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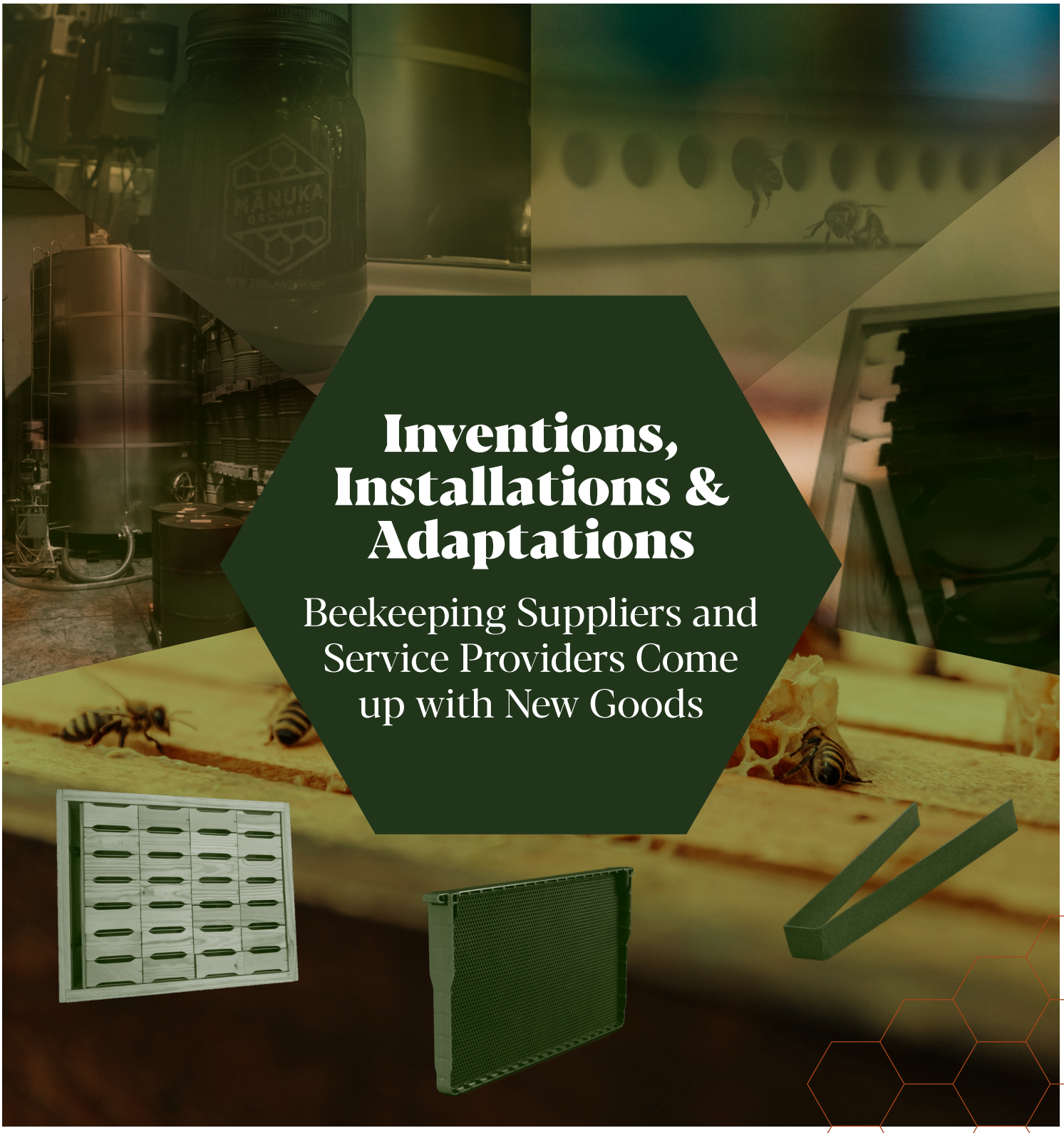
Apiarist's Advocate

News, Views & Promotions – for Beekeepers – by Beekeepers



Inventions, Installations & Adaptations

Beekeeping Suppliers and Service Providers Come up with New Goods

Shutting the Gate on Varroa

It has proved successful in controlling varroa mite in Europe, was up to the job in New Zealand trials and soon BeeGate by Bayvarol, a treatment fitted to the entrance of hives, will be available in New Zealand. Despite the product being novel to Kiwi beekeepers, the company behind BeeGate is confident the external hive treatment will provide tangible benefits and ultimately help make beekeeping more productive and profitable.

BeeGate has three major benefits over alternate treatment options currently available. It prevents varroa re-infestation, treats hives for a longer period, and is a labour-saving device, says Claire Hunt, Elanco (formerly Bayer) veterinary and science advisor.

"This will really help with re-infestation issues and if we can help prevent that we are really helping to improve bee health overall. If we have healthy bees, we can make more honey and have more profitable businesses," Hunt says.

BeeGate comes in the form of a 170mm long by 21mm high polyvinyl strip impregnated with 275mg of flumethrin, the same active ingredient as in Bayvarol. Each strip has 15 holes through which bees can pass and it is designed to fit on the outside of hives, with two strips required per hive, so that all bees entering and exiting the hive receive a dose of flumethrin which proves fatal to varroa mites. Once inside the hive, forager bees transfer the active chemical to fellow bees to deliver a "whole-hive" treatment.

Elanco plans to make BeeGate available in New Zealand in January 2021, sold through Ecrotek Beekeeping Supplies and New Zealand Beeswax at a yet-to-be-determined price. The varroa treatment has been sold in Europe since 2018 under the brand name PolyVar Yellow and has found favour with beekeepers, Hunt says.

BeeGate distributes flumethrin to bees entering and exiting the hive.

"It is exciting to bring a new product to the bee industry in New Zealand, but we are fortunate that we do that on the back of it being such a success in Europe. We have multiple trials where it has proven to be a success in Europe in terms of efficacy and safety. It has also been commercially available for purchase there for a few years now," Hunt says.

To gain registration BeeGate had to prove its efficacy in New Zealand conditions. So, trials were carried out in the Waikato last year, which compared mite knock down rates against amitraz treatments.

"What we found was a non-statistical difference between the products. So, we know we are not coming to market with a sub-optimal product. It has proven that it can work effectively," Hunt says.

The trials were carried out over a nine-week treatment period, the minimum duration BeeGate should remain on a hive. However, overseas trials have shown it to be effective for up to 16 weeks, meaning BeeGate boasts a longer-lasting impact on varroa than any other treatment registered in New Zealand.

