is expected to be the New Zealand Beekeeping Inc. (NZBI) Mini-Conference, held Friday August 21 – Saturday 22 at the Wairakei Resort in Taupo.

The cancellation of Apiculture New Zealand's annual conference, which was to be held in Rotorua in June and expected to draw about 1000 attendees before being scuttled by Covid-19 and lockdown concerns, left a void in the beekeeping calendar. Fellow beekeeping industry body NZBI and the Mini-Conference will help fill that gap, with the event expected to draw about 300 delegates.

The two-day conference will feature a range of seminars, discussions, in-hive demonstrations, a trade show and social evening. The overall schedule of events is titled "Looking to the Future: Economics, Biosecurity, Science", which reflects the range of experts speaking to an array of topics relevant to beekeepers.

NZBI president Jane Lorimer says she really enjoys organising and hosting events such as the Mini-Conference, with the beekeeping body holding seminars or mini-conferences every year. Covid-19 provided added difficulty this year, with the organising committee having only two months from the time the decision to hold an event was made, until August 21-22. Despite that, Lorimer is very happy with progress.

"I am really happy with the variety of things we have got on the programme," Lorimer says.

"You always are unsure if you have enough on the agenda to encourage people to come along, but we have got it so on Saturday we will hopefully entice a lot of hobby beekeepers along. We are able to have hives on site, so we will do some practical demonstrations over our two-hour lunch break."

The list of speakers includes Dr Terry Braggins on adulterated honey, Ian Fletcher over two sessions on gaining value for honey and then biosecurity, Grant Jackson from Miraka Dairy Company on "Thinking Outside the Bee Box", ANZ Bank chief-economist Sharon Zollner, Victor Goldsmith on protecting the term "manuka honey" and Dr Mark Goodwin on the Honey Characterisation Project, among others.

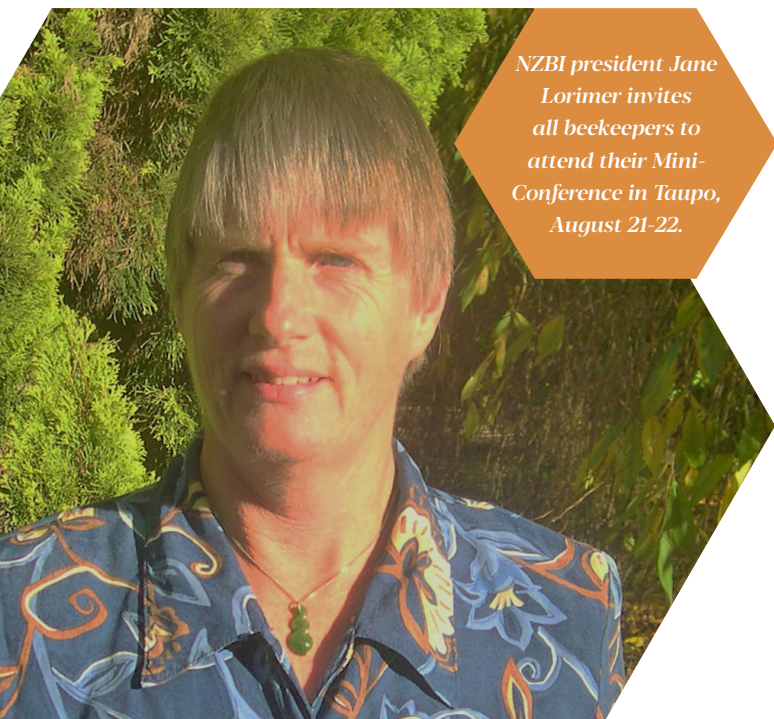
However, it is not just the seminars where beekeepers will be able to gain knowledge, Lorimer believes.

"We have a couple of sessions where we will be getting audience participation. For us you learn as much by leaning on a bar, or talking at mealtime with another beekeeper, than you do sitting through a seminar."

For that reason, there will be a three-course roast dinner held on Friday night at the resort, and plenty of open floor discussion at each presentation, Lorimer says.

"I enjoy talking with the researchers, finding out what they are doing and providing their information to beekeepers to learn something."

A trade show will also take place at the conference, with around 20 exhibitors of beekeeping products expected.



NZBI president Jane Lorimer invites all beekeepers to attend their Mini-Conference in Taupo, August 21-22.



Wairakei Resort in Taupo will host beekeepers for the NZBI Mini-Conference.

Early-bird registration (prior to August 7) is \$80 for NZBI members or \$110 for non-members, per-person per day, with the schedule of events running from 9am to 5pm both days.

For Lorimer and her organising team, pulling together the Mini-Conference in a couple of months has required a lot of fast work, but they are hoping a wide range of beekeepers will benefit from the occasion.

