Amateur Beekeepers Australia

NEWSLETTER

Presidents Report

Vincent Schnyder, ABA President

It's amazing how quickly time flies and we are already in the middle of autumn and some members will soon conduct their last hive inspections and potentially pack down their hives for winter, where others, like here on the Northern Beaches, can expect some more honey towards the end of autumn.

Membership Fee 2024/25

The ABA Executive drafted the initial budget for the 2024/25 Membership Year and although costs for insurance and IT are increasing, determined that the ABA membership fee will remain unchanged at $25 with an "Early Bird" rate of $20 for those members who renew in June.

Clubs have from now until late May to determine their club fees and update the Portal. By that time we should also know what the insurance premium for the optional Beekeeper Public and Product Liability Insurance will be.

Further details will be communicated in the next issue of the TAB and the renewal notice that is due to be sent out by early June.

Membership Pack

Since 2019, each member received a logbook to record hive inspections together with their membership card. Based on the orders we receive through our shop, we know many members (and non-members) like the logbooks. However, we also received feedback from members who use other means (e.g. App, spreadsheets, etc.) that the logbook is of no use to them. To reduce waste and keep our membership fees down, we concluded that the logbooks will be an optional extra as part of the membership renewal.

ABA Logo

In the last TAB Newsletter we asked our creative members to provide some ideas for a new logo for the ABA. Since we moved from the "angry bee" or "wasp" to the logo with the shape of NSW in the background and the current logo with a round background, we hear from time to time that our "bee" has only one pair of wings and thus looks more like a fly. Thus, we are looking for a new logo with a bee with two pairs of wings to make it clear that we are not a "fly" club. If you are a creative person, share your ideas with us.

Website Design

Our website is in need of a refresh and we are looking for members who have the skills and experience to provide input into the design and configuration of our new website. If you are a web designer or web publisher and would like to get involved in this project, please let us know. president@beekeepers.asn.au

Stay tuned for more updates and opportunities to engage with the ABA community in the coming months! Till then, ...

Happy Beekeeping

Biosecurity Buzz

Mike Allerton ABA Biosecurity Officer

Transition to Management Extended

The transition to management phase has been extended 12 months.

Industry requested more time to implement the goals of the transition to management. High on the list is beekeeper education and registration of treatments.

The biosecurity order will remain in force throughout the extended transition period unless cancelled earlier.

A One Day Beekeeper Varroa Management Workshop was prepared by Tocal College for the National Varroa Management Program.

Tocal invited representatives from the industry including the ABA to critique the program so they could fine tune it.

Vince Schneider (President), Doug Purdie(Vice President) and I attended the first of two prerelease workshops. Several members from ABA clubs attended the second. We offered quite a lot of suggestions and I'm happy to say the Tocal educators adjusted the program accordingly.

Tocal presented an initial three public workshops in February at Narrabeen, Richmond, and Campbelltown to further hone the program with the feedback they received. I attended the Richmond workshop which was well attended. In my opinion, it is a solid program well worth your time.

The first workshops were held during the week, making it difficult or not possible for some to attend. We let the Management Team know of the issue and they'll work toward scheduling some workshops for weekends too.

Tocal has now engaged a team of contract trainers to deliver the workshop throughout NSW. Interstate trainers will deliver the workshop in their home states. The contract trainers were selected and trained by Tocal College for a consistent delivery throughout the country.

Several ABA members are included in the team of trainers including Doug Purdie, Bruce White, Torsten Engelhardt, Max Rae and me.

Workshops are rolling out across the state, so keep an eye out for one near you. The ABA, your local club and DPI will do our best to notify you of times and locations.

A separate training program for ABA club biosecurity officers or other nominees will be run by Tocal to provide resources to build club expertise. This is the program for which I have already received nominations from many clubs. If your club has not nominated someone, please let me know.

I talked with Rod Bourke from Tocal who is coordinating the program for an update. He said that now the Contract Trainer program is finalised, he can turn his attention to creating a one-day workshop for our club officers.

I'll let you know when details come to hand.

Registration of treatment chemicals

The transition extension also allows more time for treatment options to complete the arduous registration process with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APMVA).

