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Amateur
Beekeepers
Association
NSW

THE AMATEUR BEEKEEPER

NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS

OCTOBER • NOVEMBER 2020



EXTRACT!
Tips for getting great
honey without
dramas

**SWARMS
AND AFB**
Avoid nasty surprises

**BEEKEEPING
FAILS**
Learn from these
mistakes

**EUROPEAN
WASPS**
Join the trapping project
and stop new nests

**AUSTRALIA'S
BEESWAX UNDER
THREAT**

**HOW FAKE PRODUCTS
RISK HIVE HEALTH**



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The *Amateur Beekeeper* is the journal of the Amateur Beekeepers Association of NSW Inc. It is distributed to members six times a year, in December, February, April, June, August and October.

The editor will consider adverts from businesses relevant to beekeepers to run free of charge where they contain a discount or special offer to ABA members. Please email editor@beekeepers.asn.au

Do you have a photo you'd like to be considered for the cover of the next issue. Send it in to editor@beekeepers.asn.au

Behind the scenes

Acting ABA president **Sheila Stokes** outlines what the association has been working on



Well, spring is here, and the swarms are swarming!

I read this week that we are heading into a La Niña year, which will hopefully bring increased rainfall to eastern Australia, and reduce the intensity of the inevitable bushfires. If it plays out as forecast, it should be a welcome relief for bees and beekeepers alike.

After six months of worrying about human health, it is now time to turn our attention back to bee health, in particular American Foulbrood disease. It will be interesting to see if our experiences with COVID-19 change our attitude to or understanding of AFB. Perhaps one difference already is the level of interest our members are showing in the location of reported cases of AFB.

In July the NSW DPI started publishing a list of postcodes where AFB has been found. This has enabled us to develop a system that sends an email alert to our members in affected areas. As postcodes can cover very large areas, this is clearly not an exact science, but receiving an alert by email certainly does serve as a timely reminder to check your hives!

We have received lots of feedback about this new service, and will be looking at ways to improve it over the coming months.

We've also had some great questions about what happens when bees swarm in AFB affected areas. You'll find answers later in this issue.

Last month we held a successful online training session for our club Biosecurity Officers. This network of ABA volunteers is armed with information to help members of their own clubs, so don't forget you can contact your club Biosecurity Officer at [yourclubname].biosecurity@beekeepers.asn.au.

If they can't answer your questions, they now know an expert who can!

CAMPAIGN

Say no to fake wax

HAVE YOU purchased any imported wax foundation recently or bought wax that you believe is not 100% pure? The ABA, along with other beekeeping groups, is asking beekeepers to send in suspect samples for analysis. Action now to keep contaminants out of our hives. Page 4

CITIZEN SCIENCE

Trap this bee killer

European wasps are a menace to bees and to humans each summer. Now a community project to trap queen wasps as they come out of hibernation is making a difference. We give you the recipe for making your own European wasp trap and you can report your results online. Page 9

NEWS

AFB advice & offer

OCTOBER IS AFB Awareness Month - so look out for a bunch of stories in this issue to help you understand and act on this nasty brood disease. Steritech has a special offer for members dropping boxes at the Sydney facility this month. See page 6

TRAINING

Free online course

HAVE YOU completed the Australian Biosecurity Online Training course (BOLT) yet? The course takes around 90 minutes and provides information about keeping your honey bees healthy.

Go to honeybee.canopihr.com.au to enrol for free



CAMPAIGN

Australian beeswax Let's keep it pure

Australian beeswax has an enviable reputation. Here's why that's now at risk



IN THE REST of the world, beekeepers rely on chemical treatments to keep varroa infestations in check. These fumigants leave residues that are detectable in the comb. In Australia, where varroa fumigants aren't needed, beeswax collected from hives remains relatively pure.

This makes our wax highly prized for a whole range of items, from candles to cosmetics to food wraps. Also local beeswax foundation going back into hives can be kept free of the pesticide residues. It explains why Australian beeswax's value and reputation as a healthy product has soared in recent years.

That pure reputation, however, is at risk if imports of beeswax are allowed to contaminate the local 'pool'. Imported waxes, with no guarantee of quality, are often sold at cheaper prices than the local product, and for the average purchaser it can be impossible to detect the difference.

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC), of which the ABA is a member, has already rung alarm bells about foundation and block wax coming into Australia. Recent analysis revealed samples contained

several chemicals that were probably introduced during Varroa mite treatments. Disturbingly the results also showed high levels of paraffin wax in what was being sold as pure beeswax.