"The products currently on the market are highly effective, but they only protect for a shorter period of time, leaving a large part of the year where hives are unprotected. By providing the 16-week protection period it is the ideal autumn treatment."

The longer-lasting treatment comes with a catch though. BeeGate cannot be used in conjunction with honey supers due to the high rate of flumethrin held in each strip, 275mg as compared to the 3.6mg in Bayvarol.

That high rate of active compound is required to allow BeeGate to diffuse a repeatedly effective flumethrin dose over a long period. The polymer matrix which makes up the medium of the strip is essential to this process and it is the same technology used in long-lasting flea collars for cats and dogs.

"Its active concentration is equally spread across the plastic at first and then when the bees pass through the holes the active ingredient is released from the polymer matrix onto the bee. That means the active concentration at the gate has reduced a little bit, so the molecules in the polymer rearrange down a concentration gradient to refill the active at the gate. So, then the next bee coming through gets exactly the same dose," Hunt explains.

BeeGate does not include methods for fastening the treatment to hives, meaning beekeepers will be required to fashion their own

devices to suit their hive setups or explore options provided by equipment stockists. Effective treatment will require beekeepers to ensure all bees exiting or entering the hive come into contact with BeeGate though, meaning it must be securely and completely applied to hive entry points, with no alternate entry points available.

Having a treatment that can be attached to the outside of the hive, with minimal disturbance to the hive and which can easily be seen to have been applied, will find favour with beekeepers, Hunt believes.

"From a labour saving and efficiency point of view, this is really meeting a need that the industry hasn't met before."

BeeGate promotions claim it has a mean efficacy exceeding 98 percent, does not hamper bee foraging ability and also states that "rigorous" testing found the treatment adhered to maximum residue levels in honey and wax.

Midlands See Promise in BeeGate

Beekeepers are expected to trial BeeGate this autumn and Midlands Apiaries will be among them.

"Reinvasion is a big issue for us and I suspect it is for most beekeepers," says Martin Laas, head research apiarist at the Canterbury company.

Midlands plan to trial BeeGate on selected hives and compare its impact to that of Bayvarol this autumn, and Laas sees great promise in the treatment he has followed since it was first used overseas.

"So long as there are no resistance issues with the active chemical, then it is going to solve some massive issues with varroa management in autumn, winter and potentially early spring."

They plan to apply the treatment when honey boxes are removed in February and hope it can be effective through until late winter, or early spring to "get us through the reinvasion period and out the other side", Laas says.

That other side currently starts with spring treatments applied in August.

"If BeeGate solves the reinvasion issue then we will have more confidence to push out our spring treatment until later. When I first started with Midlands in 2012 we were putting out spring treatments in October. Every year since then it has been pushed back by a couple of weeks and we have now settled on August. So hopefully BeeGate can help us push back in the other direction."

They have yet to determine how the BeeGate strips will be fixed to their hives, but Laas points out that it is something beekeepers will want to get right the first time, as well as blocking any alternate entry points, to ensure the treatment is effective.

"Boxes with holes in them could have issues," he says, adding, "you might see a bit of duct tape floating around on hives."

Twenty-tonne Honey Tank Dwarfs Others

Manuka Orchard's new 20-tonne blend tank in Paengaroa is believed to be the biggest in the country, perhaps even twice as big as any other.

Only 18 months after launching, Paengaroa honey storage facility Manuka Orchard continues to expand with installation of a 20-tonne blending tank recently – believed to be double the size of any other honey tank in the country. The installation has been made to help beekeepers meet the demands of international honey buyers and put more money in Kiwi beekeepers' pockets. With a 15-tonne blend already completed, returns are just around the corner, Manuka Orchard owner Logan Bowyer believes.

Previously the facility's largest blending tank was three tonne and most large packers are believed to have eight to 10 tonne tanks, putting the Manuka Orchard installation in a league of its own.

The Bay of Plenty facility stores honey for beekeepers from all around the country, but mostly the North Island, and Bowyer says the 20-tonne tank has been installed primarily to meet the demands of international buyers who come to him.

"I think, as an industry, we are heading towards needing larger batch sizes if we want to provide New Zealand rewarewa, kamahi, or any other type of monofloral honey to the international market.

I have a lot of small batches of these honeys in storage, so if it looks and tastes like rewarewa then we should put it in a big batch and see what we can do with it," Bowyer says.

Installation of the new tank was only completed in September and a 15-tonne batch of honey was blended and drummed off soon after. The inaugural blend was made up of three batches of honey, all from the same producer. Testing showed the resulting 50 drums of honey was well homogenised, and Bowyer says they have added an estimated $40,000 to the overall value of the beekeeper's honey.

The initial batches were a non-manuka, multifloral manuka and monofloral manuka and were blended to form a UMF 10+ monofloral manuka honey. The $40,000 figure was the difference between the sum of what Bowyer believes it may have sold for in its individual batches, compared to what buyers are willing to pay for UMF 10+ honey.

"Not only do I think we have added $40,000 worth of value, but he couldn't sell the non-manuka and he couldn't sell the multi because nobody wanted to buy it for the price we valued it at. So that is a conservative $40,000 saving," Bowyer says.

The non-manuka honey used had many of the qualities of manuka honey, but scored low on the 2-MAP test.

While he is happy to see value added to beekeepers' product and a potential solution to some of the backlog of honey in New Zealand, Bowyer believes longer term the industry should be looking to add even more value to honey than what large batch blends can provide.

"I think the industry needs to be aware there is some advantages and disadvantages with larger volume batches going forward. The disadvantage is we are not going to be adding the value where, ideally, I want to, which is right back to the hive.

"However, at the moment it is hard work to move all these little batches of beekeepers' honey. I think what the big players are looking for is a constant honey type at a larger volume, but it is not necessarily what the answer is going forward. This is a way to get the large amount of North Island, or New Zealand honey out there and in a pot as rewarewa, kamahi or whatever it is, instead of just as individual beekeepers' honey."

The tank was purchased via Trademe in December last year and had previously been used in the dairy industry in Taranaki to store milk for raising calves. At that time, Bowyer expected to have it "in before Christmas".

However other things took priority until more recently when Bowyer's other business, Manuka Engineering which specialises in the design and build of innovative honey processing equipment, modified the tank and stirrer to suit the requirements of honey blending.

This year Manuka Orchard has also built another room to store up to 150 pallets, or 600 drums, of honey at 20°c, as demand for their services grow and the business goes from strength to strength.

"Only 18 months ago I was just a small-time engineer working in the shed by myself, now I presume we have the largest blending tank in the country and in excess of 800 tonnes of honey on site," Bowyer says.