DPI is supporting the registration of Oxalic acid products, but there are safety concerns particularly regarding sublimation. Vaporised oxalic acid is corrosive and can cause serious injury to your eyes, throat, and lungs.

On the other hand, with proper PPE, Oxalic acid sublimation can be a practical, fast way to treat multiple hives.

Warning! Until it is registered, DO NOT USE OXALIC ACID!

Hopefully, we'll have a full range of options by the time we enter the permanent management phase next year.

Nuc Aid

Beekeepers in the Hunter Valley and Central Coast areas are steadily reestablishing their apiaries.

As more of you become confident that you can deal with Varroa, take advantage of Nuc Aid. There are still some Nucs and hives available.

If you want to start beekeeping again, Email biosecurity@beekeepers.asn.au with your name, phone, suburb, ABA member number and hive brand. I'll put you in touch with a Nuc Aid donor to work out the details.

AFB Minimisation Program

The NSW DPI AFB Minimisation Project is under way for 2024 with the first batch of samples dropped off to the lab.

Club biosecurity officers email me to join the program. Each club can have three tests. Larger clubs can have more.

Club Presentations

Invite me to speak at your meeting on virtually any biosecurity topic. AFB is still our biggest biosecurity challenge and is a regular topic. Varroa is top of mind for many.

I've talked at several club meetings recently including Hawkesbury, Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands.

Southern Highlands members are interested in how Varroa treatments apply to alternative hive designs such as Warre, top bar and Long Langs. Treatment labels are aimed at Langstroth hives presenting a thoughtful challenge to apply treatments effectively and legally.

Shelby Ashelford from Orange Beekeepers contacted me about similar concerns and she's launching a special interest group, Bee Natural Beekeepers (BnB) within the club.

Shelby is researching alternative non-chemical methods to help control Varroa and plans to create a dedicated Face Book presence.

She's invited me to speak at a special club meeting 19th May incorporating BnB and World Bee Day. If you're in the neighbourhood, drop in. There's a lot for us all to learn. Contact orange.secretary@beekeepers.asn.au for details ■

Mike Allerton biosecurity@beekeepers.asn.au

Testing times in the world of beekeeping

Doug Purdie, ABA Vice President

Having beehives in Sydney city locations has always been rewarding for us, with sometimes huge honey yields and relative seclusion from other beekeepers and pests. We had viewed the arrival of Varroa as inevitable but still some time away, secure in the knowledge that it travels slowly by itself. We believed we would be relatively late adopters of the pest.

A few weeks ago when the DPI contacted us to do some surveillance using Bayvrol and sticky mats we were pretty confident, given that only a few weeks earlier we had alcohol washed the hives due for surveillance and also conducted drone uncapping with no Varroa identified.

You can imagine our shock when Varroa was identified in all the sites tested. How did Varroa get right into the middle of the city so quickly? There is only one way of course. Somebody has moved an infected hive nearby which is incredibly disappointing.

Right. So now we have Varroa. What's next?

Well apart from some swearing and more than a little frustration vented at the situation, there's nothing for it but to put a treatment plan together for our hives. The rest of the world has Varroa and I personally know plenty of beeks who consider it just a normal thing you deal with. There is no need to give up beekeeping!

We do have time to devise a solid plan which will involve looking at the available treatments and their limitations, testing each hive with an alcohol wash to determine which are at the treatment threshold, then treating where appropriate.

Do I want to be treating? No of course I don't! But just like dealing with small hive beetle or swarming, it's a task we need to undertake. Varroa isn't particularly difficult to treat and if you select your treatments carefully your bees will be fine. Just read the label on each product and educate yourself on what you should and shouldn't do.

So onward and upward its time to test and treat and test again it's a whole new way of beekeeping and one that I never wanted to be doing but it is what we will be doing from now on.

And, before I go: the person who moved Varroa into the city, I am blowing a huge raspberry in your general direction. Now go away or I shall blast you a second time! ■

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE: WAX MOTH

Dave Wilson with Bruce White

Most beekeepers are familiar with wax moth fluttering up from unprotected comb. We often think of the moths and their larval grubs as a nuisance rather than a serious pest of beehives.

