

ISSUE 11, JUNE 2020

APIARIST'S ADVOCATE



News, Views & Promotions – for Beekeepers – by Beekeepers

The background image is a misty, blue-toned landscape. In the foreground, two wooden beehives are visible, each with a dark rock on top. The middle ground shows several bare trees and a misty field. The sky is overcast and blue. In the bottom right corner, there is a decorative pattern of hexagons.

**Wintering
Down in
New Zealand**
Migrant Beekeepers
Face A Long Stay
Away From Home

Wintering Down Away From Home



From international honey sales to increased sanitisation in the workplace, the impact of the global pandemic has been far reaching in New Zealand apiculture. Caught up in the effects of Covid-19 are a large portion of New Zealand's migrant beekeepers, with many forced to spend a winter away from their homeland and families, or risk being unable to return to their jobs.

Among New Zealand's migrant beekeepers are husbands, fathers, sons and sole breadwinners with families relying on the pay generated from their tending to bees a world away.

Like many of New Zealand's primary industries, apiculture relies on a migrant workforce, a large amount of who travel from the Philippines in spring time, work through the summer months and return to their homeland when the beekeeping season winds down over winter. However, this year uncertainty around flights and border restrictions mean travel is either not possible, too expensive, or too risky to undertake.

Exact numbers of migrant beekeepers in New Zealand are difficult to ascertain, but in many commercial operations Filipinos alone make up the majority of the beekeeping workforce, many of who are employed on seasonal contracts.

Apiculture New Zealand chief executive Karin Kos says conversations have taken place with various government departments in an attempt to offer migrant workers greater freedom to shift between jobs.

"We approached MBIE (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment) to see if there was some way to support migrant beekeepers who were unable to leave New Zealand and their work ran out. Recently Immigration NZ introduced some changes including relaxing visa conditions for those working in essential services. Some beekeeping businesses have reported migrant workers making contact to ask about work opportunities, but that Immigration NZ processing times for visa changes have been slow," Kos says.

Discussions with employers reveal the amount of beekeepers facing an unexpected winter in New Zealand varies greatly between operations. Some seasonal contracts were completed prior to lockdown and beekeepers were able to return to their homeland, while in other businesses work continued through lockdown and now many foreign beekeepers remain in the country.

At Tweeddale's Honey in Taihape, 18 seasonal Filipino workers, who would normally return home between May and July, remain on staff.

"It is difficult finding work for them," owner Don Tweeddale says.

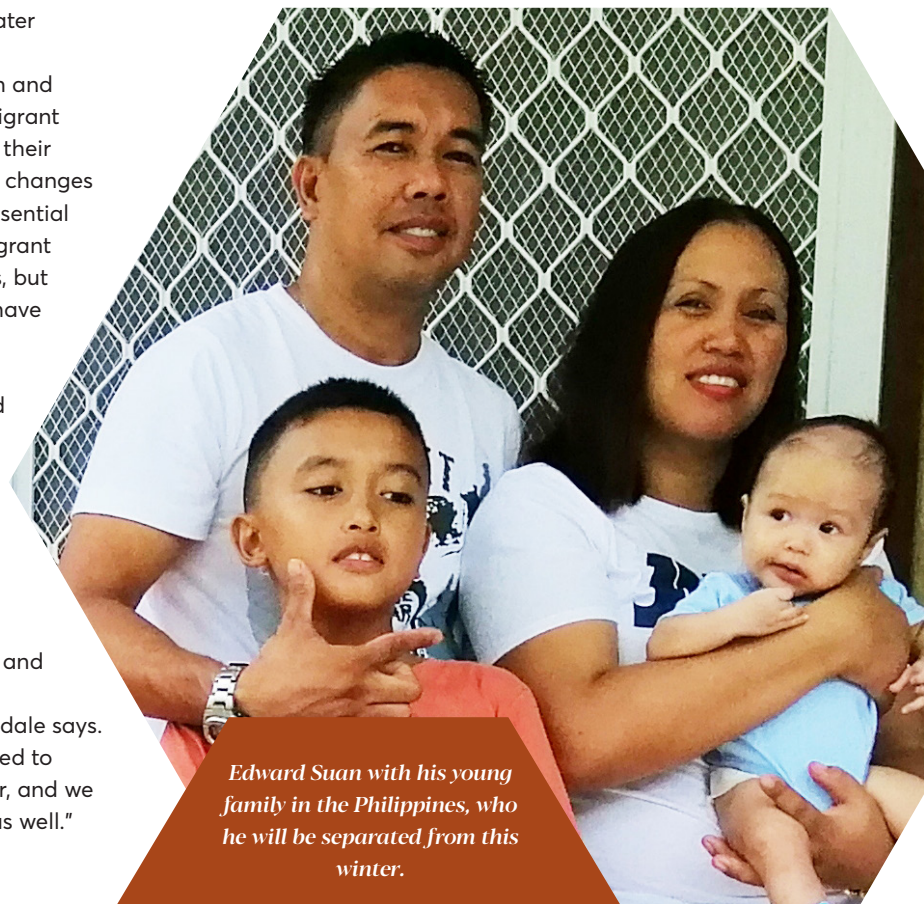
"We are doing a lot of maintenance work which we need to catch up on. Hopefully that will get us through the winter, and we have some manuka properties which we are tidying up as well."

Some of the staff have also been kept busy with late season extraction, but that is expected to wrap up in early June. With 18 extra sets of hands to utilise, Tweeddale says the work may run out at some point in July.