"At the moment we are focused on helping beekeepers get back to having positive stories," he says, adding, "this is just another step and I don't imagine it will be our biggest tank."

What's in a Frame?

Wooden hive frames have been in regular use for hundreds of years and more recently HIP (High Impact Polystyrene) plastic alternatives have filled hives around the world. Now however, Ecrotek have evolved framing material further with their soon-to-be-released BioForme frames. Made from organic matter to form a "bio-plastic", BioForme frames leave less of a negative impact on the environment at both beginning and end of their life while maintaining many of the benefits of the usual plastic frames, according to their inventors.

Since 2017 the innovations team at Ecrotek has been trying to find a solution to the problems associated with disposing of plastic frames, such as the resulting emissions from burning American foulbrood (AFB) infected material and the slow breakdown time of damaged or aged frames sent to the landfill.

"There were a lot of technologies out there that we could have chosen which would have made it possible for us to say 'it is biodegradable', but they wouldn't necessarily have been any better for the environment," says Alastair Binney, innovations manager at Ecrotek.

"We danced around a few things like that, but at the end of the day it wasn't just about being a bio-plastic, it was about being carbon neutral and burnable."

AFB infected BioForme frames can be burnt with zero waste, while damaged frames can be composted.

While Binney and his team wish to keep the details of their suppliers close to their chest, they can confirm that the materials used in BioForme frames are primarily plant based. Suppliers have also provided certification that the frames' production is carbon neutral, and produces 81 percent less greenhouse gases than a standard HIP frame.

"It has a lot of the benefits of wood, environmentally, but a lot of the design benefits of plastic," Binney says.

"The reason people like plastic is that it does not blow out in extraction and you can be rougher with it. So, you get all those benefits while still being able to maintain the marketing aspect of environmental benefits. Or as a hobbyist you may feel better to use a product which is better for the environment."

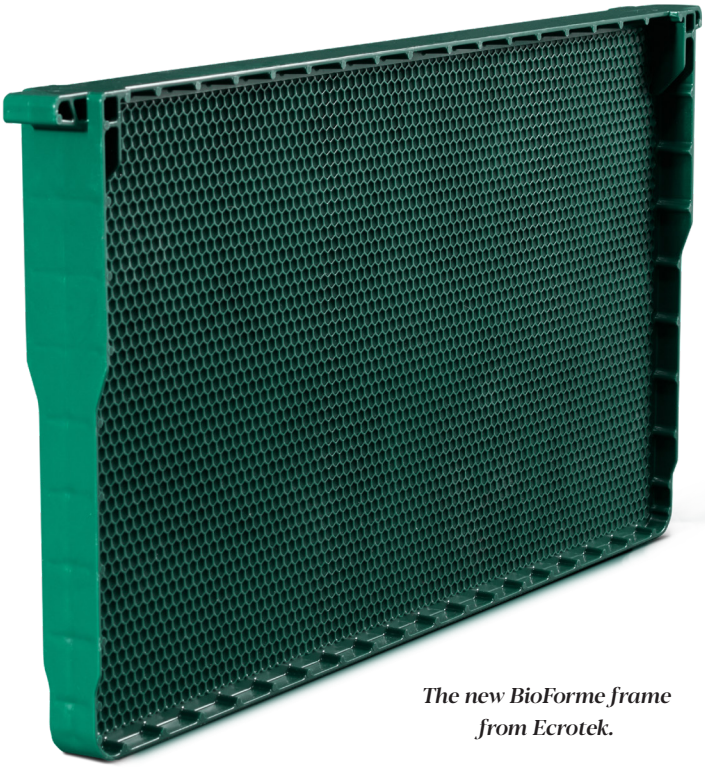
BioForme frames were announced to the beekeeping public last month with a "one free full-depth frame" giveaway, with the response to that being encouraging, Ecrotek marketing manager Rob Owens says.

Delivery of those frames, all around the country, is expected to take place over the next month and the new product is likely to go on sale later this year, initially in the full-depth size.

Ecrotek have yet to finalise a price for BioForme frames, but Owens says they hope to be able to compete with wooden frames on price.

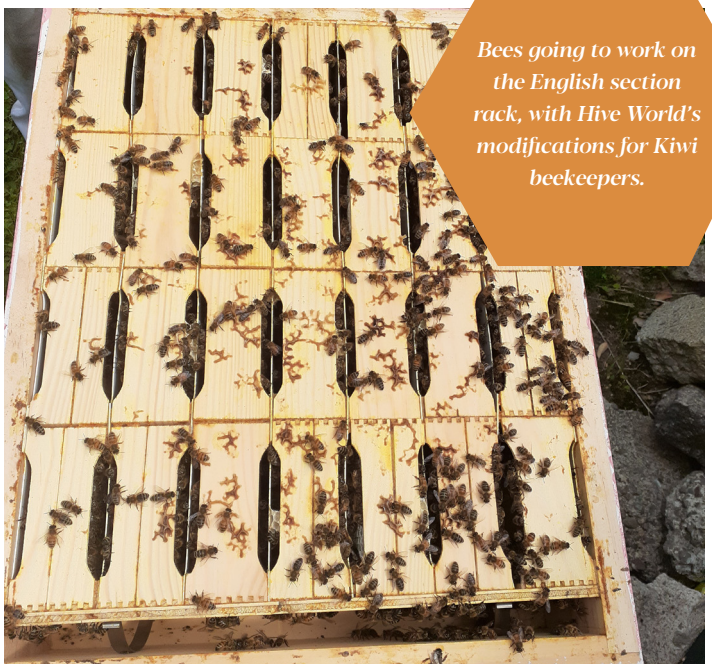
For Binney, it is exciting to see a product which has taken the best part of three years to engineer, heading to market.

"The main thing is to get everyone to give it a go. No one is going to swap out all their frames overnight so it is a matter of getting people to try it for themselves and see what they think of it," Binney says.



The new BioForme frame from Ecrotek.

Comb Honey Adaptations



Bees going to work on the English section rack, with Hive World's modifications for Kiwi beekeepers.

Anyone who has attempted to produce comb honey knows it takes adaptable management of hives, changing with the situation presented by the conditions and the bees. Recently, adaptions have also been made by those suppling comb honey products, with both Ceracell and Hive World altering well established products from the United States and England to better fit in New Zealand hives.

Providing beekeepers with a practical and cost-effective system to produce comb honey has driven Ceracell's Thomas Clow to invent a product to more easily adapt the "Ross rounds" comb honey system to New Zealand conditions.