However wax moths can cause massive damage to frames of comb if not controlled. The larvae burrow through the wax comb leaving badly damaged wax and a mass of sticky white webs. The larvae will also damage the wooden frames and occasionally the wooden sides of the bee box.

The behaviour of wax moths is well studied and their basic biology and control is mentioned in almost all beekeeping texts. A Google search on wax moth will produce a plethora of information.

But how much do you really know about wax moth?

True or False?

1. There are two types of wax moth – big and small.

2. Wax moths are a significant source of comb damage in active hives in the middle of summer.

3. Wax in any form, from refined blocks, foundation or fully drawn out comb, will be damaged by wax moths.

4. Wax moths are a typical insect with a life cycle like a bee.

5. The mass of sticky thread across and between the frames found after wax moth damage are the remains of the cocoons where the larval stage metamorphoses into a juvenile wax moth.

6. The life cycle of wax moths is very dependent on temperature.

7. The lifespan of bees is similar to that of wax moths.

8. Stored beeswax combs are particularly prone to wax moth damage.

9. Wax moth larvae can travel to adjoining hives or boxes of stored comb.

10. Wax moth larvae will supplement their diet by consuming wood from frames or box sides.

11. Boxes of comb can be safely stored if all adult wax moths are removed.

12. Collected pollen and comb honey can also be damaged by wax moth larvae.

13. The damage caused by wax moth is due only to physical comb damage caused by the burrowing larvae.

14. Stored combs can be protected by chemical treatment using products such as Phostoxin.

15. Keeping boxes of comb in cool rooms will provide an effective control of wax moth.

(Answers are on the next page)

WAX MOTH QUIZ *Answers*

1. True The larger moth *(Galleria mellonella)* is a mottled grey and is approximately 35 mm long. The lesser wax moth *(Achroia grisella)* is white or silver, smaller, slimmer and approximately 12 mm long. The lesser moth is more common but it generally causes less damage. Both moths are often found in the same location.

2. False Healthy, populous honeybee colonies do not tolerate wax moth larvae in the hive. Wax moths are never the initial cause of colony destruction but in weak colonies their larvae can damage combs not covered and protected by bees.

3. False Wax moths overwhelmingly prefer brood comb, where pollen, honey and the remains of pupating bees provide an essential diet for the wax moth in its larval stage.

4. True Wax moths have the usual insect lifecycle of egg laid by the adult female then the active feeding larva stage. This is followed by the pupae stage where the larval grub metamorphoses into juvenile wax moth. It is the larval stage that does the damage to wax comb.

5. False The mass of sticky threads are really travel tunnels. The cocoons are quite separate and are often found on flat timber surfaces of the frames or the hive sides.

6. True Wax moths can survive a quite significant temperature range but the reproductive cycle time reduces noticeably as the temperature increases. It takes up to 35 days for wax moth eggs to hatch at 18oC but fewer than five days when the temperature is between 29 and 35°C.

7. False Female worker bees may live for up two months, drones on average live for about 50 days, while the queen may live for several years. The lifespan of the adult wax moth varies depending on the sex of the moth. Females live for approximately 12 days and males can live up to 21 days.

8. True Comb with available honey and pollen and not protected by adult honey bees is particularly vulnerable to attack by wax moth.

9. True Wax moth larvae can travel more than 30 metres and so can infect adjacent boxes of comb or weak hives nearby.

10. False The larvae will chew into the wood to form a hollow to spin their cocoons. This can cause substantial damage to wooden frames.

11. False Comb to be stored may well have eggs or even small larvae present that have not been seen. These will eventually develop into active feeding larvae and damage will result.

12. True Both will provide a food source for wax moth larvae and so damage may occur. This is particu-larly true for pollen.

13. False There is certainly damage caused by the burrowing larvae but there is considerable damage caused by the sticky mass of threads. This will certain-ly render cut comb unfit for consumption. The ex-creted products from the larvae encourage fermenta-tion and so render the honey unfit for consumption.

14. True Phostoxin *(trade name for aluminium phosphide)* reacts with moisture in the air to pro-duce phosphine gas which is extremely toxic. It will kill all stages of wax moth. Note that as time passes the phosphine gas disperses and if the boxes are opened reinfection by wax moth is possible. Phostox-in cannot be used unless you have completed a course in the safe handling of fumigants.