"I really enjoy putting these sorts of events on. I am hoping everyone, irrespective of what beekeeping organisation they belong to, or if they don't belong to any, can come along and enjoy the fellowship." 🐝



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New Zealand Beekeeping Inc. Mini-Conference

August 21st and 22nd, Taupo

FRIDAY 21ST AUGUST

Programme subject to change

9am	<i>Morning Tea</i>	
9.40am	Welcome and housekeeping	
9.50am	Economy World/New Zealand – Scenarios in Covid-19 times	Sharon Zollner – ANZ Bank Chief Economist via Zoom
10.20am	How will Government help the beekeeping sector during Covid-19 times?	Todd McClay – National Party MP Rotorua
10.50am	Adulterated honey – Issues, effects on export, how are ISO and CODEX committees addressing this to stop adulteration?	Dr Terry Braggins – Analytica
11.10am	Breaking free of the Commodity Cycle	Ian Fletcher – InPhySec
11.30am	Honey Characterisation Project	Dr Mark Goodwin – Honorary Fellow Plant and Food
	What is the value of this project to beekeepers	James Jeffery – Summerflow Apiaries
12pm	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
	Practical Session – Disease recognition, dividing hives and more ...	
2pm	Sponsors – Introduction – New Products	All sponsors
2.20pm	Manuka Charitable Trust – Protecting the term "Manuka" – Work Programme	Victor Goldsmith – Kaiaka Consulting Ltd via Zoom
2.40pm	AFB Pest Management Plan – now and the future	Clifton King – Manager, AFBPMP
3.10pm	<i>Afternoon tea</i>	
3.40pm	Health and Safety – conflict – workplace safety if marijuana legalized	Errol Brain – TDDA
4.10pm	How can we run our businesses on little or no money	Roger Bray
	Followed by an audience participation session on other ideas	
4.30pm	<i>Close of day and acknowledgements</i>	

SATURDAY 22ND AUGUST

Programme subject to change

9am	<i>Morning tea</i>	
9.45am	Welcome, introduction and housekeeping	
10am	Thinking outside the BeeBox – "Change Leaders"	Grat Jackson – Miraka Dairy Company – Nurturing our world via Zoom
10.20am	Biosecurity – International Post vs Express Freight	Chris Denny – Border Biosecurity – MPI
10.40am	How can we improve New Zealand's biosecurity?	Ian Fletcher – InPhySec
11am	Apiwellbeing Project – What is it?	Dr Richard Hall/Hayley Pragert – MPI
11.20am	AsureQuality – Exotic Surveillance Programme	Byron Taylor – AsureQuality
11.40pm	Disrupting the Pollination Paradigm	Dr Ashley Mortensen – Plant and Food
12pm	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
	Practical Session – working beehives, disease control, mite detection and more ...	
2pm	AsureQuality: Roles in Apiculture – now and in the future	Byron Taylor –AsureQuality
2.20pm	Contaminants – how to stop them getting into our bee products	Russell Berry – Arataki Honey Rotorua
2.40-3pm	Propolis: The money making glue	Dr Michelle Taylor – Plant and Food
3pm	<i>Afternoon tea</i>	
3.40pm	Pollination – Bees Under nets	Melissa Broussard – Plant and Food
4pm	The role of moths as pollinators	Max Buxton – Plant and Food
4.20pm	The Joys of Beekeeping	Russell Berry – Arataki Honey Rotorua
	<i>Close of day and acknowledgements</i>	

Educated Advice From the Outside



He does not own a beehive, never has, and instead grows peonies for a living, but beekeepers would be well advised to listen closely when Ian Fletcher speaks on both days of the Mini-Conference in Taupo on August 21-22. With a resume that includes working as director of the Government Communications Security Bureau, for the United Nations in Kosovo, as chief executive of the UK Patent Office, for the European Commission as a free trade negotiator, and in Australia in a key biosecurity role for the Queensland government, his knowledge of overseas markets and biosecurity has seen him become a valued advisory to the apiculture industry in recent years.

After a well-travelled career in top diplomatic roles Fletcher now calls the Wairarapa home and growing peony roses his main line of work. It is a far-cry from the offices he has held throughout his working life, but advising the apiculture industry puts to use some of the knowledge gained in the varying roles he has held.

"I am not a beekeeper and don't pretend to be," Fletcher is keen to point out.

"I work with them behind the scenes though."

His introduction to apiculture came with a chance meeting of a New Zealand Beekeeping Inc. (NZBI) member in 2017 who

recommended he advise the industry group, particularly around changes to the manuka honey export standard which were being discussed at the time. He continues to advise NZBI and has since taken up a similar role with the Manuka Honey Appellation Society as they attempt to gain certification of the term "manuka honey" for New Zealand producers in international markets.

Despite some economic struggles, the industry on the whole is in a very healthy place Fletcher believes, and the debate that sometimes takes place within New Zealand apiculture is the sign of a "mature" industry.

"It is interesting to come to an industry, many decades into my professional life, where I can generally look you in the eye and say, 'there is no group-think here'. People think for themselves and are cheerfully willing to debate and disagree. That is a really healthy thing. Nobody assumes they know the answer and nobody is let off the obligation of thinking for themselves."

It is an interesting viewpoint from someone with a long background in bureaucratic roles, as fractures within the industry have led to criticism from bureaucrats, including the Minister for Agriculture, in the past.