Ceracell have supplied complete "half-depth" Ross round kits since soon after the Clow family purchased the beekeeping supply company in 2014. While the system, which allows bees to draw comb and pack honey directly to a container, was ideal for honey boxes in the United States, modifications had to be made to fit the differing dimensions of New Zealand honey boxes. Those modifications were costly though.

"We found the round comb was popular among hobbyists, but was capitally expensive for commercial beekeepers to get into," Clow says.

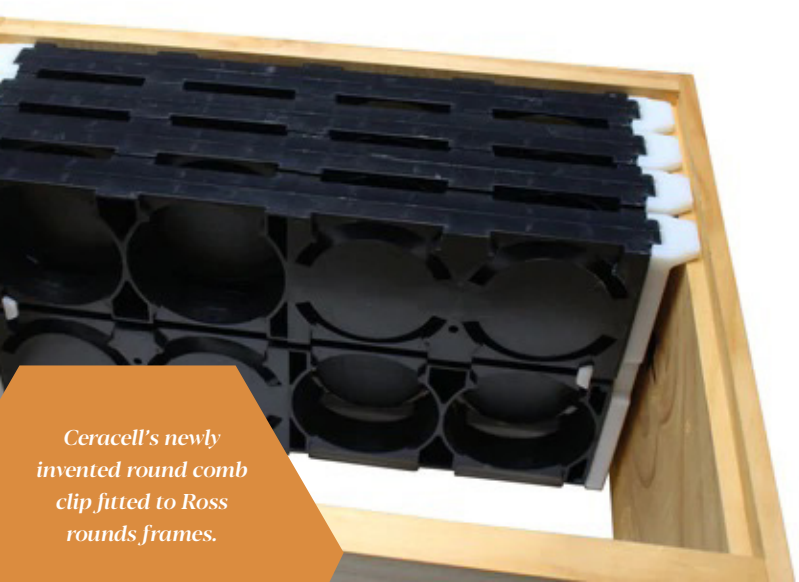
That has led to Clow's design of a clip mechanism that easily attaches to either end of a Ross round frame to hold a double row of the rounds, to fit a standard New Zealand full-depth box.

"The good thing about the clips is you don't need to have your entire full-depth box full of round comb. You could have one or two then the remainder of the box standard frames, so you can slowly integrate the comb honey and see if it sells. If it does, it is a cost-effective way to get into round comb without having to buy a specialised super."

Clow has a patent pending for the clips, which went on sale through Ceracell recently, but summer 2020-21 will mark the first season they will be used in hives.

"There will be a bit of trial and error, but I don't think there will be any major issues. The clip works really well and holds the round comb perfectly fine. If you push them all up together it is just like having a round comb special super anyway.

"The round comb hasn't been changed in 60 years. Adding this little clip might add something to it, so we are pretty happy about that."



Ceracell's newly invented round comb clip fitted to Ross rounds frames.

HIVE WORLD

Comb honey options have become a speciality of another supply company too, with Hive World in Wellington stocking a range of products which they have had to make work for Kiwi beekeepers.

The most popular of those is the traditional wooden English section rack.

"We import the flatpacks from England and make up a rack to put them in," Hive World owner Rod Williams says.

"The little boxes are designed to go into a National hive, an English hive, with slightly different dimensions. In England they put them in a frame, but you can't do that here because of the size of our box. So, I have made a rack to fit them in.

"It is a half deck rack, with supports beneath, and with it you get cardboard boxes to put your finished sections in."

Williams has also made adaptions to a three-quarter depth frame to fit eight 250-gram comb honey plastic cassettes in, while also stocking several other products for producing comb honey.

His interest in the various systems and desire to adapt them to suit Kiwi beekeepers is not limited to making sales either he says.

"I run the three-quarter cassettes in my own hives and have had some really nice honey from them.

"I am a bit of a connoisseur of comb honey. I just love it."

Cost-Effective Cardboard Strip Hits the Market

Last month *Apiarist's Advocate* profiled the increasingly popular use of oxalic acid-glycerine solutions to treat hives for varroa mite, detailing various mediums used by beekeepers to administer the formula. Since then Beequip have developed the "Beequip Strip", an environmentally friendly, low cost device to administer hive treatments, which went on sale for the first time this month.

Food-grade cardboard packed densely and cut into 30mm wide by 388mm long lengths make up Beequip Strips, a medium offering benefits over "any old cardboard" which beekeepers are commonly using to administer hive treatments, according to their creator Russell Smith.

"There have been a lot of beekeepers using cardboard, but not everybody has been able to source the right type and consequently have just been using whatever cardboard they can get their hands on. Many have still got good results, but I can see that the right sort of cardboard is very effective and a whole lot cheaper than alternatives," the Beequip owner says.

"A lot of cardboard has unknown recycled content in the middle of it, whereas this cardboard is only made from food-grade pulp."

The density of the Beequip strips make them ideal for soaking up adequate amounts of treatment solutions and also more difficult for bees to remove from hives, resulting in a longer-lasting treatment period, Smith says.

The Motueka-based supplier has hives of his own in which he has carried out successful testing of Beequip strips, but says most of the feedback about them has come from trials carried out by larger commercial beekeepers.

The dry Beequip strips retail for between 12 and 25 cents a strip, depending on the quantity ordered. They come with a recommendation to use three per brood box if used in conjunction with an oxalic acid-glycerine solution.

They also come pre-creased for easy folding post soaking, which makes them more practical to handle than cardboard alternatives that usually need to be folded prior to soaking. Beequip also offer a range of equipment to aid in their preparation and they are environmentally friendly so can be discarded on site, Smith says.

"With our method it is only a few seconds per hive to whip the old strips out and put the new ones in. I've gone out of my way to design a system which means very little labour and just good functionality."

Smith says he is excited to offer a product which gives beekeepers another tool to support hive health and which he believes has plenty going for it.

"Number one; it makes treatment very cheap, number two; it is easier to dispose of the waste, and three; it is effective," he says, adding "It's another option and beekeepers can decide what they want to do."

What are the Key Election Issues for Apiculture?

As the country nears a national election, set for October 17, some leading industry figures have provided insight into what they see as the key issues pertaining to apiculture which government can affect and which beekeepers may want to be aware before making their voting decision.

Some common themes emerged from industry insiders' insights on election issues, with supporting honey exports, improving biosecurity, reducing compliance costs and a need for more research, all outlined as areas in which government can assist apiculture.

Several people noted the value of apiculture in strengthening our economy and aiding the recovery from recession, and that politicians should be supporting apiculture through not only helping gain added value for honey, but as a vehicle for driving other primary industries through pollination.