"It is a bit of a financial pain, but we will try to manage our way through because hopefully it is a one-off thing."

Tweeddale's Honey have received the Covid-19 Wage Subsidy from the government, to help ease the burden of carrying extra staff through winter, and hope to remain eligible in the coming months.

Among the beekeepers at the central North Island operation, known for their distinctive green hives, is Edward Suan, a team-leader who calls the Occidental province in the Philippines home.



Edward Suan with his young family in the Philippines, who he will be separated from this winter.

Like many of the Filipino workforce in New Zealand, Suan is the sole breadwinner for his family, sending much of his pay back home to his wife and two children, aged seven and one. Suan has not seen his family in person since August last year, when his daughter was just over three months old.

"I am missing them a lot," Suan says.

"I wish Covid-19 was not here anymore and I could go home for a holiday."

He has been traveling to New Zealand to work for the last seven beekeeping seasons and would usually return home for several months, starting in May or June. This year flights are very limited and, even if borders are open, migrant workers risk being locked out of New Zealand and unable to return to their jobs when they need to in spring.

"I don't know if they [New Zealand immigration] will accept us when we return here, and I need this job to support my family," Suan says.

Travel home for many migrants is also risky due to increased stopovers in potential Covid-19 hotspots.

"There would be a problem travelling, especially with a connecting flight. I don't want to contract the virus. So, I will stay here to protect myself and my family," Suan says.

Even if migrant Filipino workers can find a way home, their time with family would be limited, with mandatory two-week quarantines in both New Zealand and the Philippines likely.

Right now Suan, like many others, has to content himself with regular communications with family via the internet. The Tweeddale's Honey team leader was permitted an early finish to the season in autumn 2019, to be on hand for the birth of his second child in the Philippines. Now, a little over a year later he will probably not see his family in person again until Christmas at the earliest, or winter 2021, a span of at least 18 months.

"We are hoping by Christmas time that some who want to go back and see their families will be able to, if the lockdown has reduced," Tweeddale says.

"It is two and half to three weeks off, but we are also very busy, so not everyone goes back in a normal year. It is usually just some who wish to see their families, who have small kids, but not the whole 18."

An extension to their time off work at that point in the beekeeping season is very difficult to manage, says the Tweeddale's Honey owner.

"It is right in the crunch time of the whole operation. We are harvesting honey, putting boxes on, extracting. It is all go at that time."

For Suan, Christmas and winter 2021 are a long way off. However, while he has paid work the situation holds a silver lining, despite separation from his family.

"I can't touch or hold them, but I am providing what they need. I am happy and they are happy," he says, adding "right now, I can't hug them though." 🐝



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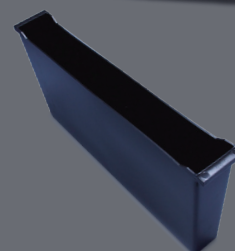


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Protests Draw Ire of Agency and Raises Questions



Is it a “perfectly legitimate protest” or a “brazen attempt to defund the Pest Management Plan”? Several members of industry body New Zealand Beekeeping Incorporated (NZBI) have paid their recent American Foulbrood (AFB) levy under protest, with the National AFB Pest Management Plan Management Agency rejecting the payments, while Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ) says their members have not raised concern with the levy. What has caused the controversy? How have the various parties responded? Will it impact the Management Agency’s ability to operate? And, is there a solution at hand?

THE CAUSE

In April, following two rounds of consultation with beekeepers over the past two years, a revision of the American Foulbrood Beekeeper Levy Order 2003 was made. The newly-amended order changed the basis on which levies were calculated, replacing the old formula, which counted the number of apiaries each beekeeper owned, with a new formula based on the number of colonies.

“But the new Order made a second change, one ApiNZ and the Management Agency have been at pains to ignore,” a statement from NZBI, released on May 29, claims.

That change is to the wording around the year to which a levy payment relates, going from the number of apiaries owned at 31 March of the *previous year* to the number of colonies owned at 31 March of the *levy year for which the levy is payable*.

There has been no change to the period which a levy year covers though, that is from June 1 to May 31.

“Under the old Order, everyone paid their levies in advance. Your 2018/19 levy (your levy for the levy year starting 1 June 2018 and ending 31 May 2019) was based on the number of apiaries you owned on 31 March 2018, and was due for payment by 1 June of the same year. The new Order charges levies in arrears. For example your 2021/22 levy will be based on the number of colonies you own on 31 March 2022, and will be payable on 1 June 2022,” the NZBI statement details.

The organisation is concerned that the switch from payment in “advance” to “arrears” could mean beekeepers end up being levied for the same year twice. On levy invoices sent to beekeepers in April 2019, the year levied for was listed as “2019-2020 year” whereas the invoices sent this April failed to determine the levy year, but did state calculations were on “registered colonies at 31 March 2020”.



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"Clearly, knowing which levy year you're being invoiced for is critical. ApiNZ seems very anxious to avoid admitting that your most recent invoice is actually a second invoice for the 2019/20 levy year – the 2020/21 levy can't even be calculated until 31 March next year," NZBI state.

That is because under the new wording the 31 March date used must be of the levy year for which the levy is payable and the 2020/21 year does not begin until June 1 this year.

The change in wording could lead to complications with levy payments when a beekeeper exits the industry, or with accounting practices, according to NZBI.

However, the Management Agency, through national compliance manager Clifton King, says NZBI's concerns are unfounded.