As beeswax is not classified as a food (despite it being a vital component of cut-comb honey), the Federal Department of Agriculture has been powerless to control imported beeswax or even check it is real beeswax.

AHBIC is now asking beekeepers to boycott imported beeswax foundation, and to report suspect products so that it can make a case for change: "This is the only way we can make sure that our beeswax stays pure and the price premium for that clean wax can be maintained on the world market."

AHBIC is also keen that the public understands the potential exposure to chemicals in purchasing overseas beeswax: "Buy only Australian beeswax to protect our industry and use only Australian beeswax for your own wellbeing."

Four ways every beekeeper can help

- 1** WHEN YOU BUY wax foundation, ask the supplier about the origin of the product. Can they guarantee that it has been made in Australia only from local beeswax? Ask about the production process. Not satisfied with the answers? Shop elsewhere. Be particularly wary of bargain prices on social media.
- 2** IF YOU HAVE BOUGHT suspect wax, please send us a sample. The ABA will work with AHBIC to get samples tested. If any are found to have unwanted chemicals or other waxes, AHBIC can lodge a complaint with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and ask for a prosecution.
Mail 100 g (or two full-depth sheets of foundation) along with details of where and when it was purchased, if you believe it has been imported, and why you suspect it is not 100% pure beeswax. Send to **ABA Biosecurity Officer Bruce White, 14 Rondelay Drive, Castle Hill, NSW 2154**
- 3** IF YOU SEE *any* products on sale that falsely claim to be made with beeswax, complain to the retailer. If you don't get an adequate response, take it up with NSW Department of Fair Trading (or your state equivalent). In one case recently, an ABA member bought a gadget to wax sewing thread. On close examination, the beeswax inside looked nothing like the real deal. When told about the issue, the retailer immediately apologised, offered a refund and promised to remove the product from its shelves.
- 4** EDUCATE OTHERS about the look, feel, smell and qualities of pure beeswax. Australian beeswax is a premium product with outstanding qualities. It deserves its world class reputation and needs everyone's help to keep it that way.





dpi.nsw.gov.au

October is AFB Awareness Month

HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF AMERICAN FOULBROOD IN AUSTRALIA

INSPECT

TEST

NOTIFY

ACT.

NOTIFY WHERE ?

TO NOTIFY NSW DPI OF AN AFB DETECTION
OR TO SEEK ADVICE CALL (02) 9741 4790
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON AFB VISIT
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity-bees

NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES
(02) 9741 4790



Amateur
Beekeepers
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NSW



BIOSECURITY

AFB Near You: Our new alert service

IN SEPTEMBER the ABA started a new service to alert NSW members in postcode districts where AFB has recently been reported. Now when the NSW DPI releases a list of postcodes linked to AFB notifications, we email all members who have told us they live in those areas.

The ABA introduced this email alert to keep members informed. The DPI used to contact registered beekeepers if a case was reported nearby, but since mid 2020 the department instead relies on beekeepers checking lists posted online

FAQS ABOUT THE ALERT SYSTEM

Can we get locality-based alerts, rather than by postcode? My postcode covers a vast area.

Sorry, the DPI doesn't share AFB-positive addresses, or suburbs, citing privacy considerations. Some members have asked about a postcode map and we are looking into setting that up.

I got an alert for my home postcode but I keep my hives somewhere else. Can you fix that?

We're working to update the system so everyone has the option to record hive locations. We will tell members when this is available.

My postcode isn't listed, does this mean my area is clear?

An AFB outbreak can occur anywhere at any time. The initial feedback from the alert emails has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic, with beekeepers grateful to be kept informed about what's been reported. But that doesn't mean that AFB is *only* in the postcodes named.

Every beekeeper needs to inspect their hives regularly for signs of disease. The minimum schedule for full brood inspections is twice a year, but remember that is a minimum and good beekeepers are always alert for signs of trouble.

I don't know how to check for AFB. Can you help?

The ABA has created resources to help beekeepers keep informed about AFB checks and tests. Check [past issues of this journal](#) or go to beekeepers.asn.au/afb

The NSW DPI and beeaware.org.au have useful local information and links. Ask your club for advice or support.

We are keen to hear from members with comments about our AFB alert system. Contact us at feedback@beekeepers.asn.au

BIOSECURITY

When AFB strikes

Beekeepers Peter Clarke and Lod Porretta took all the obvious precautions. Here's their story of when American Foulbrood struck

WE LIVE IN Castle Hill and run hives at Oakville, Kenthurst and Glenorie, northwest of Sydney. At the end of last season, we inspected our bees on all sites and left them with at least four frames of honey and stocked beetle traps. All hives passed our disease inspections.

