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Apiarist's Advocate

News, Views & Promotions – for Beekeepers – by Beekeepers

Comvita's White Knight?

Leaders at the beleaguered mānuka honey giant welcome a takeover offer

Wedderspoon Owner Targets Comvita

Comvita Ltd is almost certain to become wholly owned by Florenz Ltd and delisted from the New Zealand Exchange. Florenz Ltd owns Wedderspoon Organic NZ Ltd, said to be New Zealand's largest seller of mānuka honey in the US. If the acquisition proceeds, about half of total monofloral mānuka honey exports will fall under the control of a company that operates outside the sphere of influence of the UMF Honey Association.

BY BRUCE ROSCOE

Comvita shareholders have been presented with an offer that they are unlikely to refuse. The alternative would be to risk liquidation of Comvita and as owners, not creditors, they would fall last in line to receive any distribution from sale proceeds of Comvita assets.

Mike Weight (left), Wedderspoon's chief operating officer, talks with Tony Wright, CEO UMF Honey Association, and Karin Kos, CEO Apiculture New Zealand, at the Wedderspoon Organic honey storage and processing facility in Rangiora, north Canterbury, circa August 2024. Source: LinkedIn.

Comvita chairperson Bridget Coates, writing to "Dear Shareholder", has put a brave face on the NZ80 cents per share offer announced 18 August, saying it represents a 67.0% premium to Comvita's closing price of NZ48 cents on 15 August. The offer, which already is agreed in writing between Florenz and Comvita, was made on the condition that Comvita's board accept and recommend it to shareholders.

The offer price values Comvita at NZD56.4m, a discount of 72.0% to the company's last full-year sales of NZD201.3m. The AUD198.6m paid for Australia's largest honey producer, Capilano Honey Ltd, in December 2018 represented a premium of 43.4% to annual sales of AUD138.5m. (As a distressed and loss-making company, an earnings-based valuation is not possible for Comvita.)

WRECKING BALL

Comvita — and to an extent the honey industry at large — has dodged a wrecking ball. Banks had already begun to wind in the secondary steel rope that pulls the ball toward the crane cab before triggering release.

The unravelling became visible in September 2024 when Comvita told NZX it had been "in discussions with its bank syndicate to agree an appropriate covenants structure", which indicated that Comvita likely was in breach of the terms under which banks had extended loans. Comvita's balance sheet at 30 June 2024 recorded three revolving credit facilities to a total NZD114m in addition to a NZD1m overdraft.

The accompanying Table, "Comvita: Drowning in Debt" shows that borrowings grew disproportionately to sales and shareholders' equity.

Comvita reported further covenant stress in December 2024, March 2025, and July 2025. The last of these — called an "EBIT" covenant — signalled that the banks had lost patience. "EBIT" abbreviates "earnings before interest and tax", which loosely equates to operating profits. The banks were all but ordering Comvita to trade profitably — and not next year. The EBIT covenant would be applied retroactively to the year already ended 30 June and to the quarter ending 30 September and half year ending 31 December.

"Florenz has agreed a standstill on enforcement action with

Comvita's banking syndicate", Coates wrote in her letter and repeated in her second announcement about the acquisition offer to NZX on the same day.

SIX-MONTH NEGOTIATION

On that 18 August morning that will live in mānuka honey history, Florenz lawyers and Comvita uploaded six documents of a total 207 pages to the NZX website. The longest — the "scheme implementation agreement", which means that Comvita has agreed to be taken over under certain conditions — notes a "confidentiality agreement" between "bidder and target" dated to 4 February 2025. The acquisition, therefore, has been under negotiation for six months and, within Florenz, planned for a longer time.

Florenz acquired Wedderspoon Organic as recently as July 2024 in a move that may have been a step calculated toward Comvita ownership.

About a month after the acquisition, Mike Tod, Florenz group chief executive, welcomed Karin Kos, chief executive, Apiculture New Zealand and Tony Wright, chief executive, UMF Honey Association, to the Wedderspoon Organic factory in Rangiora, north Canterbury. He effused on LinkedIn: "One of the highlights of my week so far has been receiving a great New Zealand honey industry 101 from two of its key leaders".

Comvita: Drowning in Debt

Years to June	Net Debt (a)	Net Debt / Sales (%)	Net Debt / Equity (%)
2020	15.5	7.3	7.3
2021	4.6	2.4	2.1
2022	25.5	12.2	11.2
2023	53.4	22.8	22.3
2024	79.7	39.6	49.6
2025	62.4	32.4	113.6

(a) NZD millions. Total borrowings less cash and cash equivalents.

Note: Calculated from Comvita financial statements. In financial statements for the June 2025 year, Comvita restates balance sheet date for the June 2023 and June 2024 years. This table references the originally stated data.

BLACK AND WHITE KNIGHTS

Florenz ultimately is owned by Masthead Ltd, the investment holding company of Mark Stewart. Although Stewart may appear as a black knight who has mounted a hostile takeover bid, in effect he is poised to become a white knight who enables Comvita to remain in business, but does so on his terms. Coates' letter and announcement to NZX hoisted a white flag high. It was a declaration that Comvita found the capital and market challenges it confronts as insurmountable.

It is possible perhaps only in the world of the Cottingley Fairies that a competing offer emerges. For one thing, there is little time.

For another, Hive & Wellness Australia Pty Ltd, the Capilano Honey brand owner which may see merit in integrating Comvita's mānuka business under an Australian flag, is itself currently the object of acquisition interest.

SCENE CHANGES FOR UMFHA

Within a short time — and for the first time since the registration of UMF Honey Association in 2002 — about half of total monofloral mānuka honey exports will fall under the control of a company that operates outside the sphere of influence of the association.

Cantabrian Mark Stewart and his mother Dame Adrienne Stewart, as ultimate owners of Florenz and with it Wedderspoon Organic, will sit at the head of companies exporting more than half of all mānuka honey from New Zealand should their takeover bid of Comvita prove successful.

Comvita in the five years to June 2024 has exported NZD684.5m of monofloral mānuka honey, which translates into an average annual share of 47.7% of the industry total. It seems likely, if not certain, that adding Wedderspoon Organic's value shipped to the US would lift the Comvita-Wedderspoon total for all markets to 50% or above.

Florenz may choose to operate Wedderspoon and Comvita as discrete or combined businesses. Wedderspoon already will know most of what Comvita knows and does, from product pricing and customer details to tea break times. Each of the playing cards in this pack is held by Stewart as sole owner and director of Masthead. Comvita likely will be disinclined to say "Trust us. We're UMF" when Wedderspoon is not. Wedderspoon has built brand value through organic certification and a dual presence over 18 years in Canada (Vancouver) and the US (Pennsylvania).

STEPS TO COMPLETION

The acquisition is in motion. "Florenz, Dame Adrienne Stewart and Mark Stewart", in a "beginning to have substantial holding" disclosure to NZX dated 17 August, record they already hold 18.387% of Comvita shares, which represents the holding of the former two largest shareholders, Li Wang and China Resources Enterprises Ltd.

Steps to acquisition completion, which is expected in December, include shareholder and high court approval. Such steps appear routine. Shareholders know they can receive NZ80c per share. Or they can continue to hold shares which, after delisting, will become untradeable.

What they cannot do is participate in any post-acquisition revitalisation of Comvita. Unlike the case of the Capilano Honey takeover, in which shareholders were offered a choice between a cash payment or new shares in the acquiring company, the door to the Comvita exit will auto-lock behind shareholders.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Australia is a wild card. Mark's mother, Dame Adrienne Stewart, is Melbourne born. Her name appears in offer documents in relation to trusts behind Masthead. The Stewart family may be predisposed to view Australia's manuka honey ambitions with sympathy.

Mark's father, Sir Robertson Stewart, participated as manufacturer and exporter in the plastics revolution of the twentieth century through an acquisition that he built into PDL Industries Ltd. Mark, who worked in his father's factories both in New Zealand and Malaysia, has refocused the family business on natural food product production and export.

Beekeepers can welcome the probable acquisition of Comvita for two reasons. It will avert a Comvita collapse and the tsunami of industry collateral damage that would result. Second, as a businessman who through manufacturing adds value, Stewart is unlikely to export honey in bulk, which practice limits returns. Through packing at home, brand value will be retained, allowing higher payout to beekeepers.

What is to become of Comvita? In the hands of a master manufacturer and investor whose family's fortune was built on plastic moulding, Comvita cannot expect its shape to remain the same.

Suggested Reading

1. **UC awards honorary doctorate to illustrious grad (27 March 2023)**
   www.canterbury.ac.nz/news-and-events/news/uc-awards-honorary-doctorate-to-illustrious-alum-mark-stewart
2. **Sir Robertson Stewart**
   www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/our-story/150th/twelve-local-heroes-trail/sir-robertson-stewart
3. **Sir Robertson Huntly Stewart 1913-2007**
   https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/robertson-huntly-stewart
4. **Lady Adrienne Stewart**
   www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-alumni/honorary-doctorates/lady-adrienne-stewart

Oxalic Acid Varroa Control Gains NZ Registration

It's been a long wait, but New Zealand's beekeepers will very soon have available to them a fully-registered, long-acting oxalic acid varroa treatment, with UK-headquartered, global apiculture supplier Vita Bee Health recently gaining the necessary approvals.