"Yes there has been a change in definition of the levy year. It has changed from the year in which levy money is spent, to the year in which levy monies were incurred. That is the technical detail they are basing their whole argument on, but it doesn't actually alter the fact nothing has really changed. Beekeepers are assessed on apiaries, now colonies, at 31 March, we issue invoices in April and we spend the money implementing the Pest Management Plan (PMP) from June through to the following May," King says.

THE RESPONSE

As the due date for levy payments neared and having not received a satisfactory remedy to their concerns from any of the Management Agency, ApiNZ (who oversee the Management Agency) or the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) – to who



they were referred – NZBI advised several of their members to accompany their annual levy payment with a letter of protest. It stipulated that if the Levy Order is struck down in court or arbitration then they, as hive owners, reserve the right to seek a refund or credit.

The Management Agency responded to those beekeepers by stating the terms of their payment were not acceptable, requesting payment "without any conditions on or before 1 June 2020" or they would be charged 10 percent on top of any monies owed.

"They are trying to impose conditions on their payment they are not legally entitled to," King says.

"We have obtained [legal] advice that the most appropriate thing to do is to respond back to advise that we are not willing to accept payment on the terms NZ Beekeeping Inc is advising members to do.

"If we just accept those emails and don't respond to them at all, that is complicit acceptance of the conditions under which they were paid."

That response has been deemed "outrageous" and "shockingly inappropriate" by NZBI president Jane Lorimer.

"Beekeepers who have paid under protest are saying nothing more than, if they've paid more than the law requires, then they'd like a refund. That's hardly unreasonable. This reference to charging a penalty is clearly an attempt to intimidate, and is illegal. The Order lets the Management Agency penalise late payers, not beekeepers who've paid in full.

"Why are the Management Agency so worried if they think their invoices are on solid legal ground?" Lorimer says.

THE EFFECT

"We don't want the PMP to fall over. We just want to get this sorted so the Agency is actually operating according to the law," Lorimer says, explaining why some members were advised to pay up, but also include a protest letter.

However, King believes beekeepers should recognise NZBI's actions as an attempt to defund the Pest Management Plan, "nothing more, nothing less".

"They are dressing it up as a point of law, but it is a brazen attempt to defund the Pest Management Plan. If by small chance they were successful, all beekeepers would suffer the consequences for ever more and there won't be a Pest Management Plan to control AFB," the national compliance manager says.

Despite concerns around the protestors' true intentions, on May 29, four days out from Levy due date, King confirmed he was comfortable with the level of payment the Management Agency had received.

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"I am expecting that by 1 June we will be in a similar position to last year. I am confident of the support of beekeepers to make sure we are well funded to carry out the Pest Management Plan."

That confidence is echoed by ApiNZ chief executive Karin Kos.

"I think beekeepers see the value in the work the Agency is doing. This issue has been raised by NZ Beekeeping Inc, but it is certainly not something that has been raised by our members at all," Kos says.

When NZBI first raised concern with the Levy Order, Lorimer says they approached ApiNZ to work together on resolving the issue, but were refused.

ApiNZ received reassurance from MPI and the Parliamentary Council Office, which drafted the new Order, that beekeepers were not going to be levied twice in one year, so did not hold the same concerns as NZBI and thus did not wish to advance the issue, Kos says.

"A technicality has come up, yes, but in our view it does not stop the Levy Order," Kos says.

"There has been a change, but it does not change when the order is assessed, invoiced or when beekeepers have to pay."

THE SOLUTION

Entering June, NZBI was still in discussion with MPI about the wording of the Order and Lorimer – who was president of the National Beekeepers Association in 2003 when the original AFB Order was introduced and initially implemented by that agency – says the solution to NZBI's concerns is simple.

"We are trying to get the Order amended so that it goes back to how it was worded previously. That way we will still be paying our levy in advance and it will take away some of the confusion that is out there," she says.

According to King, that confusion is limited to some NZBI members.

However, NZBI is willing to take the matter to consultation or the High Court if they can't make progress in discussions with MPI, while the attitude of ApiNZ to sweep aside NZBI's concerns is unsurprising because "we are seen as the stirrers of the industry", Lorimer says.

Kos believes there is a more conducive way to address issues surrounding the Pest Management Plan though.

"For some time now I have asked NZ Beekeeping Inc to nominate a candidate for selection to the Pest Management Agency Board. By having a seat at the table, it is a much more effective way for their organisation to be across the decision making process," Kos says, adding, "that, to me, is a much more productive and proactive way of working with the Agency and I would think most New Zealand beekeepers can see that."

However, the Levy Order debate at hand will not be resolved in that manner. Instead, discussion between NZBI and MPI will continue, with potential for the debate to lead to arbitration or the High Court.

The Full Biosecurity (American Foulbrood—Beekeeper Levy) Order 2003, along with the 2020 Amendment Order, can be viewed by searching at www.legislation.govt.nz 🐝

Do you have a view on the Levy Order debate? Send us your feedback, email editor@apiadvocate.co.nz



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Brakes Pumped on Beeswax Buying



Leading New Zealand beeswax buyer New Zealand Beeswax has put a temporary hold on purchasing due to market disruptions caused by the global pandemic, but general manager Nick Taylor says the hold is just that – temporary.

"We are making sure we are not going to walk into a bear trap," Taylor says of the company's stance to hold off buying from beekeepers in recent months.

A lockdown enforced slowdown of their own processing, combined with global Covid-19 manufacturing disruptions, has seen the Geraldine-based business take a cautious approach to buying.

"It was a privilege and we were lucky we could continue to operate through lockdown, but as a company we chose to slow down a bit and focus on core, essential services, rather than the whole range," Taylor says.