15. True While freezing is required *(5 hours at -7oC)* to kill all stages of wax moth, keeping stored combs at around 4 oC will prevent wax moth infection.

Case Study: Varroa management in a high mite infestation zone

Elizabeth Frost, DPI Technical Specialist Bees Report

This case study demonstrates real-world management of a hive I established from a small *(roughly 1.5 litre volume)* absconding swarm in the greater Newcastle Management Zone at the end of September 2023. This case study is informational and is not an endorsement for one chemical or mechanical treatment over another. This is an early example of successful management of a Varroa-infested hive in a known high mite infestation zone during our current phase of Varroa spread and establishment in NSW. It should be taken with a grain of salt, as other hive locations may experience lower or higher mite invasion and re-infestation rates, depending on many factors.

I caught the absconding swarm 30 September 2023 and established it in a Parish with 51 reported mite detections, according to the NSW DPI Varroa Mite Heat Map. Between 30 September 2023 and 17 March 2024, I intensively monitored hive mite infestation levels. I monitored mite levels using sugar shake *(1x)*, sticky mat *(1x)*, and alcohol wash *(11x)* methods. My first surveillance activity after establishing the absconding swarm was a sugar shake, resulting in 37 mites *(a 12% infestation)*, requiring immediate chemical control.

Treatment options according to the current Control Order are permitted chemical miticides *(synthetic and non-synthetic)* and/or drone brood trapping *(non-chemical option)* within two weeks of finding a mite surveillance result exceeding treatment threshold. Due to the very high infestation level found in this hive and the low bee population at the start of its establishment, drone brood trapping wouldn't have provided quick or sufficient control, given the additional risk of mite re-infestation at this location. If I wanted this hive to survive and make a honey crop this season, chemical treatment was required to reduce the high mite load.

I treated on 8 October 2023 with the synthetic miticide Bayvarol for 6.5 weeks. The treatment period is 6-8 weeks for this product. I removed the Bayvarol strips at 6.5 weeks, because a major nectar flow had started and Bayvarol cannot be used during a peak nectar flow. During the first two weeks of Bayvarol treatment I also had a sticky mat protected by a metal wire mesh *(Fig. 1)* in the hive, to see how many mites were killed by the treatment. The mat was a bit weather-damaged by 2 weeks in, so I removed it and counted my mite drop. 505 mites in total! The Bayvarol treatment was working well.