For a decade or more oxalic acid 'strips' or 'staples' have been commonly used by New Zealand's beekeepers to control varroa mite, but under an 'own-use' exemption provided by the Ministry for Primary Industries. Soon, though, beekeepers will benefit from a fully-registered, and thus proven, product with strong efficacy claims. VarroxSan is expected to hit the shelves of recently-relocated Auckland, and online, retailer Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies in October or November.

"It is long overdue," says Ceracell export and marketing manager Thomas Clow.

"We have been wanting to have an alternative product available for quite a long time, over three years of waiting."

Supply partner Vita Bee Health began the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) registration process for VarroxSan back in 2022. Hampered by Covid delays, final registration only took place on July 25 this year. The New Zealand approval for use follows successful applications in the country where VarroxSan is manufactured, Uruguay, in 2020, neighbouring Argentina in 2022, then the major market of the United States in 2024, before Costa Rica earlier this year.

"We are trying to bring it to beekeepers around the world because it is a product beekeepers are crying out for," Vita Bee Health director Sebastian Owen explains.

"It provides a constant release rate over six to eight weeks. It provides all the benefits of oxalic acid and all the benefits of a strip treatment."

Despite registration having been achieved in New Zealand, Kiwi beekeepers will have to wait at least a few months longer before VarroxSan hits the market. Popularity in the product from America

Made of food grade cardboard, impregnated with oxalic acid, VarroxSan trials have proven it to have an average efficacy rate of 96%, with treatments in the hive for six to eight weeks.

New Zealand has become the fifth country to approve oxalic-acid based varroa treatment VarroxSan for use in beehives, after a more-than-three-year application process undertaken by Vita Bee Health.

has created manufacturing backlogs, and it will take time for the product to be shipped from Uruguay to New Zealand.

"It is selling faster than we can make it. The manufacturing facility is at full capacity, working 24 hours a day, six days a week, and still struggling to keep up with demand. It's a nice problem to have," Owen says.

VarroxSan is administered to hives in the form of four food-grade cardboard strips per full brood box of bees (one strip per 2.5 frames of bees) hung over frames. Each strip contains 18.42% of oxalic acid dihydrate. Trials across Uruguay, Argentina, Greece and the US show efficacy rates (percentage of mites killed) of between 92 and 98%, with an average of 96%.

Restrictions for use on the New Zealand label state the strips should be placed in hives for six to eight weeks and they should not be used when honey supers are present. Owen says this is a standard restriction across all markets, except the US, regarding oxalic acid products, but to their knowledge there is no residue in honey concern when using VarroxSan regardless of time of year.

Beekeepers in New Zealand have long been using 'DIY' oxalic acid impregnated materials during periods of honey collection.

While the final pricing for VarroxSan is yet to be calculated, beekeepers should not expect it to be priced nearly as low as the unregistered products. Vita Bee Health technical director Paulo Mielgo says there is a "huge difference" between home-use oxalic acid-based treatments and VarroxSan.

"You can buy oxalic acid in New Zealand for a cheap price, but this treatment is made at a factory using GMP – Good Manufacturing Practices – so the costs are higher. We use active ingredient produced in a GMP facility. The cardboard we use is also stronger than that commonly used, so the bees will not chew it out as quickly. That allows treatment for six to eight weeks. It is also food grade, which means it is not one, not two, not three, but about 10 times more expensive than that same cardboard. Then, the impregnation process for this type of material must be longer and more controlled to ensure that each strip contains seven grams of oxalic acid. You put all that together, it is more expensive, but with a lot more technology and quality behind it, and it won't give you any problems with your honey," Mielgo says.

"At the end of the day, we are producing honey, so we need to be sure we are not putting anything which might contaminate honey into the hive."

Owen adds that all those factors should be valued by beekeepers and Vita Bee Health are encouraged that, in the recently registered US market, they have been by a range of both small and large-scale beekeepers.

"When it states there is a certain amount of oxalic acid in the product, there is that amount," Owen says.

"The strips are all the same height, weight and width and stable for the period it says they are stable for. The beekeeper can be really confident they know what they are getting, a safe, proven and effective treatment."

Kiwi beekeepers can not quite get it yet, but both Vita Bee Health and Ceracell say the wait is nearly over. When it arrives, Owen says that, due to its organic nature and high level of efficacy, it will be able to fill a range of roles in beekeeper's varroa control plans.

"We are not advocating replacing anyone else's treatment. We see this as an additive thing. Beekeepers need as many options as possible, and we want them to use them all and keep cycling through them," Owen says, adding "we are just adding another tool to the armoury which we think is a game-changing tool, because we all know it is desperately needed".

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Final Call for Comvita

Comvita Ltd. looks likely to pass into the ownership of health food company Florenz, pending a December shareholder vote. That left one last set of full-year accounts to present as leadership fronted a video call on August 29 to report continued losses and asset writedowns.

BY BRUCE ROSCOE

Comvita Ltd, in reporting results to the year to June 2025, disclosed operating and pretax losses of NZD29.0m and NZD94.4m to NZX on 29 August. Asset writedowns amounting to NZD53.9m featured prominently in the results, and followed writedowns of NZD64.2m in the previous year.

To borrow from sports jargon, the results are a dead rubber. The NZ80c per share offer in the Florenz Ltd takeover bid for Comvita announced on 18 August does not change. The earlier winner-takes-all match was played in private between Comvita and Florenz over six months from February.

Beekeepers can be expected to note changes in Comvita balance sheet entries for "biological assets" — specifically, bees and hives. Operational hive numbers reduced 7.2% to 15,983 but the value of bees was stated at NZD1.3m, a decrease of 69.7%. The value per hive was marked down 70.0% to NZD63. (All comparisons between values at 30 June dates in 2025 and 2024.)

Looking beyond the hives, shareholders have witnessed an extraordinary evaporation of value, based on balance sheet data recoded since June 2023 when shareholders' equity (which amount equals net asset value) was calculated at NZD239.3m. The value recorded at June 2025 collapsed 77.1% to NZD54.9m, or NZ78c per share, which explains Florenz' offer of NZ80c per share. Florenz has offered to pay shareholders for the book value of Comvita's assets. Brand value for the world's flagship mānuka honey producer is discounted to almost zero.

Comvita's financial statements again are marred by restatement. Profit and loss data for the June 2024 year are restated as are balance sheet data for the June 2024 and 2023 years. Understanding the restatements demands too many hours from short lives.

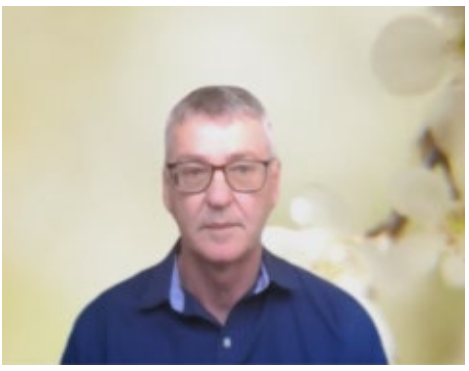
The statements bear no relevance to current shareholders and may not impact Florenz. Auditors KPMG wrote in Comvita's June 2024 annual report, "The carrying amount of the group's net assets as at 30 June 2024…significantly exceeded its market capitalisation of NZ76.5m and is considered an indication of impairment" (or reduced asset value).

Which was to say, "Because Comvita's stock market value fell, the assets that it owns must be worth less, therefore we'll write them down in the next set of accounts". Activist shareholders could have contested that position, considering that general market malaise or selling in an illiquid market or an earnings disappointment could have caused share price weakness. As a privately held company, Florenz does not need to apply such cart-before-the-horse accounting alchemy, but it may be thankful that KPMG did.

On the morning of the results announcement, Comvita held a web-based call intended for analysts and journalists but open to any who cared to call in. Chairperson Bridget Coates, chief executive officer Karl Gradon, and director Mike Sang, fronted the call. The quality of their communication and level of disclosure was excellent. But they were speaking to two audiences — shareholders on the one hand, and employees on the other.

Shareholders in effect are presented with a doomsday scenario in the event that they resist the offer of NZ80c per share. Employees are encouraged by signs of a recovery — "tangible





Fronting a public video call from Comvita and presenting year-end financial results on August 29 are, from left, recently appointed Comvita CEO Karl Gradon, board chair Bridget Coates and director Mike Sang.

progress is evident", the investor presentation assures. While showing shareholders the door, Comvita is at pains to reassure employees in their own and the company's value so that they remain in the building for the benefit of the new owner.

As a publicly quoted company, Comvita must report to NZX not only its earnings results but also events that are likely to impact its business. Comvita's financial statements and annual reports provide a widescreen view of the company's activities throughout the world and also a window on many facets of the mānuka honey industry. Under the proposed new ownership, that view will blacken and the window close. And the call of 29 August will become the final call.

REVENUE	OPERATING EXPENSES	Underlying NPBT	NPAT
$192.4 M	$114.4 M	($21.9 M)	($104.8 M)
↓ (4.1%) vs PCP	↓ (9.0%) vs PCP	↓ (1.2%) vs PCP	↓ (30.3%) vs PCP

OPERATING CASH FLOW	FREE CASH FLOW	NET DEBT	INVENTORY
$34.1 M	$25.3 M	$62.4 M	$89.0 M
↑ 539.9% vs PCP	↑ 273.2% vs PCP	↓ (21.8%) vs PCP	↓ (34.4%) vs PCP

- Underlying NPBT is a Non-GAAP financial measure. We monitor this non-GAAP measure as a key performance indicator, in assessing the performance of the core operations of our business. Reconciliation of underlying NPBT is provided on slide 11.
- Free cash flow (FCF) and Net debt are non-GAAP measure. We monitor these as key performance indicators and believe they assist investors in assessing the performance of the core operations of our business.