As we run several sites, we've introduced strict barrier controls on our hardware and equipment. Boxes and frames taken from one location are returned to that same site, and all equipment, such as hive tools and beetle traps, is cleaned with steel wool, washed in soapy water and scalded prior to reuse on the designated site.

At the beginning of September, the weather began to warm so we visited the Oakville site to check hive activity. We have six hives there: two in the front paddock, and four about 150 metres away in the rear paddock. Over the previous four seasons the site had been very productive.

The rear four hives were working well, with plenty of external traffic and had weight that indicated some 'over winter stores' were still intact. One hive at the front was busy; the other, last inspected in April, looked abandoned.

We immediately noticed signs of robbing. The tray under the mesh bottom board was full of cappings. Inside, the honey cells were open and had an uneven appearance. There were no bees, very few hive beetles and only the odd,

scattered brood cell. Some brood cells were dark, concave and had the odd pin hole. The frames had a slight 'fishy' aroma.



**Any hive can contract AFB.
Good beekeepers spot it and act
before it does more harm**

We carry slides and sampling items to all site visits, so we completed the AFB matchstick test and noted some pupae were caramel in colour, some roped when extracted, and some cells had dead bees inside.

We took slide samples from the affected cells, locked up the hive and removed it from the site. Samples were sent to the DPI laboratory for analysis and all our equipment and clothing from the site visit was cleaned and put aside while we waited for test results.

Within four days we had news: the hive was AFB positive. We immediately killed the neighbouring hive, but hoping the others might be OK, we took samples and sent them for analysis. All four came back AFB positive.

With great sadness we went to the site and killed the remaining colonies. We disposed of the brood frames, by fire, onsite. All off-site honey stickies, boxes and equipment will be irradiated – including

smokers, hive tools, bee brushes and our burr comb bucket.

We have kept hives for six years and have heard the talks on the perils of AFB multiple times. Now

we've experienced the awful task of euthanasing our bees, not to mention the cost and inconvenience.

While we're disappointed to have lost these hives we take some pride in the fact that we found the disease, diagnosed it, had this confirmed by the DPI lab. We did our bit to stop this disease spreading further through the local honey bee population.

PICTURED: (LEFT) LOD PORRETTA AND (RIGHT) PETER CLARKE

AFB AWARENESS MONTH STERITECH OFFER

During October, ABA members who take their beekeeping equipment to Steritech in Sydney for irradiation can get reusable bee cartons free of charge. (They usually cost \$4).

These cardboard boxes with a plastic liner are a clean and easy way to bundle up hardware and other equipment you want treated.

Free boxes are available at Steritech's Wetherill Park facility, Sydney, during October when beekeepers deliver their equipment.

Normal irradiation charges apply.

For details on irradiation go to steritech.com.au/industries/beekeeping



SKILLS

Extracting honey: top tips

Arthur Garske explains how to process Langstroth honey frames

CONGRATULATIONS – you’ve successfully robbed your bees and it’s time to do your first extraction.

First, set up your uncapping devices. Heated knives – whether electric, hot water or steam-heated – cut off the cappings cleanly and with little effort. The numerous cold devices on the market are designed to scrape, pierce or lift off the comb cappings. These multi-pronged forks with a handle or set on a roller work better on new combs than on older combs.

The downside of cold devices is that they introduce lots of wax particles and air bubbles into the honey. Also, they tear the tops of the honey cells, making more work for your bees to repair. Air bubbles and wax are hard to clear from honey, and help promote the growth of candy. With heated knives, this is not so much of a problem.

After you uncap, put the frames into the baskets on your honey extractor, be it a simple two-frame hand-driven machine or a 12-frame motorised model. What you purchase depends on the number of hives you have (or what you aspire to have later).

Regardless of hand-driven or motorised, stick to the same method. Start the drum revolving and watch the inside wall of the extractor. You will see the honey that comes out of the combs hitting the wall.

Spin the first side for a minute or so only. Then stop and reverse the combs. Spin the other side for a little bit longer than you spun the first side. Gauge the amount of honey you see hitting the wall rather than the time spun.

Stop and turn the combs back again and spin until there are next to no droplets hitting the side wall.

Do not spin at top speed. While the centrifugal force

throws the honey out of the open comb facing the wall, on the other side of the mid rib (or foundation) you have the unextracted honey pushing further into the cell. Stop and reverse the frames to extract that honey.

This is why it is so important to wire your frames to the right tension so they can hold the weight of the honey being spun out. Slack wiring causes comb to move and break away from the wires holding it in place.

Once you have taken most of the honey from both sides, you can speed up the extractor to collect the last skerricks.