There is scepticism around the influence politicians can have though, with Otago beekeeper Allen McCaw pointing out that, while there may be areas which government can aid apiculture, he doesn't expect it to take priority.

That is true in Northland where, despite the Northland seat being a key political battleground, neither leading politician fighting for it have offered meaningful support to the Tai Tokerau Miere collective of beekeepers striving for a rework of the manuka honey export standard.

KARIN KOS

Chief executive Apiculture New Zealand

There are several key issues where the incoming government can assist apiculture, namely.

Supporting sustainable beekeeping in key areas (around best practice and profitability): Actively reducing cost of compliance in areas government has influence around, such as audits, export costs, cost of doing business. Also, managing hive density and apiary proximity remains a key concern for our members and we want the next government to join us in exploring ways to encourage the use of best-practice beekeeping behaviour.

Focus on trade access to increase honey sales: Many beekeepers' minds are currently squarely focused on selling their honey, we need government to secure new, and improve existing, trade agreements. For example, ApiNZ has started proactively engaging with the government on addressing the high UK and EU tariffs on honey – the next government needs to focus efforts to substantially lower, if not eliminate these tariffs in upcoming EU and UK free trade agreement negotiations, as well as supporting us in opening other country opportunities, like Mexico and Vietnam.

Strengthening biosecurity commitment: We are looking for the next government to provide more certainty about the way it will prevent and manage biosecurity incursions that might affect our industry. The delayed review of the Biosecurity Act leaves industry vulnerable, and industry participants must be included in government decision making in any response to an outbreak. We also expect the new government to support our opposition to honey and bee product imports.

DR TERRY BRAGGINS

Research and development manager Analytica Laboratories

The NZ honey industry has a number of pressing issues to address, such as hive health, use of glyphosate as a weed killer and contamination of honey, competition with adulterated honeys internationally, and the threat of "Australian Manuka" honey. However, apiculture's ability to fund research and development to counter these threats has been hampered by the lack of a honey producers' levy.

We need a government who can assist apiculture and coordinate with industry, the government's funding organisations, plus research providers, to develop a long-term strategic plan for the honey industry.

RUSSELL BERRY

Co-owner and director Arataki Honey, and NZ Beekeeping Inc Board member

There are many areas where the government can assist apiculture and business, primarily:

Improved biosecurity: Through such measures as sentinel hives to be checked regularly, ideally every week, at all points of entry of goods and people. Upon finding any exotic diseases, we should immediately eradicate hives within 5km radius, with compensation paid. A delimiting survey is needed after eradication, not before, to make sure eradication is successful. We are miles behind Australia's biosecurity – hence they do not have Varroa, we do. Ban all imports of bee products into NZ, to reduce biosecurity risks.

Valuing Beekeeping Businesses: Government should recognise that honey, propolis, beeswax etc, are of minimal importance to NZ's economy compared with the pollination that bees carry out. 96 percent of the value of bees is created through pollination, but most of the income for beekeepers is from honey. The Government should not over-legislate beekeepers or the rest of NZ. We must encourage people to work productively, otherwise we may become a Third World country. Our leaders should encourage honesty and common sense – will five days extra sick pay per year, do this?

Bureaucrats in Wellington and Auckland must learn to involve people at the coal face, with meaningful communication, not just asking for their comments at the busiest time of the year, then taking little notice of those comments. I ask government to encourage family businesses and reduce their overhead costs, so that the corporates with high turnover are not the only ones that can afford to pay the overheads. Often the family beekeeping businesses are the most efficient beekeepers. They are very observant and good at modifying their beekeeping to meet what they see, in a very rapid manner, which larger organisations have difficulty in doing.

Reducing Compliance: Compliance costs have risen hugely over the past 10 years. Free Trade is a big driver to the NZ Government, but the wishes of New Zealanders should be the most important. Some of the compliance forced on beekeepers by government is, I suspect, because China demanded it. NZ is too much in the hands of China and government should do more to promote sales of NZ products to other countries, plus do everything within its powers to stop China owning and running NZ, both through shareholdings and buying businesses. We do not want profits earned in NZ going back to China.

JOHN RAWCLIFFE

Spokesman for Manuka Charitable Trust

Given we are technically in a recession, we need to trade our way out of this and grow our export markets based on a truly unique New Zealand position – primary industry has been a backbone of the NZ economy, and the greatest growth has been in added-value specialty products, as opposed to bulk exports of raw goods.

The honey industry has made significant steps in acting in a united fashion and developing the opportunities for growth it has; the marketing of manuka and other monofloral honeys, advancing on the 'clean, green' position, building an artisanal model, and recognising the unique cultural position we hold. The honey industry can continue to significantly increase the value of its exports.

This election is about those parties that can demonstrate a programme of investment, recognising and assisting the growth of the added-value position internationally.

ALLEN MCCAW

Owner-director Milburn Apiaries (Otago), former president of the National Beekeeping Association

I don't think there is anything that politicians can do for our industry's situation, other than through individual government departments assisting us to export as much as possible. That is going to be our saviour, the local market is not going to save us.

Covid-19 is dominating the politics, but I think that, economically, our industry was heading into a Covid-type situation before we even got it in the country. People were already looking inwards, not expanding and it is going to be increasingly difficult to get government funding for research projects because industry is struggling to contribute to them.

It seems the only aspect of beekeeping which is appealing to the politicians at the moment is if they can get some political mileage out of 'saving the bees' as it were.

SEAN GOODWIN

CEO 100% Pure New Zealand Honey

From an apiculture perspective, I see two main themes. Firstly, the focus from government on delivering free trade benefits that make NZ honey more competitive globally. At the same time, supporting the manuka honey trademark application and resisting pressures in some markets for protectionism.

Secondly, continued vigilance on biosecurity and pest management. We need to ensure our honey can continue to be marketed with a 'clean, green' story. For that to happen we need apiculture to be considered when decisions are made regarding environmental changes to farming. We also need help to manage weeds and pests in a way that does not damage our international reputation, including realistic standards and testing regimes that are accepted by overseas regulators.

In terms of future opportunities, I think there is potential for apiculture products to be supported through increase science and innovation. Bees play a huge role in biodiversity, supporting the growth of trees, flowers and other plants, as well as pollination of crops, so there could be an opportunity to do more work around how they can help deliver our national environmental targets.

WENDY MOSSOP

Owner-general manager Mossop's Honey

While there are some major issues that need addressing immediately, such as action on replacing the Resource Management Act and a review of all legislation pushed through under Covid-19, issues pertaining to immigration and employment are also pressing for us and other small and medium enterprises.