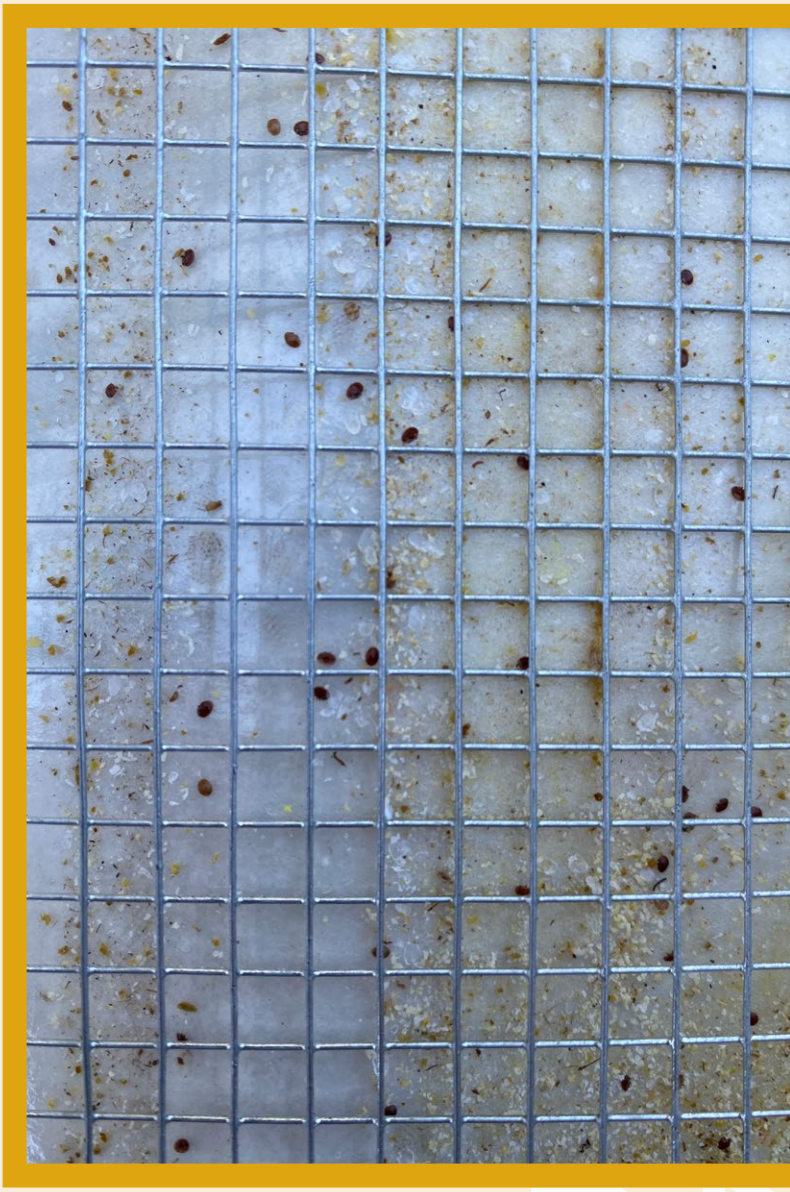

Figure 1. Sticky mat section and metal mesh. Varroa mites are the dark oval dots. 2 weeks into Bayvarol treatment, this mat had 505 dead mites on it.

Figure 2. Full-depth, green plastic drone frame uncapped with cappings scratcher to reveal multiple Varroa foundresses. A possible indication of high reinfestation. Wax or plastic drone foundation are both suitable for drone brood Varroa trapping.

From December through April, I alcohol washed 11 times and removed capped drone brood frames 8 times. After successful Bayvarol treatment, I used only drone brood frames to trap and remove Varroa from the hive between November and April, maintaining an average alcohol wash result of 5.6 mites over this period. Using drone brood trapping and removal, a non-chemical Varroa control tool, also allowed me to protect my honey crop from chemical residues. So far this season, the hive has produced 6 ideal supers of honey, with another 4 supers nearly ready for autumn harvesting.

Drone brood trapping can be a highly effective non-chemical control because Varroa have a strong preference to reproduce in drone cells rather than worker cells and become confined in capped drone brood. If the drone comb is removed before the drones emerge as adults, many mites can be removed from the hive. Drone brood removal significantly reduces the number of varroa mites in a hive with no negative impact on worker population or honey production.

Having a purposely introduced drone comb frame or part-frame also makes it less likely your hive will produce drone brood on other frames within the broodnest. The biggest risk with drone brood trapping for Varroa removal is losing track of its development and allowing it to emerge with a higher number of mites than otherwise would've emerged from worker brood. The first drone brood frame I removed on 2 December 2023 was a sobering example of how the mite population would've increased significantly had I not removed it before drone emergence *(Fig. 2)*. The drone comb image *(Fig. 2)* shows a small patch I've uncapped that has been capped less than 24 hours, which means every mite you see is a female foundress, the first mite to enter a brood cell to reproduce. If the 31 foundresses in this image all reached their full reproductive potential, by the time the capped drones emerged over 100 mites could've emerged with them. Not to mention, the full frame had a total of 127 mites in it!

Level	Type	Treatment (trade name)	Effectiveness High	Moderate	Low
Mechanical Control	Drone Removal	Drone brood trapping	X		
Chemical Control	Synthetic	Flumethrin (Bayvarol)	X		

Table 1. Varroa mechanical and chemical controls I used between September 2023 and March 2024.

The full timeline of this absconding swarm's establishment, monitoring, chemical and non-chemical mite controls, and honey production in the greater Newcastle Management Zone so far this 2023-2024 season is as Table 2 on the following page.