"The industry is more united than you think. Einstein said, 'it is much more important to really understand the question than to know the answer'. That is the point I would make about



*Ian Fletcher, advisor
to the industry and
speaking on both days
of the NZBI Mini-
Conference in Taupo.*

beekeepers, they are prepared to debate the question and not just the answer. Saying, 'what's the question?' is a healthy sign of an industry that has diversity of thought and confidence to be able to have debates like that," Fletcher says.

DAY 1: HONEY

Fletcher's talks at the Mini-Conference are sure to raise questions and provide some, but far from all, answers.

On day one, Friday August 21, his presentation will focus on how Kiwi beekeepers can get the best value for their honey in international markets. The former trade negotiator says that talk will centre on the premise that, "if honey is sold simply as a product to smear on toast then the price of that honey is a function of the price of sugar and your economic future is determined by the very large scale, low cost, farmers of sugar in Brazil".

"Manuka is the only honey in the world that has consistently managed to break free of the price of sugar. How do we learn from that to create a framework to take other honeys through and repeat the experience? Going from, 'golly we have had a stroke of luck', to 'we have a system'."

His presentation will take the audience's minds back to 1855 and Bordeaux, France where the winegrowers developed a taste-based classification system which is still enforced. Honey producers can learn from that, with Fletcher stressing, "if you write the rules, you have the edge".

DAY 2: BIOSECURITY

On the second day of the conference Fletcher's time at the stand will focus on ways to improve biosecurity for beekeeping and New Zealand, with a focus on the economics of biosecurity. It is a discussion that, again, poses some key questions.

"If you invest a lot of money in biosecurity, so it is successful and there are no incursions, does that mean you should spend, less, the same, or more?" Fletcher asks.

Governments tend to spend less if there have been no significant incursions and that can lead to problems.

"You end up with a system which is thinned out. It becomes token. Then it becomes dangerous because it gives you false comfort. As an industry we should be arguing for the government to do more and provide a more robust defence," Fletcher says.

People are willing to invest more in an industry that has a robust biosecurity program, with Fletcher asking, "how much would you be willing to pay for a hive if you knew you only had one year before a foreign bee disease destroyed it?" Compared to, "how much you would be willing to pay if you knew you had at least 10 years of safe operating."

Those are just some of the queries that the former 'spy chief', trade negotiator and biosecurity boss will raise in Taupo, and that inquisitive attitude is what Fletcher wants to promote in the industry he advises.

"Beekeepers might be struggling economically at the moment, but their voice is not lost and that is a great achievement," he says, adding "the industry should be proud of the social ethos and spirit of inquiry it has created". 🐝



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Big Buzz is Building



There is a buzz building this spring and it is not just from bees flying into their work. The Big Buzz Festival is taking shape, set to be held on February 14 in Matakana outside of Auckland. Two Italian-born Aucklanders are driving the concept of a non-profit event to celebrate our most prolific pollinators, the honey bee. It is intended to appeal to a wide audience, meaning the Big Buzz will be growing in the coming months.

"It's a big project and some people would think we are crazy, getting ourselves involved in something so big," says Isabella Sullivan of an event that could draw thousands of people to a yet to be determined venue.

"On the other hand, it is extremely exciting because the feedback we are getting from different parties is really, really good."

Sullivan, along with compatriot Grass Esposti conceived the idea for an environmentally-focused festival to celebrate and promote all things honey bee about a year ago.

"We did some research on whether it was possible and what kind of interest there would be in having an event, with an environmental focus, but dressed up as a food event and using honey as a lure for people to come. It is also a platform to talk about ethical beekeeping and generate more interest in that from the younger generation," Sullivan says.

Esposti has built a reputation in Auckland as "The Bee Lady" having founded Beetopia NZ, a practical beekeeping education programme, and more recently the NZ Honey Tasting Shed, to promote New Zealand honey varieties.

Sullivan also keeps a small amount of hives, has experience in event management and, along with Esposti, established the Big Buzz Honey and Bee Festival Trust which has lodged an application for charity status. They are joined by three others on the planning committee.

There are expected to be about 30 stallholders at the festival, which will include honey producers, health and natural products, gardening, other pollinator trusts, as well as some schools. A range of youth activities, live music, honey tastings and food trucks with a focus on honey dishes are also planned.

Workshops and talks will take place throughout the day, including from Dr Ngaire Hart, a researcher into native bees, Andrea Reid on her Pollinator Paths concept, and a honey cooking workshop with Michelin Star-winning chef Cory Campbell.

Although a venue is yet to be confirmed, the festival will take place somewhere in Matakana and Sullivan says it is designed to appeal to the wider public, as well as those in the apiculture industry.

"What we are doing is not a trade show. It is an environmental festival. Really it is about the pollinators and a certain kind of beekeeping where caring about the bee and understanding that by looking after them they look after us, is front of mind.

"It is about having a fun-filled, family-friendly showcase of all things bees that will attract beekeepers as well as someone who has never had anything to do with bees."

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Sullivan and Esposti have researched similar events in Australia and the USA and the findings have motivated the duo.

"When we started putting the event together and the feasibility of it, it became clear pretty quickly that this kind of event has a lot of legs. It comes at the right time, a time when people are becoming more aware of all these sorts of things we are focusing on, as well as being more conscious about what they eat, where it comes from, and supporting local businesses.