Lockdowns, both in New Zealand and globally, has seen demand for wax drop over the past two months, he says.

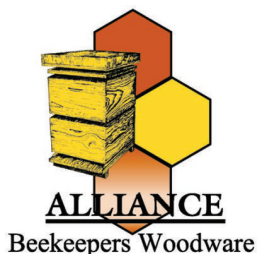
"We had about two months of next to no orders on the beeswax side of things, here and overseas. A lot of companies, even if they were deemed essential businesses, had to curtail the way they operated. As a result they have been very conservative on their forecasting and stock maintenance."

The good news for beekeepers is that Taylor expects his company to be buying beeswax again at some point in June.

Beekeepers had been receiving store credit as payment for beeswax over the past year, priced in the range of \$10-\$12 a



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kilogram, following years of cash payments of up to \$18 a kilogram through the manuka honey boom (these price fluctuations were covered in detail in the September 2019 issue of *Apiarist's Advocate*). Taylor says the policy of offering store credit will most likely be renewed when buying resumes.

"That philosophy remained unchanged up until the lockdown. We were continuing to take all comers and converting the wax to store credit. Our goal is to do that for the rest of 2020, but what we are saying is, the world has hit a big pause button and we are going to have to follow that, take a bit of a breather and make sure everything is OK, in terms of making sure the markets are holding up and prices are stable."

New Zealand Beeswax converts beeswax into hivesware for domestic sale, while international customers are made up of manufacturers of cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, personal care and nutraceuticals. Taylor says he is wary that manufacturing costs will have risen, while also noting the volatile nature of various commodity markets around the world recently.


"Adjusting the way you manufacture adds costs. So, we will wait to see what it all means."

That wait-and-see approach applies to the price New Zealand Beeswax will be offering on a return to buying, but Taylor is optimistic it will not fall greatly.



Nick Taylor,
general manager
New Zealand
Beeswax.

"Generally we think everything is going to hold up pretty well, but we want to make sure. You can easily get filled up to your gills with expensive beeswax which you are unable to sell.

"Once we get those messages that everything is OK, we will be back to buying on store credit again." 

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Beekeepers Benefit in Budget



Beekeepers will be among a long list of employers and employees benefiting from the government's May budget announcement of \$1.6billion to foster trade and apprenticeship training, while the apiculture industry could also provide a potential landing place for out of work New Zealanders.

A highlight of the national budget announcement on May 14 was a major investment in providing New Zealanders with the training required to "get them working again", following job losses associated with the impact of Covid-19.

Apiculture, along with other primary industries, building and construction, manufacturing and vocational training for community health, counselling and care work will share in the Trades and Apprenticeships Training package. Details are yet to be released, but government has signalled an intention to fully fund apprenticeship fees over the next two years.

"As we emerge from this health crisis it is important that we now invest in training and education for people who might have lost their jobs, or who want to move into a different sector where prospects are better," Education Minister Chris Hipkins says.

Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ) Education and Skills Focus Group chair Stuart Fraser believes beekeeping offers those better prospects.

"There is going to be a bunch of people from different industries forced into retraining. If you are coming from hospitality or tourism, great, we would love to have you. All those people bring skillsets that business owners will want to be paying particular attention to," Fraser says.

The budget announcement to fund apprenticeships comes less than a year after ApiNZ launched the New Zealand Apprenticeship in Apiculture. The program has generated interest, with around 75 beekeepers enrolled in its first season.


"We had really good uptake in the first year and have had really good uptake for this coming season. We are pleased with the numbers in the industry undertaking apprenticeships. This [budget] announcement only serves to enhance that opportunity as well," Fraser says.

The government's \$1.6billion package comes on stream July 1. It will not only offer great opportunities for newcomers to the industry, but also those employing beekeepers, Fraser says.

"There is funding from the government, opportunities within the industry and a high quality of people becoming available. It does not get much better than this for business owners. It is a really good opportunity to raise that entire skillset within their businesses."

Primary industries have been working alongside government to provided better training opportunities through a variety of workgroups. In apiculture, ApiNZ's Education and Skills Focus Group is essential to pursuing the needs of the industry, and, as the chair, Fraser thanks the volunteers, who come from varying apiculture roles around New Zealand, for their efforts.

"We are pretty lucky in primary industry. We have a lot of background work behind us. The apiculture team from the education and skills group have put a lot of time and effort in. So the Minister's [budget] announcement is very welcome," Fraser says, while also reinforcing the potential benefit to apiculture of apprenticeship funding at a time when many will be out of work.

"It is a great opportunity for the industry to grab some good quality skillsets to come into our industry. They come with work ethic, they are already qualified in something, and they come prepared to work. Really it is a great opportunity for business owners." 



Stuart Fraser, chair of Apiculture New Zealand's Education and Skills Focus Group.

Tropics to Te Awamutu



Brazilian by birth, Linden Gomes always wanted to go “somewhere else”. Initially that was Hawaii, where the beekeeper honed his queen-rearing skills for four years, but now it is Te Awamutu after chancing on a life in New Zealand four years ago. With a senior queen-rearing position at Kiwi Bee, his wife working alongside him, and a growing passion for photography, the 39-year-old has found his “somewhere else”.

The harsh winter of the Waikato proved the biggest learning curve for Gomes when he entered Kiwi Bee's (the beekeeping arm of Comvita) queen-rearing team in 2016.

“In Hawaii the weather was very different and in Brazil it is also very hot, especially where I come from in the north-east,” he explains.