With every control method there are limitations. As far as drone brood trapping, this method is only effective in hives strong enough to rear drones, within appropriate seasonal and nutritional conditions, and it will have little impact if used as the only control method when varroa mite populations are high. Queen breeders cannot continually rely on drone brood trapping for Varroa removal as drones are critical to queen mating. With Bayvarol treatment, it's not legal to use during a peak nectar flow and now that I've used it once this season, I need to rotate in a chemical with a different mode of action, such as an amitraz product, Apiguard or FormicPro before I can use Bayvarol again. Rotating chemicals with different modes of action reduces the risk that Varroa will develop resistance to the few chemical tools we have available.

POPULATION DECREASE PHASE (Late Summer/Autumn/early Winter)

Bee brood and adult bee population decreasing; hives rearing 'overwintering' bees. Varroa population in final growth phase, peaks and starts to decline *(unless reinfestation occurs which continues to grow Varroa population)*. Majority Varroa transitions onto adult bees as bee brood quantity decreases.

Highly effective controls:

- Apivar, Apitraz
- Formic Pro
- Apiguard
- Bayvarol
- Apivar, Bayvarol should not be used until honey crop removed
- Formic Pro, Apiguard are not suitable for use in all temperatures. Read the detailed product label for temperature ranges for use of these products.

Varroa control options for the Case Study hive during the end of season population decrease phase. Bayvarol was used as a treatment in Spring, so I need to use a chemical with a different mode of action next.

For now, with this productive recreational hive, I'll continue my alcohol washing to monitor mite levels and remove capped drone brood trapping frames until the queen stops laying drones. For in-depth Varroa management training resources, videos and workshop details keep checking in on DPI's website here:

NSW DPI 'Managing your hives with Varroa' website.

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The author conducting research in the field

Table 2. Case Study hive timeline of mite monitoring, chemical/ mechanical control, honey activities for NSW 2023-2024 season.

DATE	ACTIVITY	MITE COUNTS
30/09/2023	Absconding swarm caught, introduced in 8-frame, full depth hive	
	Drone comb foundation inserted (full depth, plastic frame)	
8/10/2023	Sugar shake surveillance	37 mites (12% infestation) in sugar shake surveillance
	Bayvarol treatment inserted	
	Sticky mat inserted	
29/10/2023	Sticky mat removed	505 mites counted on mat
21/11/2023	Bayvarol treatment removed*	
	1st Ideal honey super added	
2/12/2023	Drone comb removed, pupae uncapped/removed, frame washed out/free of Varroa and re-inserted	127 mites counted and removed from drone brood
	2nd Ideal honey super added	
17/12/2023	Alcohol wash surveillance	9 mites
	Drone comb removed, pupae uncapped/removed, frame washed out/free of Varroa and re-inserted	227 mites counted and removed from drone brood
24/12/2023	Alcohol wash surveillance	5 mites
	3rd Ideal honey super added	
6/01/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	8 mites
	Drone comb removed, pupae uncapped/removed, frame washed out/free of Varroa and re-inserted	225 mites counted and removed from drone brood
20/01/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	0 mites
	Honey extracted, 3 ideal super stickies returned	
27/01/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	12 mites
	Drone comb removed, pupae uncapped/removed, frame washed out/free of Varroa and re-inserted	8 mites counted and removed from drone brood
4/02/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	2 mites
	Drone comb removed, pupae uncapped/removed, frame washed out/free of Varroa and re-inserted	203 mites counted and removed from drone brood
18/02/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	1 mite
26/02/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	4 mites
	Drone comb removed, pupae uncapped/removed, frame washed out/free of Varroa and re-inserted	803 mites counted and removed from drone brood**
	Brood removal: Nucleus hive split removed from established hive. 2 frames brood, 1 frame food removed from broodnest and transferred to nuc. 3 frames foundation added to broodnest of est. hive.	
	4th Ideal honey super added	
10/03/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	7 mites
	Brood removal: 2 frames brood transferred to nuc est. 26/02/2024. Partially drawn foundation from nuc added to broodnest of est. hive.	
	Honey extracted, 3 ideal super stickies returned	
17/03/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	9 mites
	Drone comb removed, pupae uncapped/removed, frame washed out/free of Varroa and re-inserted	158 mites
	1 ideal super removed	
1/04/2024	Alcohol wash surveillance	5 mites
	Drone comb removed, pupae uncapped/removed, frame washed out/free of Varroa and re-inserted	378 mites
	4th ideal super added	

**Bayvarol removed at 6.5 weeks due to peak nectar flow.*

***Drone comb removed close to adult drone emergence, so mite count includes both mite foundresses and progeny.*

Key to Table 2 colours	
	monitoring activity
	mechanical treatment
	chemical treatment
	honey activity

Winter is almost here what should I do to get my bees ready?