As you take out the extracted frames, feel the lighter weight. If you can see a clear delineation of the cell structure at the base of each cell, you have extracted nearly all the honey.

Nothing will be wasted. If you are on a honey flow and you put the frames back onto your bees, they will gather up all traces of honey and start to stack it back into the cells nearest the top bar.

If you are packing your bees down for winter, or if there are no more honey flows in your area, put these stickies back on the hive above an inner mat. Make this from vinyl or builder’s black plastic cut to fit with a 2.5 cm gap from each inside wall. It allows the bees to come up and clean out the remaining honey but, as the inner cover creates a definite break in the ‘nest’, they take the honey back down to store.

In three or four days’ time, take off the box of dry combs to store till they are needed again.

You cannot store freshly extracted stickies. Honey, being hygroscopic, sucks in moisture from the air. When the moisture content is high, it starts to ferment. This makes alcohol and alcohol kills bees. Dry out the stickies if you are not going to reuse them immediately.

RESEARCH

Have your say on 'Plan Bee'

A national programme aims to improve the quality of local queens

BREEDERS, farmers and scientists have begun collaborating on a programme to boost the performance of Australia's queen honey bees.

The \$3.7 million project, supported by Agrifutures Australia, aims to identify and select traits that are important to beekeeping, horticulture and industries that depend on pollination services. The hope is that researchers will be able to develop a national database so beekeepers can choose their breeding stock according to the traits they prize most.

For some this may be honey production; others may value bees that swarm less, are resistant to specific problem diseases, or have a particularly gentle manner.

Researcher Dr Nadine Chapman from University of Sydney believes the project has the capacity to revolutionise the queen breeding industry and is encouraging all beekeepers to complete a survey into how often they replace queens, whether they raise their own queens and what traits they value in a queen.

The survey can be completed here: redcap.sydney.edu.au/surveys/?s=K98XKXNA97 Please take a few moments to complete it now.

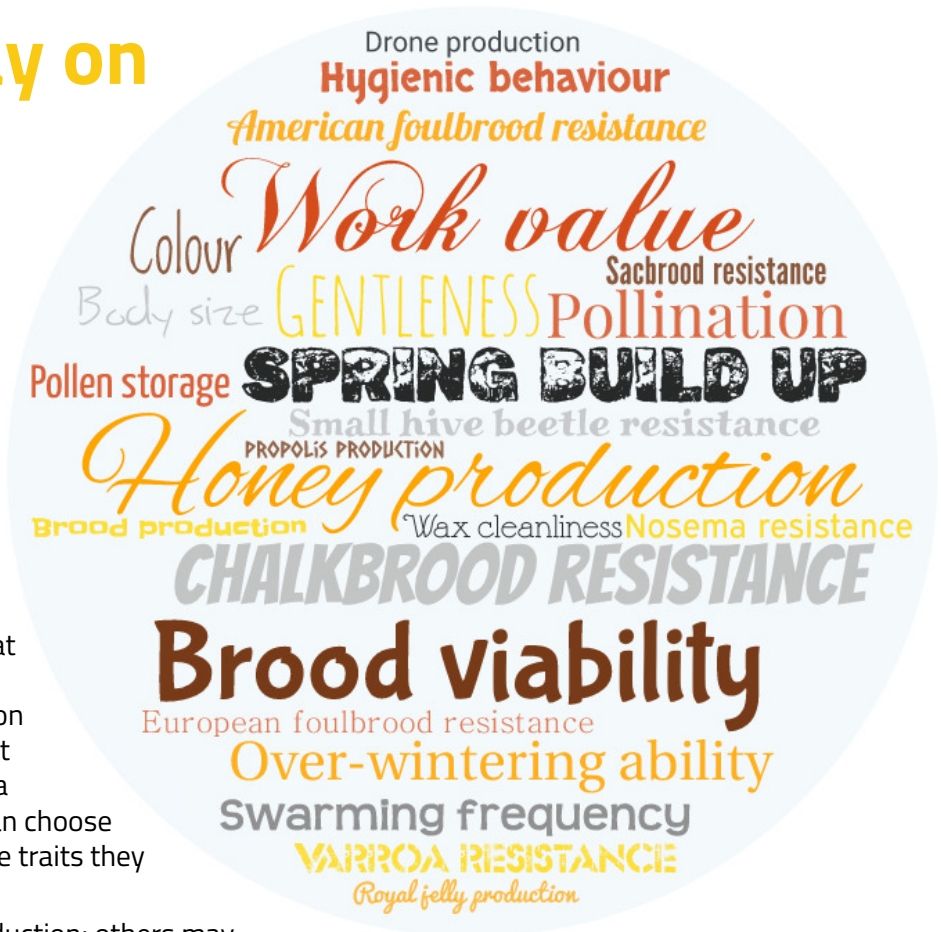


ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF NADINE CHAPMAN



FACT CHECK

Yes, queen bees *are* safe in the post

RECENTLY WE heard from members worried about ordering queen bees through the mail during the COVID crisis. Stories had been circulating earlier in the year that Australia Post was spraying mail, particularly items posted across state borders. And, of course, *if* that was true, it would affect bees mailed in packs with holes punched for ventilation.