“When I came to New Zealand everything was totally new. I had never had a winter before. Overwintering small mating nucs is totally different here.”

Gomes learned beekeeping in Brazil's state of Paraiba, working as an assistant to university professor Dr Patricio Maracaja before spending four years in Hawaii rearing queens for the company Hawaiian Queen from 2008 to 2012.

Hawaiian Queen would rear in excess of 40,000 mated queens a year, allowing Gomes to advance his skills considerably.

In 2012 he returned to Brazil with plans to launch his own business and work alongside universities, as his professor had, but soon learned his time outside the country meant the projects he had hoped to undertake were no longer available.

Beekeeping is a low-paying career in Brazil and Gomes could not muster the investment required to start his own beekeeping business, so he traded hive-tools for dog and cat clippers and launched a pet grooming business with wife Vivian.

Gomes's passion for beekeeping remained though. So, when the prospect of coming to New Zealand and working for Kiwi Bee arose in 2016, he jumped at the opportunity.

He had been in New Plymouth for the wedding of a fellow beekeeper who he had worked with in Hawaii. “From Auckland to New Plymouth I fell in love with New Zealand. I stayed 12 days after the wedding and said, ‘I need to find a job here’.”

Another beekeeping friend pointed him towards Kiwi Bee and a job and work visa were soon finalised. So Gomes, Vivian and their two children, now aged seven and 17, set a course for New Zealand in September 2016.

“Until I faced my first winter, I didn't know how different it was,” Gomes says.

“Taking mating nucs through winter, that was the biggest difference because we used to overwinter hives in Hawaii with very small populations and they would continue on growing. The queens never stopped laying. In New Zealand, 2017 was very wet and we lost mating nucs, which was really frustrating. At the same time, it taught me a lot, how to deal with the seasons.”

Spring and summer months have also thrown up some new challenges.

“In Brazil and Hawaii we can check matings after 15 days. Here we have to wait a bit more, because the matings are a bit later. You can really see the difference between early spring and when the summer is hitting us. We can see the matings become faster and earlier, than in early spring. That is what I like about queen-rearing – it is a new thing every day.”



Linden and Virginia Gomes, Brazilian beekeepers settled in Te Awamutu.

When Gomes first arrived in the country he worked in a queen-rearing team of five beekeepers, now he runs his own queen production team of two, alongside Vivian, a professional photographer turned part-time beekeeper.

"She began helping out, with cell bars and grafting. We realised she was learning and improving every day, so we became the two beekeepers of the queen unit," Gomes explains.

"In queen rearing it is easier to control the quality if you have less people doing it. I have realised that, in the last few years, we have had less complaints about the queens than when there were five of us."

The Gomes have produced about 3500 mated queens for Kiwi Bee in each of the past two seasons.

Gomes met his wife through his beekeeping, Vivian being the daughter of Professor Maracaja, who he started beekeeping with. In Brazil, aggressive African bees are the strain of choice and so Gomes says that an interest in the beekeeper's daughter may have helped draw him to the hives.

"I think I probably needed the motivation. The Africanised bees by themselves probably wouldn't have done it," he jokes.

Queen-rearing is not popular in Brazil. The high aggression level of the Africanised bees makes working without gloves undesirable, and they are also prone to swarming. Gomes says he has heard of swarm-cells being built on a newly-mated queen's first round of brood. Further to that, along with beekeeping not paying well

in Brazil, honey as a food product and apiculture in general does not garner nearly the amount of respect as what they do in New Zealand, he suggests.

That interest from Kiwis in beekeeping has also acted as encouragement for a new hobby, with Gomes developing an enjoyment for photography of bees – to go along with his wife's experience behind a camera.

He says he has received good feedback on his photos, (including featuring on the cover of May's *Apiarist's Advocate*), and plans to continue honing his shutter skills.

"I was always trying to learn and this season I decided I would really invest in it. It seems people really like it and I am very happy with that ... if people like it, then why not?"

So, with husband and wife enjoying their queen-rearing, developing their photography skills and brighter prospects for their kids in New Zealand, the Gomes family plan to apply for residency later this year.

"I don't miss Brazil," Gomes says. "I just don't. I don't lie about where I come from, but I never felt like a Brazilian. I always wanted to go somewhere else."

That somewhere else is now Te Awamutu and may be for a long time.

"Everything has worked out so well since we got here," he says.

"We have nothing to complain about and we are hoping to stay here forever." 🐝

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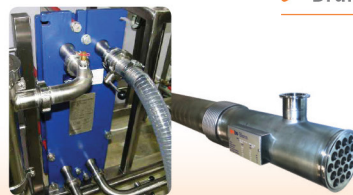


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Supplied Insights: An Industry in a New Dynamic



DAVE WRATHALL,

CEO of Ecrotek Beekeeping Supplies, harks back to the heady days of the Information Technology boom to supply insights pertinent to the current plight of New Zealand Apiculture.

As a “veteran” of almost eight years in the industry, on the supply side, I have experienced the boom and now the rapid correction, and maturing, of the New Zealand beekeeping and honey sectors. I have been here before, where I cut my teeth in business – IT.

Like us now, that industry went through a similar lifecycle through the 1980s and into the 2000s, where industry participants had to adapt to rapidly changing dynamics.

In the heady days we sold computer systems for high margins, and had long lunches to celebrate! Then came the commoditization of hardware and the move away from “selling kit to anyone” to a services and solutions mentality, working more

closely with customers to help them become more successful in their business. The industry moved from volume to value.