"The feasibility study showed that the event has an ability to grow and become quite a big event for New Zealand. In the case



Grass Esposti, known as "The Bee Lady" to many in Auckland and now helping bring the Big Buzz Festival to life.



Isabella Sullivan, Big Buzz Festival co-founder.

that the event does become bigger, we feel the work we put in now will pay off in the long run."

For now the focus is on year one though, and there is still plenty of work to do. A big part of that is financing the festival. Several fundraising events are planned in Auckland in September around Bee Aware month, while private sponsors are being sought. If charity status is achieved more funding options will become available.

Then there is the task of securing stallholders, and that is where beekeepers can help grow the Big Buzz. There is an application form for stallholders at www.thebigbuzz.nz with Sullivan saying, "anyone who is interested in participating in the festival should absolutely get in touch".

It all means, The Big Buzz has started and will only get louder as February 14 nears. 🐝

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Order Restored, Disagreement Remains



After months of dispute between apiculture industry bodies (covered in *Apiarist's Advocate* May and June issues) a conclusion has been reached in the saga of the amendment to the American Foulbrood (AFB) Levy Order. The clause in question has been restored to its previous wording. However, the process has seen New Zealand Beekeeping Inc (NZBI) raise fresh concerns over the competence of fellow industry body Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ) to manage the biosecurity programme, while ApiNZ say beekeepers can have every confidence in them.

The quarrel is the latest in a series of disagreements between the two largest bodies representing Kiwi beekeepers over management issues effecting apiculture. It started with a change to the Biosecurity (American Foulbrood—Beekeeper Levy) Order which came into force in April, primarily to shift calculation of beekeepers' annual "AFB levy" from a count of apiaries held, to hives owned.

Inside that Levy Order was a change to the wording around the dates to which each levy payment would relate. It was a change which NZBI claimed would see beekeepers hit with multiple annual levy payments in one year, but which both ApiNZ and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) say would have made no practical difference to the implementation of the levy system.

NZBI's concerns have seen MPI forced to reword the Order with a further amendment gazetted on July 10 which NZBI president Jane Lorimer says alleviates their concerns with the Order.

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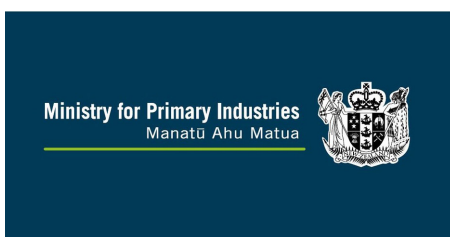
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"The changes that they have made basically take it back to the status-quo of what had been established in 2003. It means the Pest Management Plan (PMP) will get its money in advance to spend, rather than levying at the end of the year," Lorimer says.

However, it does not ease the beekeeping body's concerns with ApiNZ's ability to manage the Pest Management Plan to control and eliminate AFB, with NZBI releasing a statement claiming ApiNZ's handling of the issue was "shabby, shameful and bullying" and that it was "disgraceful that they refused to listen".

"It is additionally frustrating to learn, following the ApiNZ AGM on July 29, that they too shared concern at the Levy Order wording early in its drafting, yet were not willing to support us in seeking change," Lorimer says.

Countering that, ApiNZ chief executive Karin Kos says the concerns were heard by their organisation and the Management Agency which they oversee.



In July MPI made a second amendment to the Levy Order pertaining to beekeepers' AFB levy payments, despite initially standing by changes made in April.

"The AFB Pest Management Agency questioned MPI on the Levy Order change at the drafting stage, and again with MPI when we were approached by NZBI," Kos says.

"On all those occasions MPI advised that the draft amendment was correct. We believe we took a constructive and responsible approach to the concerns raised."

While MPI appear to have stood by the original Levy Order's wording when approached by ApiNZ and the Management Agency, once NZBI dealt with them directly and made it clear they were willing to take the matter to arbitration and even the High Court, the winds of change began to blow on the latest amendment.

"Then they realised we were right, an error had been made. We still don't know who made the error though. I don't think anyone is going to put their hand up there," Lorimer says.

MPI ALLAY CONCERNS

Despite agreeing to the change, MPI remain adamant that NZBI's worries of a double-levy under the previous wording were not valid.

"This amendment should allay any concerns that beekeepers were going to be charged twice for the 2019/2020 year. While Apiculture New Zealand and the Ministry for Primary Industries assert that in practice, there was never any question of this actually happening, the amendment provides clarification," an MPI spokesperson says.

The Ministry further explained the changes saying, "moves were made to correct this technical problem with a further small amendment returning the definition of the levy year to the same definition beekeepers are familiar with".

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CONFIDENCE

The saga has heightened NZBI's lack of confidence in ApiNZ to administer the PMP.

"The lack of confidence is in ApiNZ's Board to look seriously at the PMP, what its objectives are, what it is doing and what they should be doing to meet their requirements. The buck stops with them and they are as much to blame as anyone because they did not check the Levy Order was fit for purpose," Lorimer says.

Kos contends that ApiNZ sought advice from MPI and legal experts before making any key decisions around the issue and have acted on that advice. She believes beekeepers understand the value of their and the Management Agency's work.