Comvita's year to June 2025 financial summary.

Talks with Beekeepers Continue, but Industry Leaders Eye Next Steps

In the month following Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ) members' July 17 vote to keep the group alive and hastily progress a restructuring process, meetings with beekeepers have been held up and down the country. While two more assemblies remain, both ApiNZ and fellow industry body New Zealand Beekeeping Inc (NZBI) are pressing to swiftly turn the lessons from consultation into a blueprint for a stronger industry advocacy group.

Utilising a largely word-of-mouth system, in August meetings with beekeepers were organised in Northland, on the 5th, Manawatu, the 12th, Gisborne, the 15th and Nelson on the 22nd. In September meetings are scheduled with the Southern Beekeepers Discussion Group, in Balclutha on September 5, and in Hamilton, on September 12.

In a united front ApiNZ CEO Karin Kos and policy analyst Phil Edmonds were joined by NZBI advisor Ian Fletcher by video link in Gisborne and in person in Himatangi, in the Manawatu. The ApiNZ leaders are expected to be joined by one of Fletcher or NZBI president Jane Lorimer in each of the final two meeting destinations.

Beyond those meetings, both Kos, Fletcher and Lorimer have expressed their desire for a workable model for an industry group to be drafted and presented back to beekeepers as soon as possible. With that in mind, NZBI have scheduled an open-invite "roundtable" meeting for September 17 via video-link, with an eye to collaborating with ApiNZ and wider industry on forming a working group to move forward with.

"Workforce, task force, call it what you want," Fletcher says.

Karin Kos, ApiNZ CEO, addresses beekeepers gathered at the Mountain Valley Honey site outside Nelson on August 22. One of four meetings with apiarists held in August, with two more to come in September.

"But we need a joint group of people who take all the discussions we have had in the last 18 months and turn it into 'if we had organisation x, we could pay for it using y or z options'. To get us to a point where beekeepers are being asked to react to a proposal, rather than just further discussions."

Gavins Apiaries in Titoki, Northland, was the first of the regional beekeeper meetings attended by Karin Kos and Phil Edmonds of ApiNZ in August, with NZBI aduisor Ian Fletcher attending others either in person or online.

Funding of any group is the key consideration and Kos says that during their consultations with beekeeping groups in August "views are varied on representation, and on the best funding mechanism". She plans to provide a detailed report on findings from the

latest round of talks with beekeepers following the September 12 gathering in Hamilton, a dossier that would help further set the table for a roundtable discussion and working group.

As it stands, both Fletcher and Kos have separately outlined biosecurity, bee health, honey market access issues, and training the next generation of beekeepers and industry leaders, as key issues to have arisen in talks with beekeepers.

Fletcher also added pollination, compliance costs and research as points on his list, in a note he presented to the ApiNZ board ahead of an August 29 meeting and which was shared with *Apiarist's Advocate*. In that note he encouraged the ApiNZ board to work with NZBI and others to develop a proposal for industry with commercial beekeepers at its centre.

While talk of a levy to fund industry good activities has arisen during discussions with beekeepers, Fletcher's note stresses the need to form a proposal based on voluntary funding 'for at least a couple of years'. Further to that, it outlines that 'the community won't accept proposals from one side or the other, and we need to work together anyway', in regard to ApiNZ-NZBI cohesion.

Likely based on examples from recent history, Fletcher also points out 'each major group has an effective veto over progress; these vetoes must be resolved by agreement'.

ApiNZ's schedule of beekeeper meetings is part of a plan to inform a proposal for restructured industry leadership being funded by a $150,000 grant from the Honey Industry Trust. How a roundtable meeting in mid-September to form a widely-agreed-upon working-group fits in with the work schedule as defined in that grant is uncertain, with the document not made publicly available, but it would provide a level of rapidity which is now widely regarded as essential.

"What do you want from an industry body" was the question asked to beekeepers to launch discussions in Nelson.

Comvita, UMFHA & the Australian Question

In our June edition report *Australian Attack 'Disrespectful and Misleading', Says Mānuka Charitable Trust*, we laid bare the awkward truth of the intimate relationship between Hive & Wellness Australia Pty Ltd and Comvita Ltd. In this report, Bruce Roscoe sketches the historical context of that closeness and unearths a trove of details that illuminate the fullness of the cooperation.

BY BRUCE ROSCOE

Like the ties between neighbouring countries — Canada and the US, Ireland and England, South Korea and Japan — the relationship between the New Zealand and Australian honey industries is complex. Rivalry coexists with cooperation, bad blood and benevolence appear as two sides of the same coin. And in the case of mānuka honey, bilateral bonds are more strongly forged than many would suspect.

While funding the fight to secure the term 'manuka honey' to describe only leptospermum scoparium honey produced in New Zealand, Comvita, as an equal partner with Capilano, operated a manuka honey production venture within Australia.

In halcyon days when mānuka honey demand was seen as rising forever, Comvita became concerned over possible resource scarcity. (That concern is reflected today in the planting since 2017 of 15 mānuka forests covering 6,300 hectares across the central North Island plateau and Wairarapa, according to the company's June 2024 annual report.)

In the 10 years to the launch of the gruelling manuka honey certification trademark case (hereafter referred to as 'the trademark case') in 2015, mānuka-driven demand had propelled honey export value 7.9 times from NZD36.0m to NZD285.1m. (Five years later, it would peak at NZD505m.)

As early as 2010 such dizzying growth had compelled both Comvita and UMF Honey Association (UMFHA) to cultivate Australian honey industry relationships with a view to securing additional manuka honey supply. Although New Zealand businesses could not import bulk manuka honey from across the Tasman, they would be free to export it in bulk or retail pack from Australia, where *leptospermum scoparium* trees were abundant from the south coast of New South Wales, through to western Victoria and Tasmania.

Aware the nascent Australian manuka industry would likely grow quickly, UMFHA sought to influence the method by which Australian producers would grade the honey.

"HOW'S IT GOING WITH TASMANIAN MANUKA?"

John Rawcliffe, UMFHA administrator, in 2011 emailed Nicola Charles, managing director of Blue Hills Honey, Tasmania: "I congratulate you on setting up a company to manage your active Manuka honey…As discussed, the Active Manuka Honey Association Inc. (now UMFHA) is keen to work with you over some core standards..."[1]

The following year Mr Wright of Comvita emailed the same Ms Charles: "We have been giving more thought to the idea of sourcing honey from other countries and would like to start with our friendly neighbours!"[2] In 2014 Ms Charles received another email from Comvita, asking "How's it going with Tasmanian Manuka?"[3]

At the time of those love-calls, Comvita was on a roll. In the five years to March 2012, Comvita's annual sales had pole-vaulted to NZD95.9m from NZD39.3m. Australia had become the company's largest single-country market, taking about a quarter of all that it had to sell.

Comvita had deployed a team of seven since 2009-10, Toyota Prius hybrid cars were standard issue, and Dr Ralf Schlothaeur, Comvita's chief technical officer, had buddied-up with Australian scholars to engage in trans-Tasman health product-related research that was funded by the Australian government.[4]

"1,950 directly serviced retail customers. 20,000 website hits in Australia per month with over 6,000 customers registered online in the first year…" Comvita's March 2012 year annual report gushed. Chief executive officer Brett Hewlett said: "Australia has proven to be a dependable and consistent source of growth for Comvita".[5]

SETTLING IN SOUTH BRISBANE

Australian inroads expanded after a network of distributors was replaced with an in-house customer service and logistics team in 2010-2011. While foreign businesses could be expected to base operations in Sydney or Melbourne, Comvita charted a northerly course and chose south Brisbane, where it located two wholly owned subsidiaries — Comvita Health Pty Ltd followed by Comvita Australia Pty Ltd.

The first subsidiary was addressed to the corner of Miles Platting & Logan roads in Eight Mile Plains. That address is 17.8 kilometers to 399 Archerfield Road, Richlands, home to Capilano Honey Ltd, Australia's largest honey packing and sales company. (Capilano is now a brand owned by Hive & Wellness Australia Ptd Ltd.)

The second was sited at 10 Edmonstone Street, 18.3 kilometers to the same Capilano offices and packing plant, whose address today is shared with Australian Manuka Honey Association.

Comvita situated Australian operations in south Brisbane within a half-hour drive of Capilano, Australia's largest honey producer and exporter. This map appears in Comvita Ltd's March 2012 year annual report.

Comvita was operating in Capilano's near orbit — meet for lunch from either subsidiary's office within half an hour.