The ABA contacted Australia Post for an answer. And we can happily report that head office told us IT DOES NOT have a directive to spray or chemically treat letters and parcels carried in its network during COVID restrictions.

So those queen orders should arrive safely, but perhaps slightly delayed.



“I’ve seen wasps sit, watch and select their prey. They will pounce and dismember the bee, quickly removing first the head and then the wings, and sometimes other body parts, before taking the treat back to their nest.”

**- PHIL LESTER IN *THE VULGAR WASP*,
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY PRESS**

CAMPAIGN

Join the fight against European Wasps

YOU DON'T NEED to be a beekeeper to know how vicious European wasps can be. They attack bees, decimate hives and their habit of scavenging food scraps and sugary drinks can turn life outdoors into a perennial game of wits.

Ken Bird, a retired clergyman from Lithgow, NSW, is determined to fight back. Four years ago he launched Wasp Patrol, a community campaign to trap queen European wasps, monitor wasp numbers and destroy nests. Last year Ken and 60 or so Wasp Patrol volunteers around Lithgow, Oberon and Bathurst trapped 2600 queens and destroyed 400 nests.

Unlike honey bees, in a strong nest one European wasp queen can lay up to 1000 new queens. Not all survive the winter but hundreds can emerge in the spring to mate with drones and start new nests.

Ken's plan of attack: trap and destroy newly emerging queens so they can't go on to form colonies.

Ken's experience with wasps goes back to childhood in New Zealand where his father was a commercial beekeeper. "Dad's boss used to pay me 50 cents for every wasp's nest I found," he explains. New Zealand's beekeepers know well the devastation wasps can cause. It's recently been estimated wasps kill one in 20

honey bee hives there each year.

Wasp Patrol data shows September, October and November are the peak seasons for catching emerging queens around Lithgow. Fly traps baited with honey and vanilla essence will attract and drown them. Insects crawling into the trap cannot escape so the honey is not a biosecurity hazard. Adding vanilla to the mix appears to keep honey bees away, something that Ken has successfully tested by personally monitoring hundreds of traps in use.

After the spring trapping project, Wasp Patrollers monitor the local populations, and kill nests they find in summer. In autumn, trapping begins again, this time with apple juice as the lure. This mimics what European wasps would traditionally consume to build up their egg laying capacity going into winter.

Ken encourages all ABA members and communities in areas where European wasps are prevalent to join this year's effort. Go to wasppatrol.info for details.

Participants are encouraged to report their findings so that Ken can build up a clearer picture of the extent and range of the European wasp problem. He is also willing to help local groups map their data so they can plot their successes.



RECIPE

- Fly trap (around \$10 at hardware stores)
- Cup of warm water
- Tablespoon of honey
- Teaspoon of vanilla essence

Put water in trap jar. Add other ingredients and swirl to dissolve.

Screw on lid and hang trap outside to attract queen wasps.

Inspect and empty out dead insects regularly. Top up mix if needed.

Fermented liquid is especially attractive to wasps.

Dispose of liquid responsibly and never leave honey exposed to bees.

Details at
wasppatrol.info

Tocal Beekeepers' **VIRTUAL** Field Day

A free livestream from Tocal College to Facebook and Youtube starting 9am Saturday 17th October 2020

WEBSITE  etocal.com/BeeFD2020  etocal.com/YouTube  fb.me/TocalBees



Department of Primary Industries



Amateur Beekeepers Association
NSW



NEWS

Tocal Field Day

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE to attend the 2020 Tocal Beekeepers' Field Day – and you don't even need to leave the comfort of your own home. This year's Field Day has been organised with COVID restrictions in mind and will focus around a series of video presentations. Attendance is free.