"Beekeepers can have every confidence in ApiNZ, through the Pest Management Agency, that it can meet its objectives – the AFB Pest Management Agency has made significant progress in how it is managing AFB effectively, something that has been recognised by beekeepers," Kos says.

While there were some initial concerns the dispute might adversely affect the Agency's ability to carry out its role, this has not been the case, and MPI have stated that regulatory amendments such as with the Order in question are budgeted for.

However, Lorimer says the saga has come at a cost to NZBI.

"This process, where we have been forced to call on legal expertise to bring about the required change, has come at a significant financial cost to NZBI. This very well could have been avoided if ApiNZ had acknowledged the problem when we first came to them," Lorimer says.

GETTING ON-BOARD

In the wake of the most recent amendment to the Levy Order, Kos has renewed her ongoing call for NZBI to put forward a candidate or candidates to potentially be appointed to the Management Agency Board.

"Having a seat at the Board is, we believe, a more effective way for NZ Beekeeping to be across the decision-making process and to proactively and positively influence policy decisions that support beekeepers in managing AFB," Kos says.

NZBI is not going to take up that offer because they believe those in charge of the Pest Management Plan should be independent of any beekeeping body, Lorimer says.

"There might be one or two people [from NZBI] who may be interested in going onto a board if it became a whole industry board, where people were voted on and not just appointed. It needs to be independent of any industry organisations, but have input from the whole cross section of beekeepers, whether they are in NZ Beekeeping, ApiNZ, Southern North Island, or a South Island group," Lorimer says.

"It really does need to be an independent body because there are too many times when you get a conflict of interest."

While Lorimer, Kos and their industry groups may disagree on whether the wording in Clause 7 of the Biosecurity (American Foulbrood—Beekeeper Levy) Order Amendment should have been of concern to beekeepers, as well as how the PMP associated with the legislation should be overseen, they will surely both reach consensus on one view held by Lorimer.

"As far as this issue goes and further debate on it, I think it is time for us to move on and work together on other things within the industry rather than being at loggerheads." 🐝

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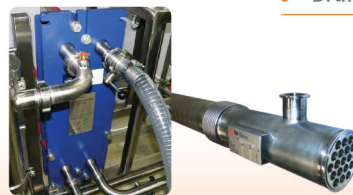


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First Research Symposium a Sign of the Times



In an attempt to bring researchers together while at the same time strengthening their connection to the apiculture industry, The 1st New Zealand Honey Bee Research Symposium will be held on September 7. In a sign of the times it will take place online with registration free to all and presenters and viewers scattered across the country. However, organisers are planning on it becoming an annual in-person gathering, in conjunction with the country's largest apiculture conference.

The symposium's focus is on fostering connections between researchers, but beekeepers will also learn plenty if they log in to the webinar, says organiser Dr Ashley Mortensen, a senior scientist at Plant and Food Research.

"Anyone is invited to come, just with the understanding that the presentations are made, knowing that there will be beekeepers in the room, but also that there may be more details about methods and rationales because that is what the researchers are trying to share with one another," Mortensen says.

The concept of a gathering of those New Zealanders conducting research into honey bees was conceived by Dr Phil Lester, a professor in biology at Victoria University of Wellington, with the idea of hosting it at the same venue and a day prior to the Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ) national conference. With the conference cancelled this year, and uncertainty around travel restrictions, the decision was made to host a webinar instead.

"The intention is to increase the connection between those conducting honey bee research in New Zealand, to facilitate collaboration and more synergy to get more bang for our buck in the honey bee research space. It would also get a connection with industry and help provide insights on what the industry is seeing as research imperative," Mortensen says.

Researchers will aim to identify future collaborations, funding opportunities, outline funding they currently have and how it can be leveraged off what each other are doing.

Those presenting their research will be located in offices and homes around the country and be able to take to the screen when it comes time to present their work, while others logging in will be more passive viewers, but still able to provide feedback.

"We hope this is not just a one-off, it is something that potentially happens fairly consistently, piggy-backs with the apiculture conference and has a repeat connection that can be made to benefit honey bee related research," Mortensen says.

The event has been organised in association with ApiNZ and is being supported and driven by Plant and Food Research, Victoria University, New Zealand Food Safety, Ministry for Primary Industries and Dnature Diagnostics and Research.

The program of presenters has not been confirmed at time of writing, but will include researchers from universities, private research institutes and labs, and industry representatives.

To submit a scientific presentation for consideration, complete the following online form: forms.gle/Dogh9mxU5jAQpTdi8

(Deadline for submissions is 5pm August 14. Prizes for the best research talk by a student.)

To attend the symposium online, please complete the following online form: forms.gle/98MPRuM2cdEH11hT9

(Registrations for attendance close September 2.) 



The 1st N.Z. Honey Bee Research Symposium



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Queen Market Update



The downturn in non-manuka honey prices has had a flow-on effect to numerous other sectors of the apiculture industry, from beeswax to beekeeping supplies. We check in with several queen breeders to find out if the downturn has impacted sales and how business is shaping up as they enter the new season.



*Nick Milne, Blue Sky
Beekeeping*

Established queen breeders say, while they expect a price-squeeze on mated queens this season and a change in buying habits, the market is still sound for those with proven reputations. However, most believe new entrants to commercial queen-rearing could struggle in the current economic climate.