Since July 2023, after about a decade at Edmonstone Street, Comvita Australia has occupied premises in Fortitude Valley on the border of the central business district. Anchoring at Brisbane has also served Comvita's olive plantation and olive leaf extract processing plant at 767 Bischoffs Road, Coominya, some 90km west.[6]

CROSS-POLLINATION

Comvita and Capilano had begun pollinating each other's flowers in earnest in 2007 when Comvita purchased Capilano's subsidiary Medihoney Pty Ltd. Capilano agreed a price of AUD6m — which Comvita would pay in AUD500,000 cash and the remainder in shares issued at NZD4.05 each. As a result of this transaction, according to the Capilano release of 18 April 2007, Capilano would emerge the owner of 8% of Comvita. Capilano's investment was short-lived as by December 2009 it had sold the holding.[7]

"Medihoney" would become a metaphor for obfuscation over what could and could not be called "manuka" in the *leptospermum* genus of plants. While Comvita could source manuka honey from only the *scoparium* species, as no other in New Zealand lent itself to commercial exploitation, some 80 species grew in Australia, and Capilano believed it could use the name manuka for several of these, notably *polygalifolium*, commonly called jellybush and which is plentiful in Queensland and New South Wales.[8]

Scholars, including Peter Molan, professor of biological sciences and director of the Honey Research Unit at University of Waikato, jettisoned the species name. In the report "Medical Honey for Wound Care — Still the 'Latest Resort'?" six scholars wrote: "The medical honey, our clinical experience refers to (MediHoney™), consists of standard mixture of different Leptospermum spp. honeys". They doubled down in a report table of terms, defining MediHoney™ as "a mixture of two honeys derived from Australia and New Zealand containing…*Leptospermum compounds*".[9]

Which it could not be. In order to be a "mixture", Comvita would have needed to supply monofloral manuka honey to Capilano in bulk for blending with an Australian honey from one or several of the *leptospermum* species. The reverse could not have occurred, as New Zealand allows honey imports only rarely and by special permit.

MANUKA FUDGE

More likely, as owner of the Australia-registered company, Comvita would look to export Australian *leptospermum* species honey for offshore manufacture into wound-care products, and it would do the same from New Zealand. But Australia held the edge, "because its manuka is cheaper", Scott Coulter, Comvita chief executive officer, would later tell the *Wall Street Journal*.[10] The manuka fudge is first baked here, though no need was felt to call anything "manuka". "Clinical evidence points to MEDHOHONEY® with Active *Leptospermum Honey*…" Comvita wrote in product introductions within three years of the Medihoney acquisition.[11]

Comvita's 2007 acquisition of Medihoney was the first of two transactions that — figuratively speaking but in some cases also literally — would put Comvita and Capilano hives on the back of the same truck. The second transaction was as burning as representative trans-Tasman sports teams shedding national garb and donning a new and identical uniform.

Comvita and Capilano would not only market manuka honey under the shared name of Medihoney, they would also jointly produce the honey. The two behemoth buddies set up Medibee Apiaries Pty Ltd, a 50:50 joint-venture, registered in May 2016, that would operate leptospermum honey-producing apiaries. Capilano sold beekeeping assets for AUD$9.2m into the venture, which would "deliver premium honey for a range of medical and natural health products", according to Capilano managing director Ben McKee.[12]

Neither company used the word "manuka" in their announcement about the venture.[13] But reporting to shareholders the following year, Capilano dropped the fudge: "Manuka specialist" Comvita was "focusing on increasing the production and security of Australian Manuka honey supply" and Medibee Apiaries was the "single largest supplier of Manuka to Capilano again this financial year".[14]

Comvita loaned NZD4.7m to the joint venture in its first year of operation and further guaranteed a bank loan of AUD5.5m. In the year to June 2024, Comvita loaned the venture NZD136,000 while in the same financial statement recorded and wrote off that loan, thus making it a gift. Comvita's compatriot beekeepers may wish they could receive comparable largesse.

THE CONFLICT OF ALLIANCE

In only the first two of 17 financial statements Comvita has issued since the establishment of Medibee Apiaries is the venture's name recorded correctly as Medibee Apiaries Pty Ltd. Various and confusing abbreviations are used in the subsequent 15 statements as though in an effort to deflect attention from an alliance that many beekeepers at home would view as a betrayal.

A UMFHA director and licensee told the association's 4 February 2020 executive meeting that he traded in bulk manuka honey within Australia. That admission was received without alarm as the minutes did not record it. Instead, it is noted in minutes for the meeting held more than two months later on 21 April 2020. The director had added that his bulk trade was conducted in IBCs (intermediate bulk containers) which hold several times the volume of the standard 300-kilogram drum.

As late as July 2020, UMFHA resolved to communicate "policy in relation to Australian manuka honey" to licensees. The notice issued by Mr Rawcliffe threatened licence revocation for "trading of Australian honey sourced from any of the various leptospermum plant species present in Australia (including the sale or purchase of such honey in bulk where the licensee's brand or licence number is not visible to the end consumer)".[15]

JULY 2007

Comvita buys Medihoney Pty Ltd from Australia's Capilano Honey Ltd, which brings the two companies' medical-grade manuka honey and products under the same MediHoney® brand umbrella.

AUGUST 2015

UMFHA launches manuka honey certification trademark case, claiming only leptospermum scoparium honey produced in New Zealand can rightfully be called manuka honey.

JULY 2016

Comvita and Capilano Honey establish Medibee Apiaries Pty Ltd (a separate venture to the aforementioned 'Medihoney Pty Ltd'), a 50:50 venture for the production of leptospermum variety honeys in Australia.

MAY 2023

NZ Intellectual Property Office rules in Australia's favour in the trademark case.

JUNE 2025

Comvita financial statements for the year to June 2025 continue to record Medibee Apiaries Pty Ltd as an active equity-accounted affiliate.

Although UMFHA had ruled that trading in manuka honey over the Tasman was out, Comvita continued to play an away game in equal partnership with Australia's flagship *leptospermum* honey producer and exporter. At the peak of its enthusiasm for the trees on the other side, Comvita wholly owned and operated seven subsidiaries in addition to the Medibee venture.

(In addition to business units on the ground, Comvita Ltd, and before it Comvita New Zealand Ltd, since 1999 maintained an ABN (Australian Business Number) with the Australian Business Register, for ease of conducting business directly with Australian companies and facilitating communication with Australian government agencies.[16])

Comvita had inked the joint venture agreement while the trademark case was in progress — UMFHA had made the first filing with the New Zealand Intellectual Property Office in August 2015.

Consider — for each of the eight years the 2015-2023 trademark case was argued at a cost in the low millions of dollars, Comvita was equal partner in a venture described by Ben McKee, chief operating officer of Hive & Wellness, formerly chief executive officer of Capilano Ltd, and director of the Medibee Apiaries venture itself, as "one of the biggest Manuka producers in Australia."[17]

Not that Comvita in spirit supported the trademark case. Comvita's Coulter advised the *Wall Street Journal*: "They have the same type of plant and they produce the same type of honey from it", he said, "so it's hard to argue that it's the sole rights of NZ to sell that type of honey."[18]

THE UNSPOKEN DONATION

Yet without Comvita, there may not have been a trademark case. And there may not even be a UMFHA. Manuka Honey Appellation Society, the UMFHA mirror body that managed the filings, records a Comvita donation of NZD250,000 for the year to March 2022. Comvita's was the largest of only two such contributions. (The second was from Manuka Health New Zealand Ltd for NZD100,000 in the same year.)

No record of Comvita's donation can be found in financial statements or annual reports or other documents disclosed to shareholders or in releases to media. Yet Comvita in past investor presentations and annual reports has publicised contributions of much smaller amounts, such as products worth NZD10,000 to the Japanese Red Cross (March 2022 year).[19]

No evidence of Comvita public utterance in support of the New Zealand position in the trademark case can be found. Neither does any Comvita website contain even a sentence on the subject. By contrast, the Capilano website, under a "Learn" tab and subject title "History of Australian Manuka", devotes 1,210 words, with 30 entries for 28 years from 1882 through 2019, to the ultimately successful Australian argument.[20]

The word "Australia" cannot even be found on the UMFHA website. The New Zealand case is made but one has to search for

it — for example, under the "News" tab, "Tests Show Again that Only 100% New Zealand Mānuka Honey is Authentic" and under the "Researchers tab", UMFHA describes itself as "…the world's only mānuka honey industry organisation…"[21]

UMFHA would wither without Comvita. Assuming, as UMFHA says, that its licensees account for about 70% of retail pack monofloral manuka honey exports, Comvita in the past five years has contributed an estimated 65%, 61%, 66%, 89%, and 60% of the association's levy income to a total of some NZD4.4m.[22] Comvita loaned NZD50,000 to UMFHA after expenses exceeded income in the year to March 2010.[23]

AUSTRALIA'S SANTA

UMFHA is a Santa to Australia. It freed up the "AMHA" abbreviation when it renamed its forerunner organization, the Active Manuka Honey Association, in 2011. Australian Manuka Honey Association (est. 2017) today is known as AMHA.

It loosened its grip on the testing methodology for "leptosperin", the third of four components in the UMF™ rating system, which is now used widely (and freely) in Australia. AMHA website quotes copyrighted UMFHA website text on leptosperin.[24]

UMFHA did not trademark "leptosperin", a word it created to describe a compound Professor Yoji Kato, University of Hyogo, identified as a manuka chemical marker and termed "leptosin" in 2012 research.[25] UMFHA has charged licensees a royalty for use of the "leptosperin" test. The royalty is paid to laboratories, which forward it to UMFHA, which in turn pays Healthcare Systems Ltd,

Comvita's MediHoney-brand products could be sourced from manuka honey produced in either New Zealand or Australia. Comvita acquired Capilano's Mehihoney Pty Ltd in 2007.

the Japanese owner of the patented testing method.[26]

UMFHA has sold marketing licences to Australian companies, among them Bee-Power International Pty Ltd, Bee Wonderful Pty Ltd, Swisse Wellness Pty Ltd, and Ocean King (uncertain company name).