As an employer we see the proposed increase in sick days or public holidays as troubling, especially when combined with ongoing increases in the minimum wage.

We have not accessed the government's financial support for employers this year because the process was difficult for a business that, financially, has one sector performing poorly and one well. The process of accessing this support needs to be made easier.

Immigration barriers are a serious issue too and we need a government that will allow immigration for family members of those workers who have been in NZ for at least three years. Under current rules, we are at high risk of losing staff who want to return to their family members overseas.

DR JOHN CRAIG

Spokesman for Tai Tokerau Miere and Northland beekeeper

I don't know if politicians are going to be able to help Tai Tokerau Miere's plight at this stage as they will just say it has all been handed over to the Manuka Charitable Trust and Te Pītau Ltd. If we could put some pressure on that group it would be helpful, but that is not a political issue.

I have met with Matt King (MP for Northland), he has not stood up and said he will do anything, but has put out some written questions which achieve nothing in the political spectrum. Shane Jones, I have not met with, but I know Maori colleagues who have and he is supportive, but nothing has come of it.

The politicians accept there is a problem, say there is a problem, but they won't act because it has all been handed over to the Trust. They don't necessarily have the mana of some people on that trust though, so they are not likely to try to tell them what to do.

There are some internal issues in the industry which are highly important, such as stopping bulk exports of honey which are then packaged offshore and called manuka, and no politician is going to step in on that as it is irrelevant to most people.

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JODY MITCHELL

Owner-director Kaimai Range Honey (Bay of Plenty)

Small business need support from government to help reduce compliance costs. In beekeeping an obvious example is that RMP audits should be cut back to an annual audit (as most people are only extracting for a few months a year or storing honey). There is very little difference between the Full Scope Audit & the Limited Scope Audits, where the same paperwork is used again. It's a waste of time and the compliance costs are extortionate.

Funding of research is needed in our industry so a government that supports research and development would be beneficial. We need the science to determine and back up the individual characteristics and properties of our unique native honeys. Work also needs to be done on the issue of C4 levels in manuka honey, along with the issue of some high MGO manuka honey being classified as non-manuka.

The Irish Drone

Settling down and starting the family

ANTHONY MORGAN

Apiarist's Advocate first met Anthony "The Irish Drone" Morgan in a story published in January, with the Irishman part way through a working holiday in New Zealand and experiencing his first foray into beekeeping. Bitten by the beekeeping bug, Morgan timed his run home just right, landing a day before the world went into lockdown and just in time for the northern spring where he began an educational and entertaining first season keeping the "Irish Black Bee". Here he brings Apiarist's Advocate readers up to date with his latest adventures.

My trip to New Zealand last November proved to be a very positive and lasting experience and, as much as NZ would have been the ideal country to get stranded in, I was glad to get home a day before Covid closed borders all around the world. I had affairs back in Ireland to attend to after three months of carefree living in a sunnier clime.

The six weeks I spent working with Manuka marvels Paddy and Laura Dawkins at Pyramid Apiaries in Marlborough, and Clayton and Karen Hartnell in Martinborough, proved to be exactly what I needed to cut my beekeeping teeth. Those six short weeks of hands-on exposure introduced me to a world I knew nothing about, but for years had wanted to know all about.

Anthony "The Irish Drone" Morgan

Upon my return to Ireland and County Wexford my first important task was to move back into my own home after approximately 11 years of working abroad and out of county. At the tender age of 48, I knew in my heart it was time to settle down and start a family - of bees!

Wexford is known as the 'sunny south east', but nobody living here has ever figured out why they call it that. My house stands on a one acre site, a paltry parcel of land by NZ standards but perfectly adequate for me and my hobby hives.

IN THE HA'PENNY PLACE!

Aware that spring was approaching, I began to research where to buy my first colony of bees and what type of hive to buy. Here British National or Commercial-style hives are most common. Langstroth apparently has been tried and tested, but it is the British National which is widely used, as it suits our less productive climate better than Langstroth.

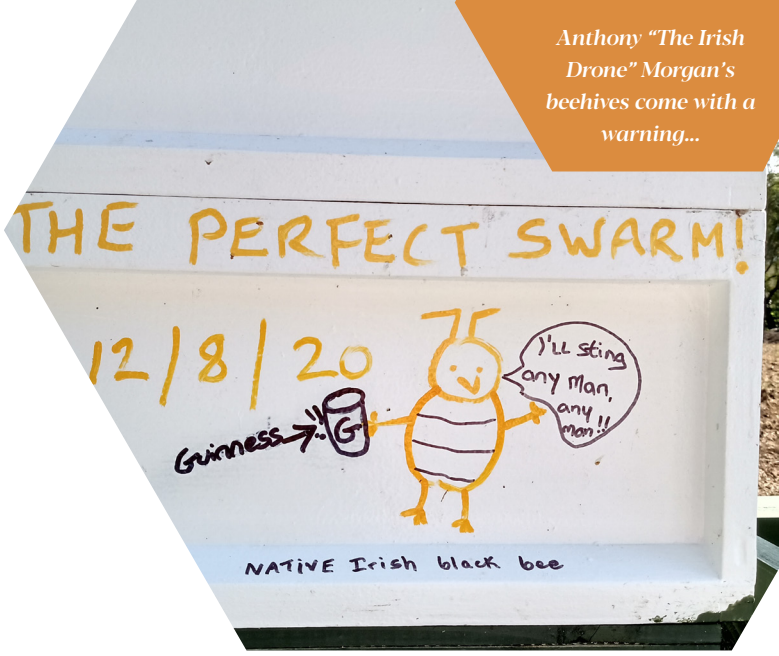
Ultimately, we use smaller hives than in NZ and many, if not most, beekeepers run only one brood box. Some run 1.5 but it makes for more consumption of honey when the bees are rained off or through the winter months.

Years ago there was a honey bee research station in Wexford and I recently read an archived document of theirs online where they said that a beekeeper in Ireland should be able to achieve an average of 20kg honey production per-hive per-annum. They were achieving an average of 25kg. In NZ it felt like I witnessed 10 times that amount!

But, as a Dublin-based beekeeping equipment supplier told me recently, "Ireland is in the ha'penny place when it comes to beekeeping." He works as a courier during winter. So, that said, I think it's wise to stick to my 9-5 job as a sparkie rather than relying on my native Irish black bees to bring home the bacon!

STARTING THE FAMILY

Around mid-April, I bought my first colony. I saw the ad online and went to see the bee man, who was located about 35 minutes' drive away.