In Nelson, experience queen-breeders Catherine Ayers, of River Terrace Apiaries, and Nick Milne at Blue Sky Beekeeping both say demand is still steady and most clients value their queens, but they expect to have to drop their prices this season.

"There are a lot of new players coming into the market thinking they can get a bit of cash flow through queens and some of them are offering crazily low prices," Ayers says.

"They are not taking clients, but they are pulling prices down."

The loyalty of beekeepers to their queen-breeders is for good reason in most cases, Ayers says, especially for manuka honey producers, and it comes down to a simple question.

"Do they want to risk a honey crop off the back of a twenty dollar difference in a queen? She is the be-all and end-all and if you don't have a good queen you are not going to have a good hive. If you don't have a good hive you will not have a good crop.

"A lot of queen buyers are like orchardists, if they have a beekeeper they have been with for a while they are not going to swap because of price. It is more important for them to know what

they are getting year in year out, and that it is tried and tested."

Milne is also aware of the influence those people selling queens and "chasing cash flow" are having on the market.

"That does soak up some of the market and the lower price buyers," he says.

"We have brought our price back because we have to be competitive, but we are never aiming to be bargain basement price because we are not a bargain basement product."

While demand for Blue Sky Beekeeping queens is still sound, Milne has noticed a difference in the market from a few years ago.

"The market has fundamentally changed. Beekeepers used to ring up and the only question was whether they could get queens. They often didn't ask price or even the breed you were running. I always told them though. I had a run of information which I spoke to them about.

"Now, with people being very careful with their money and the uncertainty around selling honey, this season in particular, there is going to be more and more people waiting until spring and when they have sold their honey until they commit."

In North Otago Shane Rawson of Whitestone Honey is also glad he has an established line of queens and customers.

"Demand is still strong for me, but we have been going a long time. I wouldn't want to be a new person doing it," the fourth-generation beekeeper says.



*Shane Rawson,
Whitestone Honey*

"Some guys who have started in the past three or four years have struggled to develop a market."

Over the past year Rawson says he has moved from selling a lot of nucs to North Island beekeepers to now supplying many of the same, newly-formed, businesses with mated queens, as well as some longer running beekeeping operations.

"The queen market is still fairly strong, but only with guys who have been able to sell their honey. If the honey is not flying out the door as normal, people are struggling too," Rawson says.

Up in Auckland Beecroft are well placed to supply the many hobbyists based in and around the country's largest city, along with some commercial beekeepers. Owner Craig Beecroft says the hobbyist market has not been affected much by the downturn in honey prices, but overall sales have reduced in the past few seasons.

"I would think orders are 20-30 percent down on a few years ago," Beecroft says.

"It is good to have the diversity between commercial and hobbyists. The hobbyists are still ticking over reasonably well. For a hobbyist with three hives, \$50 or \$100 is manageable, whereas a commercial may make the decision that they don't want queens, or that they will use cells instead."

The greater hesitancy to commit to queen orders early is making preparing for a queen-rearing season more difficult.

"We need to tailor our production to orders, which is hard when people are not committing until later," Milne says, while Beecroft is finding a similar pattern.

*A Beecroft queen.
Owner Craig Beecroft
says hobbyist
beekeepers underpin
his queen sales.*

"We have some orders, but for the most part people don't seem to want to commit too far in advance at this stage. They are just sort of playing it by ear which does make it tough," Beecroft says.

There is confidence that the orders will come in over the spring though.

"We are looking good for spring, but we are a bit softer post-Christmas," Milne says.

"I don't think things will go crazy, but I think the orders will come in," Beecroft believes, while Ayers knows there are many beekeepers largely unaffected by a downturn in honey prices.

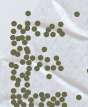
"It is a bit early to have a good idea of order numbers, but anyone who is getting manuka honey is still going to be in the market for good queens," she says. 🐝

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Management Agency Adds Another Defender



As the levy which beekeepers pay to fund the Pest Management Plan (PMP) increases this year, so do the resources of the National American Foulbrood PMP Agency tasked with implementing the plan. As of July 1 that has meant employment of a second operations manager, Dwayne Hill. He brings not only beekeeping experience to the task of tackling AFB, but also a history of tackling a very different foe – streakers.

Hill will oversee operations across most of the North Island, alongside established operations manager Marco Gonzalez who will now focus on the South and lower-North Island. With 46 AP2 certified beekeepers to manage, spread across a country with nearly one million hives, the challenges faced by the Agency as they seek to eliminate AFB from New Zealand have become clear to Hill already.

"I can now see how many uncompliant beekeepers there are and the scale of what the Management Agency is trying to do," Hill explains.

"I open my computer screen with the Agency and I see every apiary site in the country. I essentially see New Zealand disappear behind the little dots. That is the grand scale of what we need to keep control of and how easy it would be for that control to slip away.

"To look at that picture and think, Marco used to do all this by himself. No wonder, through no fault of the Agency, things possibly did slip through the cracks. It is good to know now that those cracks are probably a little bit smaller and we should be able to catch a few more things."