The nominally competing Molan Gold Standard™, which is owned and operated by an upper-echelon UMFHA licensee, is used on nine manuka honey products and three manuka candy products marketed by Australian by Nature Pty Ltd, Sydney.[27]

A UMFHA licensee supplies a jarred manuka honey product to Hive & Wellness Australia. The product label, replete with New Zealand map and Ministry for Primary Industries' RMP (risk management process) number, is printed and attached in Australia.[28]

THE COOPERATION THAT BOOMERANGED

Peter Brooks, a senior lecturer in chemistry at the University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, joined UMFHA's manuka identification research project in early 2014.[29] This project involved the collection of manuka flower nectar samples from hundreds of sites throughout New Zealand for analysis that would identify chemical markers unique to the honey. UMFHA had "secured its relationship with the University of the Sunshine Coast, one of the parties that will be conducting verification of the testing done on the honey samples", the association's 3 January 2024 newsletter informed.

MPI's manuka scientific definitions were four years away. But apart from battling the usual gaggle of product counterfeiters, UMFHA had become aware that Australian honey producers were seeking to redefine "manuka" to include all *leptospermum* honeys, which overrode the Comvita-Capilano links. Identifying chemical markers that UMFHA could hitch to its rating system would defeat fraudulent brands and future-proof the industry against posing Australians.

Dr Brooks, however, had camped only briefly in the UMFHA tent. He submitted two papers of evidence supporting Australian arguments in the trademark case. In its final ruling in favour of Australia, the New Zealand Intellectual Property Office referenced Dr Brooks and his evidence 57 times.

THE REMAINS OF PROMISE

As at December 2024, Medihoney Pty Ltd was one of six 100%-owned Comvita subsidiaries registered in Australia, more than double the number in any other country, including New Zealand. Bulk supply to Canada now represents the body of the medical-grade honey business.[30] The honey is shipped to Derma Sciences, a tissue regeneration specialist headquartered in Ontario that was acquired by Integra LifeSciences Holdings in 2017.

In the same year, Comvita sold the MediHoney® brand and related intellectual property to Derma Sciences for USD13.25m (and as a result would forfeit royalty payments of some NZD2.1m per year). It retained brand rights only for over-the-counter products. Derma Science would hold all regulatory approvals for Europe and the United States.

Comvita received USD7.7m for the Derma Science shares it held and, like Capilano which had divested its Comvita shareholding, would no longer share in profit growth through equity ownership.[31] Comvita's Medihoney revenues have remained flat or declined in four of the past five years and at NZD10.2m accounted for 5.0% of total revenues in the company's year to June 2024.

Integra LifeSciences' website returns no search result for "manuka". Under a product news tab, we read instead, "Integra LifeSciences' MediHoney®, an Active Leptospermum Honey (ALH) dressing for wounds and burns..."[32]

CROSSROADS

The ultimate fate of Medibee Apiaries is unclear as the owners approach a crossroads, but from opposing directions. Comvita, on 29 July 2024, informed NZX of a decision "to exit from its legacy Medibee joint venture in Australia" at a loss of NZD6.9m. (Comvita also said in its 25 August 2022 investor presentation filed with NZX that its "total Mānuka harvest was 499K tonnes", which volume was impossible.) Just-released financial statements for the June 2025 year continue to record Medibee Apiaries as an equity-accounted affiliate. Further, Comvita advanced NZD383,000 to the venture during the year. Medibee Apiaries has become a "current legacy".

Comvita, founded and head-quartered in Paengaroa, operated seven wholly owned subsiaries in Australia at the peak of its interest in the trees on the other side of the Tasman.

In contrast to Comvita red ink on exit, Capilano saw black on entry. It booked an AUS2.1m tax-free gain on the beekeeping assets it sold into the venture.

Capilano, in the last annual report it would issue before delisting from the Australian Securities Exchange in December 2018, printed a table showing the financial performance of Medibee Apiaries for the first two reporting periods since its founding — the years to June 2017 and 2018. Net losses were AUD187,423 and AUD613,182 on revenues of AUD1,579,866 and AUD1,864,358.

Which means that the AUD1,300,792 of honey Capilano bought from the venture in the June 2018 year was sold to it at a loss. It also begs the question of which company purchased and sold the remaining AUD563,566 worth of honey if not Comvita.

Constricted by floods in the north, droughts throughout the south, and bushfires to the west, the Medibee venture may never have been profitable. Comvita has recorded losses of NZD1.4m in sum for all equity accounted affiliates for eight reporting years of the venture.[33]

THE INTERROGATION OF IDENTITY

The "Australian question" interrogates identity — collaborator or competitor, friend or foe? The question may be too simplistic in a difficult business that demands opportunism and pragmatism. What seems certain is that blanket use of the genus name *leptospermum* emasculates the manuka naming rights argument.

Dual nationality? — yes. Split personality? — maybe. Comvita's statements have seemed governed by the expedient of which shoe was on which foot. Outstretched legs straddled the Tasman, a jandal on one foot and a thong on the other. For Comvita, the result of the trademark case would never be a win or loss but always a draw.

Bruce Roscoe is a Japan-resident researcher and former foreign correspondent and securities analyst.

REFERENCES

A full ist of references is available here.

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Varroa Pains, Bee Brains and Pollen Grains – Takeaways from the 2025 Honey Bee Research Symposium

Now an established fixture on the events calendar for the apiculture industry, the 6th New Zealand Honey Bee Research Symposium in Wellington on August 28 not only detailed the latest in research in all things honey bees and related fields, but saw discussion on how to fund ongoing work.

With the industry going through a period of reckoning regarding funding national-level projects, it was perhaps unsurprising that a lecture theatre at Victoria University of Wellington holding some of New Zealand beekeeping's most dedicated participants and scientists saw healthy discussion with a 'where-to-from-here' bent.

Around 100 scientists, beekeepers and related stakeholders heard more than a dozen research updates, while Apiculture New Zealand CEO Karin Kos provided an update on their current industry consultation progress. Later, New Zealand Beekeeping Inc advisor Ian Fletcher challenged the industry to concentrate potential outside-industry funders' – namely government – attentions on the potential for the honey bee industry to boost productivity over a range of industries through continued and improved pollination. Also offering considerations on the key topic of 'where the money comes from' was retired Otago beekeeper Alan McCaw, who extolled the value of industry building up a greater base of money to back research projects.

Here's a few observations from the lecture theatre seats…

- The middle of the day saw three students from the host university update on their research with dsRNA-interference (gene silencing) technologies to control varroa. Much of the previous work from the lab using the technique has been to aid development of 'Vadescana', a product developed by American company Greenlight Bioscience which has gained preliminary approval in the US and may soon be retailed as Norroa™ – for a whopping $22USD per treatment. That pricing news took some wind out of beekeepers in the room, but the Victoria Uni scientists are forging on with their own work into better understanding how gene-silencing prevents varroa reproduction. Projects are focusing on seeking new target sites for RNA-interference, tracking RNA-i through varroa with "fluro-labelling", and assessing varroa movements post-treatment.
- An always well received update is that out of Canterbury University Associate Professor Heather Hendrickson's lab as they seek to develope an American foulbrood "prophylactic"

Approximately 100 attendees, a mix of scientists, beekeepers and industry stakeholders, made their way to Victoria University of Wellington on August 28 for the 6th New Zealand Honey Bee Research Symposium.

Pike Stahlmann-Brown, principal scientists at Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, presents results from the 2024 Colony Loss Survey.

treatment or "vaccine" using phage-therapy. "We are still doing work behind the scenes to create the perfect phage cocktail," Dr Hendrickson reported. Field trials in association with Plant and Food Research (P&FR) will begin in the near future to determine the "stability" of their phage cocktail, but Hendrickson was optimistic. "We think we can produce a very effective AFB control for New Zealand beekeepers".

- How can chicken eggs be used to save honey bees? Victoria University PhD student Neil MacMillan is undergoing a project using poultry eggs to attempt to incubate anti-varroa antibodies. Future work will determine the varroa-killing ability of such antibodies, but, regardless, his research drew praise from Dr James Sainsbury of P&FR who commented "it is inspiring to see this level of immunology applied to bees".
- An enlightening report came from leading palynologist Dr Katherine Holt of Massey University who, funded by Te Pitau Ltd, has been researching the pollen contents of 50 New Zealand and 32 Australian "manuka" retail honey samples. She found that frequently in the Australian honeys eucalyptus pollens were the dominant variety, whereas in New Zealand samples mānuka pollens were almost always the dominant or secondary pollen. Holt determined it is "easy" to use pollen to differentiate which side of the Tasman honey has been source. "It is going to become increasingly important to differentiate, in cases of adulteration," she pointed out.
- While cleaning out an office at their Ruakura facility, P&FR scientists discovered a file dedicated to a 1947-53 honey bee breeding trial using artificial insemination of queen bees. Dr Ashley Mortensen reported some of the most interesting observations as she looked back nearly 80 years on details of beekeepers from all over the country contributing breeder queens to the project. The average age of queens submitted was just under one year, but one three-and-a-half-year-old proven-performer was sent, and five others nearly two years old. Seven beekeepers provided honey yield data, with 110lbs (50kg) the average and all stating clover as the primary nectar source.
- Allen McCaw's presentation on building up a funding base for future research stressed the need for industry participants to contribute, and potentially allow large portions of their contributions to go towards establishing an "investment base" in initial years, which could provide big benefits later. "The industry needs to stand up and take care of some of its own issues", he stated, pointing out a commodity levy with a portion of funds specifically earmarked for R&D would be ideal. "Wishes are free, but they can come to bee", McCaw closed with.

From Hive to High-Level Strategy: How the Kellogg Programme Can Nurture Strong Voices in Apiculture

BY ELOISE MARTYN

The New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust's Matt Hampton, is encouraging those in apiculture to invest in themselves – and the sector's future – by undertaking the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme (Kellogg).