Doug Purdie, ABA Vice President

To survive winter a colony of honeybees needs to be strong and in good health with plenty of honey stores and excess supers removed so they can be snug and warm while they await Spring.

A Strong Colony

To keep going over winter you need a good queen and enough worker bees to keep her fed and the colony warm. If you have a small weak colony now might be the time to merge it with a stronger colony and make a new split in spring so you end up with two colonies again.

Your success as a beekeeper is not the number of hives you manage but the strength of those hives overall, it can be hard to make the decision to merge hives but there is little point in spoon feeding a weak colony that wouldn't survive without your intervention. For that reason, late season swarms are often best merged.

There is a 17th century saying;

"A swarm in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; but a swarm in July is not worth a fly"

While the months don't match our hemisphere the meaning is still relevant.

Healthy Bees

While many of us have been focused on Varroa the main threat to our bees of American Foul Brood is still there simmering away. Autumn is a good time to be checking for AFB so make it part of your winter preparation. Having mentioned the V word lets talk about what is a whole new thing we need to add to our Autumn tasks. Varroa population is likely to be highest at the end of the summer. In other countries most beekeepers apply an effective Varroa treatment after the last honey harvest, so the mite population is as low as possible going into winter. Some treatments which take several weeks need to be applied early in Autumn so there is time to remove the treatment before winter sets in, so while your checking for AFB do an alcohol wash to see if a treatment needs to be applied.

Warm and Dry

I don't know about you but in Winter I want to be warm and dry, and my bees are the same. Now is the time to remove empty supers for storage and while you're at it check your hive boxes to make sure they are water and air tight. Any rotting boxes, lids and bases should be removed for repair or replacement. In most cases you hive should be tilted slightly forward to make sure any drips of condensation that form in the hive can exit out the front.

Enough Food

The reason honeybees forage in the summer is to store sufficient food for the colony to survive winter when less plants are in flower and the weather is not conducive to flying. Depending on your location your hive may need a considerable amount of honey. In the Sydney region I like to leave 3 frames of honey in the super in addition to the honey in the brood box, two years ago the conditions were so miserable that even that wasn't enough, and feeding was necessary.

Talk to local beekeepers about how much honey they typically leave and use this as a guide for your own colonies. One useful trick is to use a spring scale to lift the back of your hive up and record the weight, if you do this over winter you can calculate how much stores the girls have left and whether they should be fed before Spring.

If you do need to feed use a strong 2:1 syrup so that's two parts refined white sugar to one part water, don't use anything other than white sugar as it may make the bees ill. This can be placed in a frame feeder in the brood box or zip loc bag feeder under the lid or some other feeder. Fondant is another useful bee feed this is a super saturated mix of sugars that is a semi solid. Its resistant to fermenting so unlike syrup won't go off and need replacing. Make sure its not a fondant mix containing anything other than sugar.

If you take all the above points into account, you can tuck your bees in for winter and know you have done all you can to get them ready for the months ahead ■

Labelling Your Honey

After a hard working season, you have extracted your honey and you are proceeding to bottle it for sale. When bottling honey, purchase the correct size of jar, there are specific sizes for honey bear in mind that a 500ml bottle contains ~ 700g of honey. It is permissible to be over-weight but you may NOT be under the stated weight so choose your containers carefully. Do not use recycled jars and make sure all jars and lids have been cleaned before use, your dishwasher does a good job of this..

If you are producing large quantities of honey you could employ a graphic designer to design your labels, but for the smaller producer it is very cost effective to purchase ready designed labels. The nutrition part of the label works well as a separate label from your main identifying label, and is readily available pre-printed.

Essential Information

- Name of the Food
- Batch or Lot Identification
- Name and address of the supplier
- Ingredients
- Use and Storage
- Nutritional Information
- Country of Origin
- Weight

Food Standards Code

The Food Standards Code gives a very full explanation of all requirements. Reading this document will provide very useful information. This needs to be read in conjunction with your local councils code some of which are quite specific.