On leaving high school in 1999, Hill took up a summer job beekeeping with Waitemata Honey in Auckland and continued to work on and off as a beekeeper while studying physiotherapy at university. Since then he has worked on dairy farms and in security, before ultimately returning to beekeeping and progressing to be Oha Honey's head beekeeper for Taranaki/Wanganui from 2018 until taking up his role with the Agency.

"I started beekeeping when it wasn't really worth putting manuka honey in a jar, or just as it became popular. Then, many years later, working with Oha showed me that I wasn't really interested in the manuka label or, necessarily, the pay that came with it. My passion is for the bees and the industry as a whole, everyone from the hobbyist with one hive to the corporates with thousands," he says.

Hill will carry out the national operations manager role from his home in Taranaki, a region in which he still keeps five hives of his own.

While he has had little to do with the Agency, directly, prior to July 1, Hill says control of AFB has always been a high priority for him.

"Everywhere I have worked, if there was AFB, the focus has never been on just putting honey in a jar. If we had AFB, it was always better for me to eliminate it and it didn't really matter the costs because, at the end of the day, everyone is better off without it."

Key to the operations manager role is overseeing a team of beekeepers who hold AP2s and carry out inspections of hives, while Hill and Gonzalez as AP1s, have the authority to make the final call on destruction of apiaries infected with AFB.

Hill has experience managing teams of people though, including through years of work heading event security teams for Red Badge where he says he has "tackled his fair share of streakers". Despite working in other industries, his passion for beekeeping always sees him return to apiculture and he is excited about taking up the challenge of tackling AFB.



Dwayne Hill, recently appointed as the AFB PMP Management Agency's operations manager for the north of the country.

"I definitely like a challenge, which is another reason I applied for the role in the first place. I like the challenge of getting out there and convincing other people to think along the same lines as the Agency."

Thanks to his beekeeping experience, Hill believes he is well placed to do that through effective communication with beekeepers.

"Being on the front line, even as an apiary manager, I was riding choppers and driving around the country at 3am like the rest of them. That helps me understand the complexities that go into big corporate beekeeping, as well as that of small hobbyists. I bring with me a set of tools that helps us get both lots looking more into AFB and how they can control it, plus means and measure they can put in place to minimise the chances they spread or contract it."

As well as his skills gained in previous work, Hill hopes his fresh set of eyes looking over things at the Agency will lead to improvements. During his first few weeks on the job those eyes have been opened to the scale of the challenge facing the Agency, but he loves a challenge.

"I have dealt with a few beekeepers so far and set a few tasks. I am definitely enjoying it and enjoying the challenges. The more stuff I get thrown at me the faster I can get on my feet and into it." 🐝

ApiWeb Replacement Progressing

Work has begun on the development of an improved ApiWeb system, with Australian company SmartApps having won the tender.

National compliance manager for the Management Agency, Clifton King says SmartApps specialise in implementations similar to what they need and he is delighted to have them on board.

They are tasked with building the new system, including a beekeeper portal, to administer management of AFB and collection of levies by the Agency. SmartApps were chosen in June following an extensive tender process throughout the first half of the year.

The redevelopment will include integration of google maps for plotting locations of apiaries and a smart phone application.

Although they are an Australian company, SmartApps has a Wellington office. Their previous clients are varied, from Nufarm, to City of Melbourne, and Te Kura, a New Zealand education provider.

The new system is expected to be ready for user acceptance and piloting in late November.

The development and ongoing management of the new ApiWeb system over a five-year period has been budgeted at \$975,000.

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[^]This offer ends 31 August 2020.

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Supplied Insights



BRUCE CLOW

Managing Director Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies

I was thinking about my father-in-law yesterday. He will be 91 next month, and he is just about the happiest, kindest, most generous and patient soul I know.

What brought him to my mind was the depth of unhappiness I was feeling. You see, like many of you, life for me is a bit hard at the moment. I think with the difficulties non-manuka honey producers are having selling honey, and the Covid-19 situation, business for me, too, isn't what it used to be. I understand that and recognise that I will have to do some things differently, and hopefully, better than I've done in the past, but can I?

To be frank, there are times I need some help.

For many years of my adult life, I've been able to think, analyse, plan, and simply "do" what needed to be done. I rarely asked for help, and I was often disappointed in the help I did receive. You see I have a learned belief from my father, that no-one can do it as well as I can.

My father-in-law, Ian, taught me differently.

Before I had Ceracell, I built a business manufacturing wood fuel pellets. Well, when I say "I", I actually mean, Ian and me, and my sons. Even though I was a chemical engineer and worked in huge oil refineries, large equipment scared me. Not Ian! He was excited by it. He taught me that if a human being conceived it, designed it, and made it, anyone could fix it, and he did.

Not only that, but he loved coming to work with me. He gave freely of his time and experience for years. His only daily payment a two-scoop hokey-pokey ice-cream from Pokero.

With a miniscule budget, second-hand equipment, trial-and-error, and a lot of free engineering from Ian, we built a pellet plant that worked. (If you are interested in seeing that plant running go to youtube.com/watch?v=4CYqriOZEqc. The young man loading shavings at the start is my son Thomas, and the man in the blue hat at the end is Ian.)