With the apiculture industry facing significant headwinds, including biosecurity pressures, global market shifts, and internal structural challenges, the need for strong, informed leadership has never been greater. Yet Hampton, who designs and delivers the Kellogg Programme, notes a concerning trend.

"Over the past five years, only a handful of participants from the apiculture industry have taken part in the Kellogg Programme," Hampton says. Highlighting a real need for future leaders in the sector.

Established in 1979, the Kellogg programme is a six-month course featuring 18 days of content delivered across three intensive phases in Lincoln (Canterbury) and Wellington. It develops leaders' strategic and critical thinking, growing confident leaders for New Zealand's primary industries. Each participant completes a research report aimed at delivering practical leadership outcomes.

Among the few apiculture voices helping to change this trend is Sol Tejada, a Hamilton-based beekeeper who completed the programme in 2023. Argentinian by birth, Tejada has worked in beekeeping across New Zealand. Noticing a clear underrepresentation of women in the sector, she was motivated to publish a report titled *Women in Beekeeping: How to Champion Ladies in the Apiculture Industry?* – a project that led her to explore gender representation within the sector. Tejada's report offered fresh

The 2021 first intake of the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme at Lincoln University, featuring Kathryn Reid who authored a detailed report on the honey industry seated third from right.

insights and practical recommendations to encourage diversity in New Zealand's apiculture sector. Her findings sparked new conversations, challenged assumptions, and helped foster a more inclusive and thoughtful industry.

In 2021, Kathryn Reid delivered her Kellogg report, subtitled *Honey, We Need to Listen*, examining whether the honey industry was structurally equipped to meet its export goals amid internal challenges. The findings were detailed, objective, and regarded as particularly valuable by many in the industry. Importantly, this research would likely never have come to light had Reid not taken part In Kellogg. Some see the report as underutilised, but it remains a valuable, publicly available resource, and with the future direction of the industry currently poised for change, it's a timely moment to revisit this earlier research that is still both relevant and rich with insight.

Also contributing to the industry's body of knowledge is 2020 Kellogg participant Keegan Blignaut, who put forward valuable insights with his report, *Where is the Profitability in the Mānuka Honey Production in Northland?* Prompted by MPI's 2017 redefinition of mānuka honey, his research explored the region's commercial viability of mānuka honey during a time when clarity and data-driven analysis were in high demand.

Hampton says it's important that the apiculture industry doesn't fall behind when it comes to growing its leaders. "It's important that apiculture has a strong voice, with confident leaders who are able to embrace future challenges and opportunities as they emerge," he says. By educating and empowering leaders, the sector builds confidence, supports succession, and creates a capable cohort ready to lead.

"The Kellogg Programme provides the environment and tools for individuals to step up," Hampton adds.

More information on the rural leadership programme can be found at ruralleaders.co.nz

Apiarist's Advocate's coverage of Kellogg students: *Championing Ladies in Apiculture* (Sol Tejada),

Honey, We Need to Listen (Kathryn Reid).

The Kellogg programme sees students gather for 18 days of content across three phases, delivered primarily at Lincoln University, but also in Wellington as this tranche of students enjoys.

Swedish Cloth Strips - A Game Changer in the USA!

By Russell Smith, managing director Beequip NZ

The Swedish cloth strips continue to impress us the more we trial them, and from the feedback received from many clients.

One such client is Mr. Sennett who runs 3500 hives in the USA states of Georgia and Maine. He has been using the Swedish cloth strips for four years as the main treatment for varroa. He says they give him 10 weeks of very good efficacy which corresponds with research trials done in New Zealand. His hive losses last winter were no different to usual and a big contrast to the high losses experienced by many other beekeepers in the USA. He occasionally uses some formic acid treatments but uses no synthetic miticide strips.

Each of the four cloth strips is soaked with 25 grams of 1:1 oxalic acid (OA)/glycerine solution and placed horizontally directly on top of the bottom brood box.

Mr. Greg Rogers, Beekeeper and researcher from North Carolina, USA, has conducted extensive field trials with the Swedish Cloth and states in his video with **Bob Binnie** that they are "**A game Changing Treatment"**.

SIZE COUNTS

A question for many beekeepers has been what size of Swedish cloth to use.

It was determined very early on that two half-size pads worked more effectively than a full-size pad. Mr Greg Rogers then conducted field trials to compare results between half-size pads and four strips.

For the full report, you can view his video here. From 11 minutes to 25 minutes shows how four strips are more effective than two half-size pads. A tip - Set the playback speed to 1.5 if short of time.

Summaries of the results are shown in figures 1 and 2.

Another trial was conducted in 2024 to see if the same results could be obtained with four strips as previously.

It was conducted over 90 days and not 75 days. There were just 2 hives out of 31 that had a mite count at the end of the trial over the economic threshold of 9.

One comment from Mr. Greg Rogers: "I can tell you what I saw going through the hives that have this treatment in them. Typically in August (in USA) you see some strong hives and some medium-strength hives and some weaker hives. Probably those hives are starting to run into virus problems. With this treatment, **what I saw literally looked like the bees of 30 years ago**."

Fig 1. Average Mite Count by Treatment after 75 days in 2023.

Control (no treatment) (4 hives)	72
Formic Pro (33 hives)	14
Oxalic / Glycerin 2 piece (16 hives)	13
Oxalic / Glycerin 4 piece (18 hives)	5

Fig 2. Percentage of hives over the economic threshold of 9 mites.

Control (no treatment) (4 hives)	100% (4/4)
Formic Pro (33 hives)	61% (20/33)
Oxalic / Glycerin 2 piece (16 hives)	31% (5/16)
Oxalic / Glycerin 4 piece (18 hives)	11% (2/18)

Full size sheet?

Cut in half? (2 piece)

Cut into 4 strips? (4 piece)

MAKING THEM WORK IN SINGLES

Mr Sennett said the four Swedish Cloth strips worked extremely well in his **double brood box colonies** but were not successful on long term varroa control in the single brood box colonies. He uses the Beequip cardboard strips as staples in his single brood box colonies. When asked why the cloth strips were not effective on the single brood colonies, he suggested it was because there wasn't enough nurse bee travel on the strips.

We were concerned in New Zealand that the strips could get cold. No OAE (oxalic acid extended-release) strips work very well if they get below 30°C. They need to be at brood temperature.

In the face of this evidence, two commercial beekeepers in New Zealand used the strips on their single brood box hives right through the 2024-25 summer honey flow. They placed the strips horizontal over the single brood box, then added a rimmed queen excluder so there was a bee space. Then added lots of honey supers on top. Both beekeepers said they were very impressed with the results, and plan to repeat the process next season.

Regarding the 2 perceived issues:

Temperature

The process was used over summer in very strong colonies, so the strips stayed above 32°C.

The glycerine stayed liquid to keep bringing OA to the surface as it is used up.

Bee travel

The strips were used when the colonies had a peak population of bees with a huge amount of bee travel up and down in the hive, so the OA got very well distributed.

A bin with 50 freshly soaked Swedish Cloth strips, ready for packing and sealing into bags.

IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING SWEDISH CLOTH TO USE IN BEEHIVES FOR OAE APPLICATIONS

1. To be made from just Cellulose and Cotton.
2. To have no colour additives.
3. To have no flame retardant additives.
4. To have no plastic membranes or micro plastics.
5. To be 100% biodegradable.
6. To be approx. 200mm x 43mm x 2mm thick.
7. To be supplied as dry strips, not premoistened.

Based on all the information available, the Swedish Cloth strips are an excellent product for summer OAE treatments and when the beehive has enough bee population to keep the strips warm above the brood nest and to spread the OA around the brood nest.

We conducted a trial over winter on one hive and were impressed with the results. This is not a recommendation, but very interesting all the same.

Eating Well (Part Two) – Do we Believe the Headlines?

BY DAVE BLACK

"Scientists create pollen-replacing superfood for honey bees, hoping to prevent extinction"

"Saving bees with superfoods: Engineered supplement boosts colony reproduction"

"Scientists make 'superfood' that could save honeybees"

"Scientists create game-changing honeybee 'superfood'"

"Scientists found the missing nutrients bees need — Colonies grew 15-fold"

"Saving bees with superfoods: Engineered supplement boosts colony reproduction"

The news reports have been rather breathless. August headlines have rushed to declare salvation, a publicity machine based not just on the Bogaert *et al* work reported last April and *covered in the last Apiarist's Advocate*, but on a newer paper from a UK group[1] led by Elynor Moore, about earlier work on the same project. The project was funded by the UK's Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSR), with a contribution (a yeast strain) from the wealthiest charitable foundation in the world, the Danish Novo Norsdisk Foundation, and the lead scientists are shareholders in Apix Biosciences, who have the patent pending.

The Bogaert paper[2] covered work from 2023 and was submitted for publication at the end of 2024. It started with recognising that a role for isofucosterol in honeybees hadn't been established by previous research, although it was known to be present in honey bee tissues.

BBC

Scientists make 'superfood' that could save honeybees

Is the research into sterols in honey bees' diets as good as the headlines are making out?

Until now honey bees have relied on natural pollen to provide much of their nutritional needs, but British scientists believe they can now "engineer" a complete diet for the bees.

They prepared an artificial diet to their own specification, and added all the sterols that are known to be present, but also prepared two experimental batches which omitted either isofucosterol or another sterol, 24-methylenecholesterol (24MC), to see what would happen. They were expecting that 24MC would be essential, but did not expect that the diet lacking isofucosterol would turn out to be harmful.