So here are some observations from those days and how we in New Zealand apiculture can possibly apply them.

As an industry goes from rapid growth, it often hits a “correction”, before rebalancing and settling into a long term sustainable mode. During a correction, there needs to be rapid adjustment of cost models, where non-core or wasteful expenditure is reviewed and reduced; a critical assessment of products or services is undertaken, where low margin offerings are disestablished; a review of capability, where there is an adjustment of human resource to ensure the business is right-sized (where you have “the right people on the right seats in the bus”); and finally a review of markets, moving to focus on the channels and customers where there is the potential for long term sustainable partnerships, rather than short term, lower margin transactions.

Coming out of a correction, where the industry lifecycle settles into a more stable dynamic, businesses often need to apply a different lens. More often than not, this is around operational efficiencies. Once the business has adjusted its capabilities, settled its focus on its core markets, channels and customers, the energy then goes into ensuring the business can service its customers in an efficient and effective manner. So, this is about systems and processes.

These days we can lean on technology to help us operationally. Zoom became a superstar application during the lockdown, where we connected with staff, suppliers and customers in an efficient face-to-face manner. We now have excellent and elegant financial systems available to us such as Xero, and for the beekeeping industry there are some new management systems in the market, including Ecrotek’s new iApis software platform.

Aside from technology, there is always an opportunity to review people-related processes, especially when it comes to labour efficiencies. If I have a team of 10 beekeeping, or a team of six in extracting and packing, what is the workflow on an hourly, daily,



*Dave Wrathall,
Ecrotek
Beekeeping
Supplies CEO*

weekly basis? How do I measure outputs per labour unit/labour hour? Can I find an extra 10 percent efficiency by doing things a bit differently?

At Ecrotek we have developed process maps to understand the workflow from taking an order, to shipping it out the door, so we can look for bottlenecks, double handling etc. In doing so, we have streamlined the way we do things, becoming more efficient, but also improving our levels of service to our customers.

Often the most interesting developments which occur during this period of an industry's life cycle come from innovation. Those that can take advantage of dramatic change by innovating often come out as leaders. We have seen some of this during the Covid-19 lockdown, where one car rental company turned its fleet into a food delivery service. Coffee-ordering apps popped up out of no-where to help cafes service their customers safely. Change and necessity often drives innovation, but it often needs courage and boldness.

Innovation is not only about technology – it can be around product offering, brand, service, process. So as an industry and as individual businesses, we can think differently and innovate, and be successful in this new world.

Best of luck! 🐝




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"K9 Chief", one of Richelle Doerner-Corson's Honey Hound AFB detector dogs ready to work.

Detector Dogs Reward



Training American foulbrood (AFB) detector dogs is "very rewarding", says dog trainer Richelle Doerner-Corson, and the rewards extend to beekeeper and canine too.

Doerner-Corson, who farms and keeps bees in Canterbury, has been at the forefront of AFB detector dog training in New Zealand, alongside her mentor Rene Gloor. On Sunday June 14 Doerner-Corson, along with husband James Corson, will host a field day (previewed in A Much Needed Catch Up in May's *Apiarist's Advocate*) at their Whitecliffs farm, Gowanlea.

The occasion will include a user-pays queen cell tutorial from Maggie James in the morning, then an open afternoon featuring demonstration of Doerner-Corson's Honey Hound AFB sniffer dogs, discussion on AFB in the area and then a barbeque in the evening. Initially the event was scheduled for June 7, but Covid-19 restrictions have forced the date back a week.

Doerner-Corson says being a dog trainer and handler is a dream job, with her skills learnt over the past 10 years from Gloor.

"Initially we employed Rene to train the first dog, which was the first of its kind in New Zealand, and he then trained me as a dog handler," Doerner-Corson explains.

Gloor had worked for the Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry as a dog trainer, and he now has his own dog training business in Dunedin. Doerner-Corson saw the potential in dogs, along with Gloor's training and handling skills, to identify AFB incidence in the hives of Gowanleagold, their beekeeping business.

"Then other beekeepers started coming to me and asking if I would have the dogs search their hives. So, I started searching hives all over the country. I didn't charge, it was all experience, but then one beekeeper said 'you can't do this for free. This is an amazing tool you have'."

Doerner-Corson started a small business inspecting apiaries for beekeepers, before the workload, alongside family and farming,

became too much. Now she trains detector dogs, on-selling them to beekeepers as well as into other roles, such as drug or cell phone detection. Training a dog to detect for AFB is particularly difficult due to environmental influences though.

"An airport dog works in a controlled environment inside. Whereas, we have dogs outside, in a paddock, with sheep manure, sheep, rabbits, even wekas on the West Coast that jump out from beehives. Then you also have wind and rain influencing things, but most of all the bees influence things."

The bees fanning of the hive moves the scent pattern, which can be disruptive to the dog, plus there is the more obvious potential disruption.

"The last thing you want to do is invest all this training into a dog and then have it get stung and think, 'no way am I going near one of those things again'."

For that reason, most detector dog inspections of apiaries take place at night, to minimise the chance of bee stings.

Although the AFB Pest Management Agency do not use dogs in their work, Doerner-Corson says properly trained canines can be a highly effective tool in the control of AFB, especially when coupled with beekeeper inspections.

"If the beekeeper misses it, hopefully the dog will get it, and vice-versa. But, what beekeeper can see preclinical AFB?"

American foulbrood
detector dog "K9 Chief"
indicating on a hive.