So, why am I telling you this? Because maybe you are in circumstances that are making you unhappy? For me, I understand that when I focus on myself and my problems, it only makes me unhappy.

Ian was always happy because he was always helping. He was totally focused on helping.

Also, I understand that sometimes I need to ask for help. I don't know everything and can't think of everything.

If you are in a situation that seems to be overwhelming, and you can't see a way out, ask for help. I want to help! Even if all I can give is a listening ear, it may be enough for you to see things from a different angle and find a way through.

Or maybe things are okay for you, but someone else you know needs some help. If asked for help, give it. If you can see someone needs help but they don't ask for it, offer it.



Bruce Clow

Let's increase the kindness in our industry and help each other. It has got to be better for all of us.

Bruce Clow is the founder and managing director of Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies. Born in Canada, he has lived in New Zealand for the past 38 years. 🐝

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What's Changed? – Feebate



What's changed? is our monthly look back on a story which ran in *Apiarist's Advocate* 12 months ago. This issue, we go back to August 2019, and the story *Beekeepers Could Be Left Carrying Feebate Load* which detailed a proposal to subsidise low carbon emission vehicles and tax higher emitters such as utes commonly used by beekeepers. A year on plenty has changed, with political parties opposed over the scheme, the coalition government unable to reach an agreement and it set to become an issue debated as the country nears an election.

When Associate Transport Minister Julie Anne Genter announced the "Feebate" scheme, officially titled the Clean Car Discount, in July 2019 it drew the ire of the agricultural sector.

Federated Farmers were outspoken, saying the proposed changes to import laws would increase the cost of vehicles commonly used by farmers, without viable alternatives.

Beekeepers that *Apiarist's Advocate* canvassed on the issue also expected that under the scheme they would be left out of pocket when it came time to replace their vehicles.

The fee and rebate scheme was proposed to apply to all new and used light vehicles entering the country with a gross vehicle mass of less than 3.5 tonnes. 4WD utes would be subject to an import fee of between \$2250 and \$3000 dollars.

The Clean Car Discount discussion document went out for public consultation in July last year, with submissions required by the 20th of the following month.

Primary sector groups were not the only corners from which the scheme copped flack, with Treasury recommending the policy should be ditched as it would result in negligible reductions in the country's carbon emissions. Opposing that view, Ministry of Transport backed the Feebate scheme, while Genter claimed

Treasury was wrong and the scheme would make a substantive difference to New Zealand's carbon emissions.

Lowering the carbon emissions of New Zealand's vehicle fleet through targeted legislation is an established policy of the Green party, while National and New Zealand First have been outspoken



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in their opposition to the Feebate proposal.

NZ First held up advancement of Feebate during government discussions in February. The coalition partner then put a halt to another proposal, the Clean Car Scheme which would see importers measured for the emission output of their entire fleet (as opposed to individual vehicles under Feebate) in July.

That means the Greens will be forced to take both Clean Car policies to the coming election in September, with the hope of progressing them in a new government.

So what's changed? Beekeepers would still be among those carrying the load should a Feebate scheme, as proposed, gain traction under a new government. However, like several Green party policies, NZ First have applied the handbrake for now. 🐝



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Positive Turnout at Beeswax Open-Days



A wave of positivity was the feeling coming from beekeepers when New Zealand Beeswax opened the doors to the public at their two facilities in August.

Around 70 people came through the doors of the NZ Beeswax Hamilton plant on July 23 then another 80 checked out operations at their Orari, South Canterbury, branch a week later.

Although well aware of the economic struggles many beekeepers are going through, NZ Beeswax's general manager Nick Taylor says he and fellow staff at the beekeeping supply company witnessed a sense of optimism for the industry from those attending the two events.

"It was massively positive on both days, in terms of the attitudes of most beekeepers. Times are difficult, but the positivity still remains. People are looking at the silver linings, which is great," Taylor says.

That attitude was different to 12 months ago, when a sense of negativity for the industry prevailed, Taylor says.

"Everyone feels like we have scraped the bottom of the barrel and are on the way back up. Don't get me wrong, we are not a hell of a long way off the bottom, but it feels like we are on our way up."

He was encouraged by the turnout at both events, with a plastic frame cleaning system in Hamilton, and their pollen-patty mixing machine in Orari the main areas of interest for beekeepers on the tour of facilities.

"It was long overdue and we thought it was a great thing to do. It is a bit of extra work at a busy time of year, but well worth doing. It really does show beekeepers have been missing a bit of interaction," Taylor says.

Now they have completed their own open-days the NZ Beeswax promotional stand travels back north, with the eventual destination Taupo and the New Zealand Beekeeping Inc. Mini-Conference on August 21-22. Prior to that is an open-day at Paengaroa, Bay of Plenty, honey storage facility Manuka Orchard on August 7 under the tag line "Together We Are Better". That day is open to clients of the facility and will feature a variety of trade exhibitors and speakers. 🐝



Beekeepers at NZ Beeswax's open-day in Orari talk pollen-patty during their tour of the plant.



Beekeepers attending the NZ Beeswax open-day in Hamilton enjoy some positive discussion.

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

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