They all compared the diets with a couple of standard commercial preparations available to US and EU beekeepers. The best results from field trials came with their sterol-supplemented feed which led to the claim that they had *"developed a nutritionally complete pollen-replacing diet that supports continuous brood production from May to October in colonies without access to pollen"* and that isofucosterol was a critical micronutrient.

The latest paper from Moore *et al* deals with the more practical question of, if we have discovered what bees need (ie., sterols), then what's a realistic way of supplying them? The Moore et al trials were conducted in 2022 and 2023, and the paper submitted for publication in June, but it was two years before it was published.

The starting point was Herbert, Svoboda, Thompson and Shimanuki's 1980 paper[3] pointing out that sterols were essential for honey bees, and noting that a 2021 EU Food Safety report about pollen supplements and substitutes in the EU feed market didn't provide much evidence that anyone had paid much attention to sterols, particularly as pollen was expensive, perishable, and deliberately excluded or substituted so as not to spread disease[4]. They also realised that *"most of the pollen sterols used by bees are not available in quantities that could be fed to bee colonies on a commercial scale"*, and went on to carry out a forensic analysis of which and how much sterols were found in the different castes of bee pupae.

Prior work by others suggested a solution to the problem. A yeast, already regarded as 'food-safe' biomass in the EU could probably be genetically modified to produce the relevant sterols. Because similar things had been tried, Moore *et al* thought it could then be done in a commercial process at an 'industrial scale' in conventional bioreactors, and the biomass fed to bees, just as brewer's and torula yeasts are constituents of bee-feeds now. The rest of the paper is a detailed (so detailed...) account of the 'bioengineering', diet testing, and scientific validation they undertook to prove it.

Is it a 'game-changing' breakthrough? Well, for people putting honey bees to work yes, quite possibly. However, it doesn't solve the fundamental problem, which is that our cultivation of the earth has in vast areas created an ecology quite unsuitable for most of our pollinating animals to live in, and no one will be feeding or housing them.

A full ist of references is available here.

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Technology Should Empower Beekeepers, Not Replace Them

BY GREGORY FOULKS

I read Dave Black's recent article, "No More Heroes (Any More)," with a mix of appreciation and concern. Appreciation because he voices something many in the beekeeping world feel but don't always say out loud: the creeping sense that technology is being used to make us obsolete. Concern, because the trajectory he describes is real, and if we don't address it, the very people who sustain pollination — the growers and keepers — risk being pushed to the margins.

THE BROKER PROBLEM, REINVENTED IN TECH

For decades, pollination has been managed through brokers. Their role has been to connect growers with beekeepers, but that connection often comes at the cost of transparency. Growers rarely know what percentage of their payment makes it to the keeper, and keepers rarely know what premium a grower might have been willing to pay. The broker controls the information and takes their cut.

Now, we see companies like BeeHero and Beewise stepping into this same role — only dressed in silicon and venture capital. Instead of a middleman with a Rolodex, it's a middleman with sensors and data servers. The effect is the same: beekeepers become fungible, growers lose direct control, and the value pools away from the people doing the work.

DATA WITHOUT ACCESS IS JUST ANOTHER LOCKBOX

Precision pollination technologies promise data, and on the surface, that sounds like progress. But who owns that data? Who gets to use it? Right now, the answer is: not the beekeepers, and not the growers.

BeeHero collects hive-level information through sensors and AI, but the beekeeper and grower are locked out of that data flow. It remains in a corporate black box. Claims of 'improved outcomes' can't be independently verified because users are bound by NDAs. As Dave pointed out, AI is only as good as the data it's trained on — and if those inputs are hidden, we can't evaluate whether the outputs are trustworthy.

That's not empowerment. That's disempowerment at scale.

BEEKEEPERS AS COMMODITIES?

Technology that strips beekeepers of ownership and agency reduces us to commodities. Our knowledge — built over generations — becomes irrelevant. Our labor, invisible. Our property, fungible.

This isn't just a philosophical problem. It's an economic one. If beekeepers are reduced to interchangeable parts, margins get squeezed further, and sustainability of the profession erodes. In a world already struggling with bee health, the last thing we need is to hollow out the beekeeping community that sustains it.

A DIFFERENT PATH IS POSSIBLE

I don't believe technology is inherently bad for pollination. In fact, I believe it's essential to meeting the challenges ahead — from scale to sustainability. But it has to be done differently. Here's what that looks like:

- **Direct Contracts, Not Middlemen:** Growers and keepers should be able to contract transparently, without hidden spreads. Technology can facilitate that without inserting itself as another broker.
- **Shared Data Rights:** Beekeepers and growers should own their data. If sensors are in my hive, I should have full access to that data. If a grower pays for pollination, they should see the evidence of service.
- **Tools That Augment, Not Replace:** Technology should amplify beekeeper expertise, not erase it. Sensors, mapping, and smart contracts can make pollination logistics smoother, but the beekeeper's judgment must remain central.

BUILDING FOR EMPOWERMENT

This is the philosophy behind PollenLink, the platform I'm building. It's not about replacing keepers or locking growers into opaque systems. It's about creating an open, transparent way for growers and beekeepers to connect, transact, and share information on their own terms.

In PollenLink, data isn't a black box — it belongs to the people generating it. Contracts aren't hidden — they're visible and enforceable. And the beekeeper isn't fungible — they're recognized as a skilled professional, critical to the future of agriculture.

CLOSING: A CALL FOR BEEKEEPER-FIRST INNOVATION

The choice in front of us is clear. We can allow technology to follow the same path brokers took: hoarding information, extracting value, and reducing beekeepers to replaceable cogs. Or we can chart a different path — one where innovation empowers the people who actually make pollination happen.

No more black boxes. No more disempowerment. Technology must serve the beekeeper and the grower — or it will fail the future of pollination.

Greg Foulks is the founder of PollenLink™, a recently launched US-based blockchain software which provides online, on-chain sign-off and smart-contract settlement for beekeepers and growers. A longtime technologist based in Ohio, USA, he focuses on introducing agriculture to technology that delivers actionable data for efficiency and better yields.

Don't Look Back in Anger...

What can we learn from a Hertfordshire beekeeper's 1939 letter to The British Bee Keepers' Association (BBKA) magazine Bee World? That New Zealand's current turmoil over beekeeping industry representation is not entirely unique, and that there are examples from not just other locations, but through history, which could help guide our thinking.

BY DAVE BLACK

"Wherever one goes one meets beekeepers who earnestly desire to see some kind of Central Organization at work which really represents beekeeping as a whole, to which all can belong, and which can speak and act in the name of all beekeepers in the country. A new generation is arising which is not interested in the quarrels of the past, and even the old antagonists are beginning to see how much has been lost, and how little gained by these unfortunate disputes. Already there is talk of new proposals for bringing about this greatly to be desired object"

I'm sure you have heard this sentiment expressed recently, although the style probably reveals in this case it comes from a different time and place. In 1939, a Hertfordshire beekeeper L. Illingworth (who was one of the BBKA's Presidents 12 years later) was writing in the organisation's journal, Bee World[1].

THE BACKGROUND

The early years of the BBKA were promising but tumultuous. For many reasons British agriculture, and British apiculture, was changing. The British statutory body responsible for agriculture was originally the Board of Agriculture, briefly established in 1773 (because of a war) and put on a more permanent footing (after another war) in 1884, and after repeated outbreaks of a lethal cattle virus and foot and mouth disease, at the same time as cheap grain from the Americas and bad weather debilitated the agricultural economy.

'State interference' became indispensable. Even so a 'free trade' lobby stifled government intervention in farming, and a growing body of farmers saw their livelihoods ruined. British agriculture, and the apiculture that accompanied it, never recovered. The same thing played out for suburban, sub-rural beekeepers. The gradual introduction of moveable-frame hives, bouts of 'Isle of White' disease in the early 1900s, and as the foulbroods were recognised as an existential threat, beekeepers needed someone with actual power (the government) to intervene.

COLLECTIVE ACTION

They were out of luck, simply not important enough, the free trade team ruled. Collective action was all they had. The BBKA, the country's collective 'union' of beekeepers, had formed in 1874. The first Foul Brood Disease of Bees Order, enabling legislation from the Board of Agriculture, even though the need was recognised, took another 68 years until 1942. In 1939 Illingworth was frustrated by seeing the power of the organisation to act drained by squabbling between the BBKA and various other groups ('County Associations') of beekeepers. He continued;

"...we beekeepers are mostly quite ordinary folk and therefore need

Bee World has been published since 1919. We look back to a 1939 contribution from a British beekeeper to highlight how some occurrences in the plight of the beekeeper seem to change little.

a sound organization that will promote smooth working, and prevent anyone from exercising more influence than he has a right to...The dog ought to wag the tail, not the tail the dog."