Guest speakers include: renowned American bee expert Dr Jamie Ellis from the University of Florida, who will speak about worker bees; Clare Densley, head beekeeper at Buckfast Abbey in the UK, the home of the gentle Buckfast bee bred by Brother Adam in the early part of the twentieth century; Madlen Kratz, NSW DPI Honey Bee Industry Development Officer talking on nutrition for honey bees; Fiona Chambers from When Bee Foundation will outline the organisations new projects; and the DPI will be represented by Elizabeth Frost, NSW DPI Technical Specialist Honey Bees, and Rod Bourke and Mark Page, NSW DPI Biosecurity Officers.

Watch online for an entertaining and informative day, with presentations mixed with filmed demonstrations, a few surprises and the results of the 2020 Tocal Honey competition.

Register now.

Go to the Facebook page TocalBees or etocal.com/BeeFD2020

ABA MEMBERSHIP Q&A

ABA FEE: CURRENTLY \$20

CLUB FEE: SET BY YOUR LOCAL CLUB

OPTIONAL INSURANCE: \$20

"WHEN'S MY NEXT RENEWAL DUE?"

Memberships and insurance purchased now carry through to 30 June, 2021

"WHY DO I NEED TO PAY AN ABA FEE AND A SEPARATE CLUB FEE?"

Each affiliated club is independent and sets its own fees to cover local operating costs. The ABA fee funds activities that benefit all clubs in the network, such as group insurance, IT systems, member packs and support materials.

The two fees are listed separately so that members can join multiple clubs and pay one set of ABA fees

"HOW DO I CHANGE CLUBS?"

If you are already a member of an ABA club, email membership@beekeepers.asn.au with details of the other ABA club you wish to join. We will send you details of the fees due to the new club.

Unexpired club membership fees are not refunded

BIOSECURITY

Swarms and AFB

Could that swarm you've just collected harbour a nasty surprise?

FIRST, IT PAYS to understand some basic science about how American Foulbrood affects honey bees.

Bees develop when the queen lays an egg in a cell. The egg hatches in three days into a larva that is dependent for development on nurse bees providing larval food. AFB is spread if larvae are fed within the first 24 hours of development on honey that contains AFB spores. AFB spores have no impact on the health of adult bees. Although adult bees can carry AFB spores and bring them into a colony, only brood can develop the disease.

Does a colony with AFB swarm?

AFB is a debilitating disease. In an infected colony the larvae die before maturing and each dead larva produces literally millions of AFB spores, increasing the likelihood more larvae will become infected. The hive population declines rapidly. Is such a colony likely to swarm given a prime trigger for swarming is crowding? Answer: Unlikely.

Could the swarm bees carry AFB spores?

While it is unlikely that an AFB infected colony will swarm it is not impossible. What is more likely is that a badly infected colony with dead and decaying larvae and an associated smell will abscond. They will take to the air in search of a new home and may well resemble a bee swarm. This is more likely late in the season. Be wary of cranky, small, late-season "swarms": they may not be swarms at all – they may be bees from a failing hive.

Can the beekeeper destroy any honey that a swarm brings with it?

In a way. Standard practice is to put bee swarms onto foundation. The bees are compelled to consume their honey stores to secrete the wax needed to build



out the comb. Digestion destroys the AFB spores. (Seven kilos of honey is used up to build one kilo of wax). In the past, beekeepers wouldn't even supply foundation to a swarm. Only after the bees built burr comb (which the beekeeper removed) would the foundation frames be added. The intention was to force the bees to convert all their honey stores into wax. Could infected honey remain unused in the gut of the bee? Unlikely.

Could the first new larvae feed on old infected honey?

A queen that has swarmed will take some time to fatten up and start to lay. Some three days later larvae will form and they will be fed by the nurse bees. If conditions are poor there may be no nectar being collected and so it is possible that some residual honey stores could be used. Again, unlikely, but possible.

So what to do?

There are some who maintain that all bee swarms should be destroyed as they are potential vectors of AFB. Bee swarming is about bee reproduction: before the swarm we had one colony; after the swarm we have two. If we assiduously set about to destroy all swarms then we limit the ability of feral bees to reproduce.

AFB remains the most serious bee disease in Australia and destroys over 2% of hives annually. Infected colonies must be destroyed and beekeeping equipment irradiated or burnt. So while the risk of AFB transfer is small, all swarms should be monitored for six weeks so that at least two generations of bees are produced. The brood needs to be checked over this time for AFB.

DAVE WILSON



CLUB NETWORK

For details of our network of 30 affiliated clubs across NSW and beyond, check out beekeepers.asn.au/find-a-club

We are always happy to hear from beekeepers wanting to start a new group. Information is at beekeepers.asn.au/affiliation

BEEKEEPING FAILS

How not to hive a swarm

They say you learn from your mistakes. Here's a time recently when Dave Wilson did

IT'S BEE SWARM TIME and after inspecting some hives I notice a large bee swarm at head height in a tree.