That is where dogs have a major advantage over other methods of detection Doerner-Corson says, stating they have had many instances where a dog will indicate a hive to have AFB, so it is monitored. However, the clinical signs do not become obvious until months, and sometimes years, into the future.

A confident dog with "high drive" is essential for the AFB work, or "one of those dogs that will chase a tennis ball all day and that is very annoying at a barbeque," Doerner-Corson says, adding that that could be any breed.

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"They get into a pound or rescue situation because they are seen as being bad dogs, but actually they just need a job to do. So, we use their brain and their drive in a positive way and all the other issues go. It is very rewarding."

Those rewards are reaped by beekeepers too, with Doerner-Corson and her dogs having helped identify AFB in many hives across the country. Value has been found close to home as well.

"In Autumn we had no AFB at Gowanleagold, for the first time. I put a huge percentage of that success down to the dogs aiding us. They are a big help and find more AFB than the beekeepers."

She hopes to be on hand to demonstrate the dogs at the June 14 field day. However, with the event having been pushed back a week, she may have a clash on her calendar. If that is the case, Gloor will attend to handle the detector dogs' and showcase their abilities using dummy hives.

"The dogs love it and it is all good fun. We will have several dogs here and they are all different in the way they indicate, but it is quite obvious in the demonstration that they are indicating," Doerner-Corson says, adding. "People are usually quite fascinated".

Registration to attend either Maggie James tutorial, afternoon session, or both, should be emailed to mjqueenb@xtra.co.nz 🐝

Timetable

Sunday 14 June, J & R Corson, 'Gowanlea', 981 Whitecliffs Road, R D Coalgate, Canterbury 7673

9.30AM-2.30PM

Maggie James Queen Cell Production Tutorial
\$190 pp (GST included)

3PM ONWARDS

Richelle Corson & AFB sniffer dogs demo.
No charge

3.30PM

James Corson AFB hive burning demo & discussion on control techniques & AFB incidences in local areas. An AP1 or AP2 from The American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan will be in attendance to report on AFB in the region.

Socialising & BBQ to follow.

BYO drink, cutlery, plate, salad or dessert. Home kill meat supplied by James & Richelle. Tea, coffee, hot water available.

The long awaited Pumpkin Competition. Other suitably impressive vegetables accepted! Must be homegrown. First prize 1kg Barry Sheehan's famous queen candy. Attendees to events receive a NZ Beeswax goody bag.

REGISTRATIONS: by 7 June stating attendance at tutorial and/or open afternoon to mjqueenb@xtra.co.nz or 027 629 9388. Do not attend without registering.



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Elephants, Guinea Pigs and Karma Corrections



Former National Beekeeping Association (NBA) president and beekeeping history buff **NICK WALLINGFORD** reminisces on a colourful character of the industry's past.

Trevor Palmer-Jones was made the chief New Zealand beekeeping scientist in 1944, worked through until 1975 and was made a life member of the NBA. In the 1980s I had dinner with Trevor and his wife Claire. They were both interesting, exciting people, with excellent memories and, having led varied lives, incredibly interesting to talk with.

I asked Trevor, "what was the most amazing advance in beekeeping research that came about during your time as a researcher?" He didn't hesitate, "The photocopier!"

In those early years, a magazine might come by on circulation. If there was anything you wanted to read more closely, or save to be able to use in your own research, you had to write to the author, asking for a reprint. Authors were generally given a large number of these reprints - just copies of their articles - so were happy to distribute them this way. You then had to hope the author would do that, and then wait all the time it would take for the mail to get back to you.

Palmer-Jones said the introduction of the photocopier saved him "heaps" of time that he could then use more effectively actually doing the bee research.

That wasn't the answer I was expecting...here's a longer, but hopefully more interesting story about Palmer-Jones.

His wife spent quite a bit of time teasing Palmer-Jones regarding his tutu research work. She, it seems, was vegetarian and of Eastern religious leanings. She felt he had "destroyed his karma forever because of the number of guinea pigs he had killed during the course of his work".

One of the contentious aspects of Palmer-Jones' work was his direct injection of the guinea pigs with quite large amounts of suspect honey/honeydew. Enough to the point that some people still contend he was killing them with sugar/diabetes, etc, rather than the possible poisonous substance.

Palmer-Jones launched into a story about how, because of funding restrictions, he didn't have an unlimited supply of guinea pigs, so he worked out how to revive them after giving them poisonous doses of tutin. He pointed out that, scientifically, obviously, he couldn't 'reuse' them, but still did it for the curiosity of it all.

Once he figured out that several of the barbiturates would act to counter the tutin, he published in a veterinarian's journal. Shortly after it came out, somewhere near Galatea/Murupara in the Bay

of Plenty, an elephant was stricken with tutu poisoning. Yes, an elephant. Not exactly one of our native species, but not for the first time, either.

It seems that travelling circuses, hauling wagons with the animals in them, would travel down the roads. Elephants, with a long reach of their trunks, could reach out to grasp at foliage on the road side, including the poisonous tutu leaves.

So when this elephant showed signs of tutu poisoning, the vet, who had just by chance read Palmer-Jones' article, managed to get a whole bucket full of barbiturates down the elephant's throat and saved its life!

Palmer-Jones' analysis was that, based on body weight of one elephant saved versus many, many guinea pigs killed, his karma was still in the positive even now. Didn't really convince his wife though. 🐝



The photocopier, an amazing advance for beekeeping research.