This was not quite the democratic appeal it might seem to our modern eyes. 'Mostly quite ordinary folk'! An 1890 list of the BBKA's 44 Officers and Committee at the time includes two Princesses, three Dukes, six Earls, three Bishops, a Marchioness, a Viscount, two Baronesses, three Lords, one Lady, six Reverends, a Sheriff, two Navy Captains and two MPs. The few remaining to be addressed as 'Esquire', or 'Mr'. It wasn't very different in the inter-War years the author is writing in, and of course, only men carried any real authority anyway. He goes on with some quite specific suggestions:

"If it is said that it is not desired that the Central Body should itself carry out any scheme, but merely provide a really representative assembly to work out and recommend schemes for the County Associations to carry out, then unity will not be achieved any more this way. The Central Body will become a mere debating society expressing pious opinions... It is most important that the Central Body in any scheme should control the purse, as the House of Commons does. Without this there can be no true democracy. When it does so, and the Representative Assembly carries any measure, all the Local Branches carry it out, even though they voted in the minority against it. Without control of the purse the minority refuses to carry out the policy voted in the Assembly, which is not democracy but anarchy... In any scheme of reform all the sacrifices must not be on one side; the County Associations, as well as the B.B.K.A., must be prepared to reform themselves, and to scrap much of what has hitherto proved a hindrance to progress."

A BEEKEEPERS' CONUNDRUM

Few will be as aware as I am that British and Kiwi beekeeping exist in very different worlds, but they have something in common with each other, and all the other beekeepers that have ever existed. Beekeeping can start on a whim; no special equipment, no land, no money. That though is the root of the occupation's unique weakness, it's powerless to chart its own path. Owning nothing, consuming nothing, and producing nothing essential, beekeepers have no economic power and can only preserve their livelihoods by nurturing good will and collective action. We see this effort faltering time after time. The cautionary phrase "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"[2], or the many variations of it you will have heard, is worth recalling.

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1. Illingworth, L., 1939. The Re-Organization of Beekeeping in England. Bee World 20, 51–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/0005772X.1939.11093883 (Paywalled)
2. Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana, The Life of Reason: The Phases of Human Progress Vol 1, Reason in Common Sense p. 284

Bee Love

August is over, the last of the beekeeping 'breather' months. Bee numbers are on the rise as lambs are on the ground. No rest for the multi-discipline farmers out there, even I find myself with extra mouths to feed after successfully caesarean sectioning a dead ewe with triplets.

Mouths to feed are many in the hive, but at least we are not feeding the mites. After our deadly campaign with oxalic acid mist, mite numbers are being kept in check by the oxalic staples.

Last week our test hive at home had a drop of five mites on the sticky board, three days after vaporizing. I can live with that background level - and it is a datum, as sad as it is, we know we can never get them all. Our crew is super-vigilant for any signs of mites or damaged bees, and it is extremely heartening going through the rounds without finding evidence of either.

Off to a good start. Looking forward, I can see the orders for overwintered queens, piles of gear to create splits, and stacks of newspapers for making formic acid bags, looming overhead. Preparations are underway. The pricker bank is being re-needled, the extracting room floor is being resurfaced, and our operations are being revamped with a custom stainless sugar tank to go on the back of the truck.

Shoutout to all those significant others. Mine is a boilermaker/welder, so you know where that feed tank came from. The best things in life are free, and I don't just mean the repairs to the truck. I'm talking about love. Appreciate what you have, and love will set you free.

The guy who won't wear a suit. Looking through some recently purchased hives with my brother.

It's got to be love of the job that drives most of us. Love and necessity. Or insanity. Kidding, but the big push is just around the corner and things are about to get real.

To get into the mood, I attended an event, with Zespri's 'Beekeepers guide to kiwifruit pollination', a collaboration of kiwifruit industry reps and beekeepers. The meeting went down with the same tone I'd heard at other recent shindigs – Zespri's unabashed optimism and enthusiasm for the future of export kiwifruit. This was, however, the full-depth spiel, and the kiwifruit caucus was all ears and note-taking as the beekeepers bantered.

Now a few familiar faces, I could recognize some of our industry advocates. Discussions were encouraged and there was a fair bit to get through. With many unique challenges in perfecting the pollination of kiwifruit, what's 'good' for the orchard is not always good for the bees, and various dances take place around flowering times and spraying schedules.

Interesting points were raised, including enclosed orchards and the use of nettings. One could liken it to, as a bee, beeing in an absolute white-out. Every which way is a never-ending colour-block, and your chances of finding home are dubious at best. In perpetual gloom, the odds continue to stack as your life-giving wings break away on the windbreak (wing-break). Save the bees, guys.

Thankfully, this issue is being addressed in real time, and now some orchards are removing large strips of overhead netting to better accommodate pollinators' need for the sun as a point of reference.

Encompassing good practice and communication, the way forward is lit. Hive standards were covered, and on the topic of revolutionary hive auditing, my dad demonstrated his gift as a visionary, apprising that he has used thermal imaging on beehives for the last 10 years, to quickly pick out weak hives and otherwise gauge bee numbers.

All in, I have been sucking up information like a sponge. Attending industry events has been an eye-opener to how the real world works and has given me insight to the future.

New technology has a place in the scheme of things, but ultimately, sensors and algorithms do not hold a candle to the depth, understanding, and gratitude our humanness brings to managing bees.

So embrace your passion, cherish what you hold dear.

Bee Love.

Aimz

Revitalising Bee Science

Offering ideas on how the apiculture industry might improve its appeal to potential funders, on August 28 Ian Fletcher called on his experience and expertise in high-level government departments to present to the 6th New Zealand Honey Bee Research Symposium in Wellington on the topic of 'Research partnerships in a dynamic and political environment'. He extends his thinking here.

BY IAN FLETCHER

While I was only able to join part of the day-long Honey Bee Research Symposium recently, I was struck by the care and commitment to bee research reflected in the material I did see, and in the commentary and conversation that flowed through the event.

It has been suggested that I use this month's column to capture the comments I made. I'm always hesitant to tell beekeepers about beekeeping (you all know more than me). But my topic was Research Partnerships in a Dynamic and Political Environment. That means looking at how to get more money, more reliably, for bee-related research.

The case for bee-related research seems obvious to beekeepers, and to anyone who looks at the role bees play in both our economy and our environment. Yet, bee-related science struggles for attention and funding. The problem isn't that bees are unimportant, but that the way science and politics work in New Zealand often sidelines smaller, less glamorous sectors.

Ian Fletcher believes the beekeeping industry must refocus government attention on its role in pollination, not honey, and do a better job of explaining the challenges it faces if it is to effect significant change in funding decisions.

Politicians, government agencies, and organisations like the Royal Society Te Apirangi (which is both our national science academy and acts as the funding body for a lot of science work) tend to give priority to issues of the moment, or just bigger industries and high-prestige research topics. The result of this is bee science is crowded out and marginalised.

This political environment means researchers must be aware not only of the science, but also of the culture of decision-making around science. In New Zealand, researchers are often told to chase fashionable areas that look impressive internationally. Yet the local needs of agriculture, pollination, and rural livelihoods may not fit neatly into global fashions.

For bee research, this has led to chronic underfunding and an absence of long-term strategy. I'm in no place to judge, but from my perspective we have a small number of good and dedicated scientists tackling urgent and important work without the simple scale needed to make headway quickly enough to really help beekeepers, or to position New Zealand science to help prepare for future diseases, or market opportunities. For example, we are still doing what looks like vital, but fundamentally foundational research on varroa twenty-five years after the incursion.

At the same time, beekeepers themselves are geographically dispersed, and have a low level of trust and engagement with institutions (many of which are over-centralised anyway, as I've said previously). This hasn't been helped by the gold-rush atmosphere that surrounded beekeeping during the years when mānuka prices were very high.

This means that outsiders – and politicians – can be impatient with the real difficulties the industry faces, not recognising that the challenges are real, and need to be taken seriously. In that environment, it's hard to make the case for more science funding when it's overshadowed by institutional prejudices. I also think that beekeeping is still coming to terms with the impact of varroa

– something I call "post-varroa stress disorder". This mix of stress and low trust makes collective action hard.

What can be done to get a better hearing for our scientists? The first step is to change the story. Too often bees are thought of simply in terms of honey. Instead, the narrative needs to emphasise pollination, which is vital not only to agriculture but to ecosystems and food security. Including native pollinators broadens the story beyond just honeybees. A striking example came from Bavaria in 2019, where a "Save the Bees" referendum proposal on protecting pollinators gained huge public support and was enacted. New Zealand could learn from that success by framing bee science as part of beekeepers' work protecting biodiversity and food supply for everyone.

To shift the culture, researchers need to work not only with scientists but also with economists and social scientists. Understanding beekeeping as an economic activity, and a human activity dating back thousands of years is legitimately relevant to bee science. Beekeeping is part of the ecology and the biology of bees and should be seen as such.

Economists can help explain the value of pollination in clear financial and process terms. This would help show others the value being created by pollination, and underpin the case for more research money. It might also mean beekeepers can charge more for pollination services – a market that is certainly wildly underpriced at present. If I was providing pollination services, I'd want a royalty, not a fee – a percentage of the value of the crop. That would incentivise me to provide an excellent service. Say, five percent of the retail value? Just a thought.

Social scientists can help too. They can shed light on the culture of beekeeping itself – why trust is so low, why people feel alienated, and how "islands of trust" can be built. Rather than getting criticised for lack of "unity" by successive governments, it's would be good to be able to properly understand and explain why beekeeping is hard, and what can be done to actually help.

Practical steps include hosting research-focused events where beekeepers and scientists can meet, even before funding is in place, to make sure every scrap of knowledge is shared. Keeping communication simple, transparent, and collegial can help confidence.

Ultimately, culture is upstream of politics, and the cultures of beekeeping and of science both undervalue what everyone does. Without a new narrative, bee science will remain peripheral. With a bit of thought and some creative thinking, researchers and beekeepers together can create a compelling case for investment that not only strengthens science, but also revitalises our share of New Zealand's rural future.

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

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