Too easy! I grab a bee box and lid from the car, foundation frames and a spare base. I assemble the bee box and then carefully (but not carefully enough) cut the branch containing the swarm. The branch, heavy with the weight of the swarm cracks and swings through an arc, and the bees fall to the ground. Some land in the box but most finish up outside.

Not perfect. But not a failure (yet).

It is approaching dusk and getting cool. The bees that landed on the ground head for the box and soon I can see only a few stragglers on the outside.

Well done, you say.



Having closed up the entrance to the box with a sponge rubber strip, I lift up

the hive only to discover the bulk of the bees are *under* rather than *in* the box. The base I'd grabbed is vented with a Blue Boards screen and has nothing to prevent the bees going under rather than into the box. The vents have allowed plenty of pheromones to circulate, easily persuading the lower bees that they are now part of the colony.

Eventually I gather up the swarm, but the moral of this tale is that, where possible, hive entrances on bottom boards should have a direct and easy path to allow bees to walk in. The cleats should be at the lip of the entrance or landing strip to provide an easy walkway.

I note the exceptions where bees are on raised platforms to avoid ant or cane toad problems and for other particular reasons.

For more beekeeping fails – and lessons – see page 15



What's your fail?

REMEMBER when you made a mess rendering wax? Bought bee equipment that was a bargain but cost you dearly? Discovered a fresh way to make bees cranky?

Share your story of a beekeeping task where things didn't go exactly to plan (or maybe you didn't have a plan to start with). See page 15 for examples from the ABA team!

Email editor@beekeepers.asn.au with your story. Tell us in 50 words or fewer.

We'll send you an ABA keyring if we include your beekeeping fail in the next issue.

HONEY EXTRACTION VAN FOR SALE

We are looking to upgrade our extracting trailer and are seeking expressions of interest for our current one.

Features:

- Built to food handling standards with hot hand wash
- Air conditioning
- Uncapping machine, extractor and generator
- Single axle trailer towable by most vehicles

Suits a beekeeping operation of around 100 hives

Email bees@theurbanbeehive.com.au



U21, 19 McCauley St, Matraville 2036

Phone 02 9232 5600

Open Thurs to Sat 10 – 3

or by appointment at other times

INVETERATE INVENTOR

Making vented lids

Here's how to keep the bees in and let heat out at the same time

THE INVETERATE INVENTOR has had repeated tree falling events associated with his apiary sites in recent times. Bees and chainsaws are never a good combination, so what to do with the bees while the tree removal/lopping happens?

In one event where a large tree fell near a small apiary site, four three-decker hives were removed to another site. Moving hives well laden with honey and bees mid-summer is no easy task, not to mention the need to have another site available. It can be done, but an easier option may be to leave the bees at the site and lock them in over the day of the tree works.

Why not a vented lid? These are used when bees are to be contained in the hive and there is a risk of overheating. This is a real issue if the weather is hot, the hive is crowded and loaded with honey, and the lock-in time is over an hour.

The lid allows air circulation, and in very hot conditions water can be spray-misted onto the bees. If the weather changes, a regular lid can be placed above the vented lid. It can be part open or fully closed.

Vented lids are widely used when transporting bees but can also be used to lock in bees for a time.

A regular lid frame without cover and metal top can be used but can be easily made. In this case the lid frame was made using 22 x 40 mm section timber, though these dimensions are not critical. It needs to be an exact fit on the box type you are using.



A simple half-housed joint was used in the corner, though simple butt joints are fine.

A roll of vinyl coated stainless steel mesh from Bunnings costs round \$20 and works for eight frames. The mesh cuts easily with old scissors or a Stanley knife. Small section (22 x 16 mm) timber cleats were cut to size to fix the screen to the top. A coat of paint, and the screened lid is complete.



For the bees to be confined to the hive, an entrance closer is needed. These come in many different styles but in this case the surplus mesh



foldes easily into a wedge that can then be slid into the entrance. It has the added advantage of allowing further air

movement in the hive.

THEN THERE'S . . . THE QUICK FIX

Perhaps you're not so handy with timber and nails? Buy a piece of mesh large enough to wrap over the lid of your hive. The night before you need to shut the bees in, take the hive lid off, place the mesh over the top box, fold down the corners and tape with heavy duty tape wrapped securely round the side of the box. Replace the regular lid. Seal up the entrance with a block of wood.

Next day, you can slide the lid back if the bees are in danger of overheating. Remove the entrance seal when work is finished around the hive. You can leave the mesh in place until the next hive inspection and save for reuse. [Ed: This worked for me as a last-minute solution when I needed trees removed from my garden.]