Name of the Food

It must be Honey! It must contain no less than 60%reducing sugars and no more than 21% moisture content.

Batch or Lot Identification

In the unlikely event of a product recall, the honey prepared and packed under the same conditions not exceeding 24 hours should have a unique identifier. Some people use the month and year as the batch code.

Name and Address of Supplier

Your honey must be traceable. Your name and address must be locatable premises. Post boxes or web addresses are not locatable. You can add a telephone number and/or e-mail address – these are not required but could be useful

Ingredients

100% Pure Honey. If you have added flavourings or other ingredients they must be declared and the Nutrition panel corrected.

Best Before Date

A best before date is not required for any food products with a shelf life of more than two years. The stability of honey means that it keeps for several years and you may choose not to use a best before date. A best before date can be used with a lot number and all that is required is the month and year.

Nutritional Information

The best guide to nutritional information is using a pre-printed label available from various bee suppliers. If you wish to print your own Food standards have a calculator here: https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/business/labelling/nutrition-panel-calculator

Country of Origin

As long as it is pure Australian honey – say so! If you have added any imported ingredients you MUST declare them. The appropriate logos and information on their use can be found here https://business.gov.au/products-and-services/product-labelling/country-of-origin-food-labelling-resources

Weight

The weight should be stated in kilograms and/or grams (e.g. 250g or 0.25 kg but not 1/4 kg). More information here: https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/guide-sale-pre-packaged-goods

And Finally.....

If you are designing your own labels do not be tempted to use beautiful photos of flowers or forage plants, unless your honey is from the flowers depicted. It is considered misleading if you have a picture of Bluebells on the label and your honey is Spring Blossom. If you have taken bees to Canola, a Canola flower spike would be acceptable. You may name any floral source, if the honey in the jar is predominantly from that source.

Labelling is tricky and keeping it simple is best. Pre-printed labels are freely available from many of the bee suppliers – you just have to supply your identifying information.

Reading the code will give you much more information as the code will be updated from time to time. It pays to keep up to date.

You can be quite creative with your labels, as long as you include the essential information. Including the Australian country of origin symbol on your label, promotes a product we are all very proud to sell ■

Fiona Fernie
March 2024

RECIPE HONEY SNAP BISCUITS

INGREDIENTS

80 grams butter
1/3 cup honey
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
3/4 cup plain flour (sifted)
1/2 tsp ground ginger

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C

2. Combine butter, honey and sugar and vanilla in a small saucepan; stir over a light to medium heat until the butter is melted. Remove from the heat.

3. Combine Put flour and ginger into a bowl, stir in the butter honey mixture with a spoon until smooth.

4. Using a teaspoon drop dollops of the mixture, about 10cm apart, onto greased oven trays the mixture will spread during cooking.

5. Bake until golden brown leave biscuits on the trays for 5 minutes or so then transfer to a wire rack to cool...then eat the entire batch in one go ■

Hello Beekeeping Community,

I am a lecturer in the School of Information and Communication Studies at Charles Sturt University, working on a research project about beekeeping and its impact on our lives. This study aims to understand how beekeeping, as a serious leisure activity, affects our information experiences and overall wellbeing. By sharing your thoughts and stories, you can help me learn why beekeeping is so special to people like you. If you are interested in participating in this study, please email or call me, and I will send you more information about the project before you decide to participate:

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NSW National Varroa Mite Management workshops

The dates for Varroa Management Workshops being delivered in NSW in April have been set there will be more workshops if you miss out on one.

This training is part of the National Varroa Mite Management program and is delivered by experienced trainers and beekeepers. It will provide the most up-to-date Australian centric information on how to prepare for and manage varroa mite in hives.

This FREE ONE DAY WORKSHOP will provide information on:

- Understanding Varroa mite and its impacts
- The importance of monitoring and treatment thresholds
- Integrated pest management and Varroa
- Chemical treatment options including organic options
- Brood location, frame rotation and management
- Best practice record keeping

To register click here https://ticketing.humanitix.com/tours/varroa-management-training