Anthony "The Irish Drone" Morgan's beehives come with a warning...

In his bee yard of mostly home-made wooden hives, an overwintered poly-nuc was bursting at the seams and almost ready to swarm.

"That's the problem with polystyrene hives," Tom said. "They bring the bees on too early in the spring."

To me it was an opportunity though.

I quickly asserted that this was the hive I was interested in. I drove back home and patiently awaited my Amazon order of equipment for two National cedar hives. Within the week I was unboxing, brushing on linseed oil, assembling the screened bottom boards, the roofs, brood boxes, supers and frames. It was a truly exciting time.

Ready now to collect my new family, I arranged to call back to Tom's house one evening at dusk. When I arrived he wasn't in great form and was tut-tutting at my lack of preparedness – all I had brought was one of my hives. No bee suit, no gloves. Just a thin camo veil that would do well to stop a mosquito. My suit was at home. I didn't envisage doing much, just driving my bees home.

When Tom saw my mosquito net he said, "you've got to be joking Anthony. This isn't New Zealand. These are Irish bees!" Now I know what he meant.

Tom went off to the house and returned with a dirty torn old suit that I imagined his dogs were using as a bed, judging by the smell.

As he was transferring the nuc frames into my hive, he got stung on the face. He had forgotten to fasten up his veil. I tried hard to stifle my laughter because he was already in bad form and now really peeved off.

Although he was on his knees at the time, he wasn't saying prayers. In raised tones he exclaimed "I don't give a *@#! Anthony! Sure, what can ya do? It's happened now, I don't give a *@!#!" But clearly he did.

In any case, €200 later and the bees safely in my van, we parted on good terms. Next morning I placed the hive on my homemade stand where I could view it from my kitchen window. My family was begun, and soon I would be taking in runaways.

Next month we carry on the story of the Irish Drone's first season of beekeeping in the Emerald Isle, where entertaining characters and creatures continue to abound.

Views From Outside the Apiary:

Election Time

IAN FLETCHER

Ian Fletcher is a former chief executive of the UK Patents Office, free trade negotiator with the European Commission, biosecurity chief executive for the Queensland government and head of New Zealand's security agency. These days he is a commercial flower grower in the Wairarapa and consultant to the apiculture industry through both the Manuka Charitable Trust and NZ Beekeeping Inc.

It's election time and the issue of the day is Covid-19. Bottom line up front: I'm not going to suggest who to vote for (that's for you and your conscience). My only advice is to make sure you do vote.

But I have some thoughts on Covid, on how we've done, and what any sensible government might do next.

Firstly, we (New Zealand) have really done well. A recent University of California paper looked at health and economic costs over the *whole likely life* of the epidemic, not just a first wave, using an econometric (ie quantitative model) and said:

"A[n] outcome of our study is that strong suppression strategies lead to lower total costs than taking no action…" ["Containment efficiency and control strategies for the Corona pandemic costs" by Claudius Gros* , Roser Valenti, Lukas Schneider, Kilian Valenti, and Daniel Gros]

That's what we did. Health data supports that view: as a country we did the right thing, more or less. David Skilling, an expatriate New Zealand economist has looked at small versus large countries, and finds evidence that small is beautiful – mainly due to greater social engagement.

So far so good. But history shows that voters look ahead, not back. What's next? As Bill Clinton said, it's the economy. How should we think about politicians' economic ideas?

We can see that government needs to build capacity to address rolling public-health crises, to compensate for the private sector's limited ability to withstand sustained economic disruption (especially in a small economy), and tackle pervasive social inequality – not least because that's the only way we will nail the virus.

Conventional economic thinking won't cut it. Only government has the economic capacity to take on the risks and mobilise resources on the scale we need. The ideas of the 1980s – privatisation, de-regulation, small government generally – are really not up to it. And Covid-19 has shown the government needs to be competent as well as big enough to be effective. A whole new way of thinking is needed.

If we get this right on Covid, we'll be better placed to tackle other problems too, like social inequality and climate change.

What does this mean for the polls? Look for innovative thinking, for a commitment to actual competence, and for a willingness to think again about the relationship between government, society and the economy. Beekeepers' survival depends on this wider stuff as well as the industry's immediate challenges.

Don't forget to vote!

Nick Taylor: "The NZ honey sector is as well positioned as any to endure Covid and come out the other side stronger than before".

Supplied Insights

NICK TAYLOR
NZ Beeswax general manager

Spring has struck and, as we close out another winter season, I have reflected on the tumultuous time the world has experienced since last spring, and what amazing change can be forced upon us in a 12 month period.

It is hard to believe that it was only September last year that myself and two fellow directors attended Apimondia in Montreal, meeting with our international supply partners and looking for the latest ideas to apply to the NZ beekeeping industry. Today it is hard to contemplate domestic travel, let alone a trip halfway around the world in pursuit of business innovation.

At that conference, the biggest issue facing the global industry seemed to be adulteration of honey – as evidenced by the disqualification of close to 50 percent of entries in the honey competition due to concern over

product authenticity. While this is an extremely important issue in the context of consumer confidence in our products, it does seem to pale somewhat against the dramatic impact Covid-19 had in a global context, just six months later.

This impact has manifested itself in societal and economic disruption on a global basis, the likes and scale of which has not been witnessed in our lifetime. For many businesses, this has meant a focus on survival in the face of uncertain consumer demand, disrupted supply lines, a changing regulatory environment, and very difficult operating conditions.

Adaptation, managing key stakeholders and a focus on keeping people safe will be the key attributes that see businesses survive and thrive as the "Covid crisis" moves through its various uncertain stages.

The NZ honey sector is as well positioned as any to endure Covid and come out the other side stronger than before. Honey is a natural, quality product that is appealing to the global health conscious consumer. New Zealand, as a food producer, has a reputation for food safety, authenticity, and security of supply. Kiwi beekeepers have a world-beating reputation for their innovation, experience, and expertise. New Zealand is geographically well positioned to supply the burgeoning Asian market, where demography, rising incomes and urbanisation are underpinning demand for high quality food products.

Add to this the fact that some very talented ex-pat New Zealanders are returning home, bringing with them overseas innovation, networks, and capital. These people will be seeking to align themselves with businesses in industries that have a bright future. The New Zealand honey sector is one such industry, providing opportunities for returnees and the businesses that partner with them.

However, as a sector we cannot be complacent. Like so many of New Zealand's primary industries the quality of the products we produce starts right back at the farmgate.