Editorial

Winter Has Come



I got the last of Pyramid Apiaries' 300-odd hives wintered down on April 26 and it is always a good feeling to get that last round completed. After nine months of regularly inspecting hives, by autumn I am usually ready for a change of scenery.

However, I found myself walking past an apiary this week, just a month after the wintering down was complete, thinking it would be nice to check inside a few of them. Of course it would do me or the bees no good, as the hives are well set to survive through to spring.

The temptation to "lift the lid" is there though and I guess that means I am in the right profession. I know I will be itching to get back in to it by August.

For every beekeeper winter is different I guess, some head to their offices, sheds or, on the good-weather days, out to their apiary sites to carry out maintenance. Many will take up winter jobs to keep the money rolling in, and hopefully we can all fit in a holiday.

For most-all New Zealand beekeepers, these activities will be undertaken with friends and family at our side, even in this Covid-19-restricted time. However, for our migrant beekeepers their usual "holiday" to their homeland will likely not be.

In our lead story, *Wintering Down Away From Home*, we have looked into the issue of migrant, particularly Filipino, beekeepers stuck in New Zealand over winter.

The situation is different for every migrant beekeeper left in the country and their employer. Many will be kept in work, but it may not last all winter. Add to that the separation from family and it must put stress on the migrant beekeepers and their families. I have to tip my cap to the likes of Edward Suan (who we spoke to for the story) who is staying put 8000 miles from home to make sure he is in the country when the "real" beekeeping begins again in spring.

Our industry relies on migrant beekeepers, like Suan, to spend long periods separated from their families by long distances, in foreign climates, and, in most cases, speaking a foreign language. All because not enough New Zealanders are willing to do the same job, sometimes only a few miles from home, in a known climate and speaking a language they are fluent in.

This beekeeping is not such a bad gig when you look at it like that and perhaps, with rising unemployment in the wake of Covid-19, more Kiwis will see as much. Another of our stories this month touches on that potential influx of job-seekers, *Beekeepers Benefit in Budget*.

You can thoroughly read all of these stories now you have a bit more time on your hands (hopefully), plus, enjoy your winter, get onto all those tasks you have saved, spare a thought for those beekeepers away from home and... try not to pry into your hives until you need to!


We welcome your feedback. Address a letter to editor@apiadvocate.co.nz and share your opinion, or offer a news tip if you think there is something which should be covered.

Weather Anomalies: May



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

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

Data provided by and more detail available at www.niwa.co.nz/climate/daily-climate-maps 

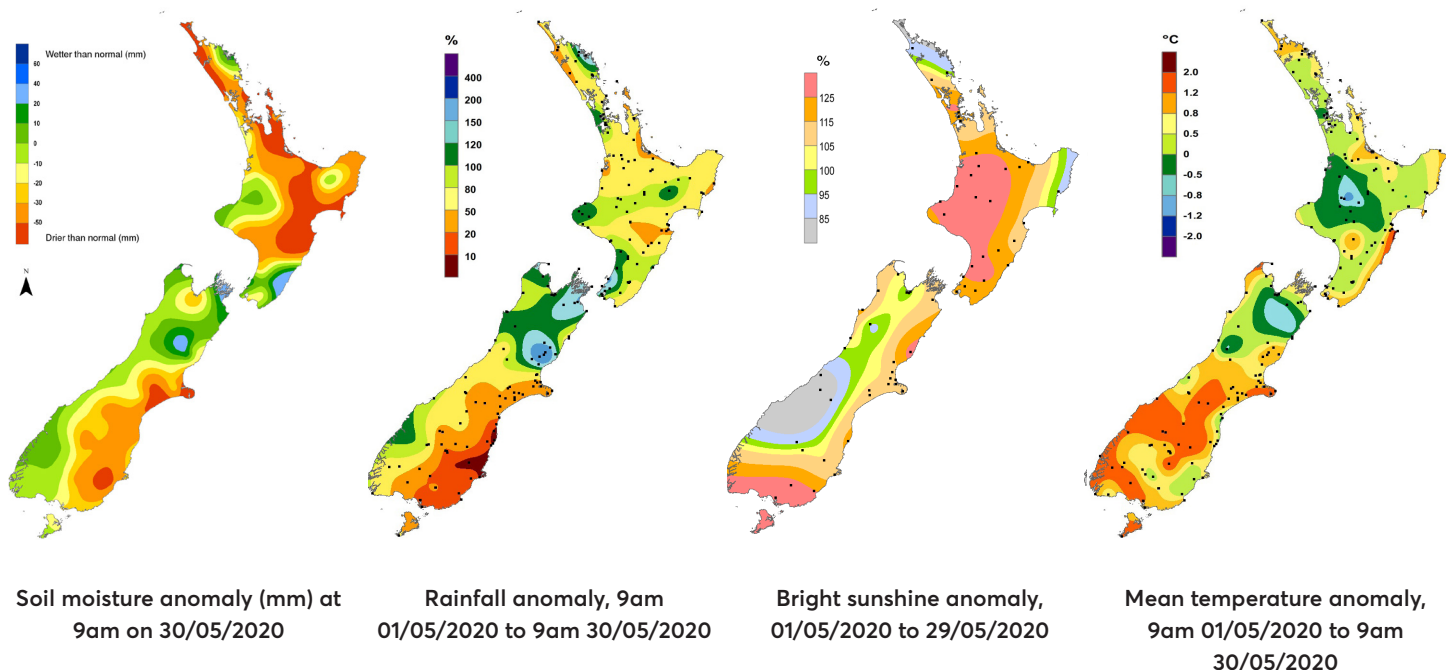
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