For us, that means the hive. The practices we adopt there and right through the supply chain will ultimately impact on the value that accrues to the industry as a whole. In this day and age of increasing complexity, disruption and consumer preference, that is a big challenge.

For NZ Beeswax, our absolute focus is on bringing the beekeeper the best products, knowledge and tools to assist beekeepers with that challenge. In doing so we have un-fettered confidence that, by beekeepers doing the right thing, a bright future will prevail for the honey sector.

Nick Taylor has been the general manager of New Zealand Beeswax since 2013, email nick@beeswax.co.nz

Zooming in on Research

Highlighting the "bright and enthusiastic minds" carrying out research projects relevant to New Zealand apiculture, while communicating their methodologies and findings to a wider audience were the major benefits of the 1st NZ Honey Bee Research Symposium on September 7.

Around 70 participants from across New Zealand tuned in to the online Zoom call, made up of 24 presenting researchers, joined by fellow scientists and interested parties from within the industry.

When the Symposium concept was first conceived, by Dr Phil Lester of Victoria University of Wellington's biology department, it was hoped it would take place at the venue of Apiculture New Zealand's National Conference on the day prior to that event. However, cancellation of the conference this year, along with ongoing Covid-19 concerns, meant the inaugural Symposium was moved online.

"We were really happy with it," says co-organiser Dr Ashley Mortensen, a senior scientist at Plant and Food Research.

"Other participants I spoke to said they enjoyed it and thought it was valuable to get a broader scope as to what is going on."

As well as presenting their work to the apiculture industry, it was particularly valuable for scientists to grow their knowledge of what work fellow researchers are carrying out and to identify areas of overlap and synergy, of which they hadn't been aware, Mortensen says.

In the future the Symposium will be held in person, if possible, to foster the informal, but valuable, discussions which are made by face-to-face networking. On the Zoom call efforts were made to replicate these conversations, with a 45-minute workshop taking place in the afternoon of the day-long program.

A key topic of discussion in the workshop groups was the question of whether it was realistic to aim for eradication of varroa mite from New Zealand (with participants recording close to a 50-50 split on that vote), while the use of gene-editing to reach that end was debated. Another key takeaway was the need to retain in apiculture those researchers who had "bright and enthusiastic minds", such as those who had presented at the Symposium, and strategies around gaining funding for their work.

ApiNZ chief executive Karin Kos kicked-off the event by welcoming attendees to the online gathering. She also recognised the challenge of ensuring the correct research should be carried out, without an industry levy to aid it.

The afternoon session was introduced by Jane Lorimer, president of New Zealand Beekeeping Inc, who identified a wide range of areas where further research is needed, including into the "goodness of honey and other hive products".

Viewers were able to pose questions to researchers following their 10-minute presentations, with most topics generating healthy discussion.

The day was capped with acknowledgement of the best presentations from students, with Anya Noble of Waikato University taking out the award for the best talk after detailing her work on identifying bacteria on manuka leaf surface and its effect on honey quality.

Club Catch-Up

Brought to you by Hive World

Buzz Club Otaki

In the first instalment of a regular series of stories profiling beekeeping clubs around New Zealand, we begin in close to the middle of the country, on the Kapiti Coast, and meet the enthusiastic group at Buzz Club Otaki who have created an inclusive environment and connection to their community.

Otaki might seem a small town to host a beekeeping club, but the settlement of around 3500 people is centrally placed between Levin and Paekakariki, the area from which their almost 100 club members reside. That makes for a short commute at 7pm on the third Wednesday of every month to the Buzz Club meetings at Waitohu School in Otaki.

It is at these meetings that the club has built up a welcoming environment which has fostered steady growth in numbers since establishing six years ago.

"We focus on a social environment of learning and sharing and tend to avoid the politics of beekeeping," club president Shaun Wakeford explains.

"We have had a very good base of members and meetings are well attended, regularly around 40 people. It is popular and the key to it is being inclusive and friendly."

Wakeford has a small commercial beekeeping business, but most members of the club are hobbyists.

"The Kapiti Coast is one of the retirement areas for many New Zealanders. So, amongst the club we have a number of lifestyle retirees who have beehives and bring a wealth of knowledge and work experience to the club," Wakeford says.

Meetings run for two hours, with the first hour dedicated to a guest speaker, followed by a break and then club business to close.

"We like to have a guest speaker and, after six years, finding speakers who are beekeeping appropriate can be a little challenging. Over the years we have had some really interesting speakers and some good stuff discussed though," the president says.

In September Hive World owner-director Rod Williams gave a presentation on comb honey, previous to that the Kapiti mayor spoke to the club and this month they plan to be joined by Victoria University of Wellington professor of ecology and entomology Dr Phil Lester.

The club was formed after a group of keen apiarists, Wakeford included, ran introductory beekeeping courses. While they no longer host those courses per-se, they still aim to foster beekeeping knowledge through the hands-on experience of practiced members who are open to working alongside new beekeepers.

Buzz Club members also have hives at several schools, strengthening their connection to the Kapiti Coast area, while also publishing a regular newsletter and hosting a Facebook page.

Next meeting: 7pm, Wednesday October 21, Waitohu School.
Email: thebuzzclubotaki@gmail.com
On Facebook: @buzzclubotaki
President: Shaun Wakeford, ph 027 435 3640

Levy Submissions Close

Seventy-two submissions were received on an increase in beekeeper's annual levy proposed by the Management Agency, American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan in September.

A 16 day period, from September 9 to 25, was given to beekeepers to provide feedback on the Agency's proposal to increase the annual levy from $1.35 per colony owned, to $1.70 for the year 2020/21. The base-levy of $40 per beekeeper would remain unchanged.

The Agency will now assess the responses and provide a report to the November meeting of their Board, at which time the levy rate will be set. The decision of the Board, along with an analysis of submissions, will be provided to beekeepers by early December.

The proposed increase would raise an expected additional $269,000, of this $170,000 is earmarked to fund a review of the National Pest Management Plan.

Jess Curtis, last year's scholarship recipient

Ron Mossop Scholarship Applications Open

Beekeepers between the age of 17 and 25 have been invited to apply for the Ron Mossop Youth Scholarship by sponsors Mossop's Honey and Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ).

The scholarship was set up three years ago as a way of giving young people the best possible start in the apiculture industry. It includes $2000 to be put towards best practice training and/or set up costs. It also includes membership to ApiNZ for a year and attendance at the industry's national conference in the year of the award.

Last year Taylor Pass Honey Co. beekeeper Jess Curtis was awarded the scholarship.

Applications close October 25 and can be made at www.apinz.org.nz/scholarship-in-beekeeping/

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