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Barrier systems: the key to containing AFB



NSW Department of Primary Industries **Bee Biosecurity Officer Rod Bourke** explains:

Earlier this year I was contacted by two commercial beekeepers suffering sizeable AFB outbreaks. One had AFB in over 20 of 100 hives. The other had more than 80 hives infected in a load of 140. For both, the economic impact was significant.

All beekeepers can get AFB, but only those using a good barrier system – as these beekeepers did – will quickly get on top of it.

The fact is that AFB is generally spread in one of two ways, with the initial infection often caused by bees robbing unprotected honey or infected colonies. They bring AFB spores home on their bodies or via ingested honey. Some spores are deposited in honey/pollen stores and others are fed directly to larval bees. Days, weeks, months or even years later, the hives consume these spores.

The second cause is when it is physically introduced into the hive by the beekeeper adding bees and brood, frames, boxes or other equipment that contain AFB spores. Many beekeepers swap material between hives for years without a problem, but as soon as AFB arrives their luck's just run out.

For beekeepers running good barrier systems, their main threat of catching AFB is from the first pathway, while for beekeepers not running a barrier system (and keeping poor records so they can't trace the movement of equipment between hives), they're vulnerable both ways.



When these two beekeepers discovered big new infections breaking out, they were able to quickly eradicate infected colonies and, since all boxes associated with each hive were already clearly marked, stop the risk of any further spread by irradiating that equipment. They were also able to monitor all hives associated with the infected loads to manage slower developing infections that may show up later.

There are many who are quick to criticise barrier systems and say that they are too slow or that you need too many boxes. But for any commercial beekeeper who has stared at AFB's threat to destroy their business would know, when you get a prolonged AFB outbreak and spend days and weeks trying to control it (often, it seems, with little success) and nights and nights of troubled sleep worrying about it, you will wish there was a better way. There is: it's called a single hive barrier system and I would encourage all beekeepers to consider using one.

Some beekeepers like to irradiate and then reuse brood frames from AFB hives. A few points:

1 Do not reuse frames that have been exposed to petrol. (Wax may absorb toxic chemicals). Hives would need to be killed by a different approved method, such as soapy water, to avoid potential contamination issues that may affect brood or hive health.

2 Frames containing dead brood need to be kept in cool storage or sent for irradiation very quickly to minimise wax moth or small hive beetle infestation and damage. Once irradiated, these frames of dead brood then need to be cleaned up on strong hives to avoid SHB attack.

3. Frames should be thoroughly inspected upon return from irradiation to remove ones showing visible signs of AFB (infected cells and scale). This will avoid a future false positive for AFB if the bees do not clean it up. Plastic foundation can be scraped back to remove most of these signs, whereas wax frames are often best used as honey frames or melted down/destroyed. Some beekeepers mark the top bars to identify irradiated brood frames.

**SINGLE HIVE
BARRIER SYSTEM:
Managing hives so you
don't transfer equipment
– boxes, frames, lids,
bases, mats, tools etc –
between hives**

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ABA CONTACTS

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Read the story on page 12 about a beekeeping fail? To prove it happens to all of us at some stage, here are some lessons the ABA team has learnt the hard way. Enjoy!

Think you can beat us for a classic *should-have-thought-it-through-first moment*? See page 12 for details of how you can 'fess up and share your story.



SHEILA STOKES

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"Check whether the cushions are attached to your outdoor furniture before you attempt to pick it up and shake a swarm off into a box."



VINCE SCHNYDER

secretary@beekeepers.asn.au

"Don't assume that just because bees don't fly at night that they can't still crawl and sting you.

Oh, and don't be hasty lighting a smoker: it will go out when you most need it."



SUE CARNEY

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"When you wash a new bee suit, don't remove the head section unless you have figured out how the zippers work to reconnect it. Hours of Googling and YouTube will result."



DAVE WILSON

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"Don't put that nice new swarm in a box on a waist-high garden ledge – unless a month later you have a ramp and pulley to shift it, as the box is now much heavier."



ARTHUR GARSKE

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"If you think that just this once you don't need to light a smoker or wear a veil to move that 10-frame five-decker hive just a short distance, think again."

LYALL ZWECK

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"Want to make an impression at one of your hive hosts? Put your lit smoker down on their artificial grass. It doesn't need to be there for long."



BRUCE WHITE OAM

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"If you put a swarm in a car boot and leave the entrance open for ventilation, the bees will leave and find their way into the car. And between the roof lining"



ANA MARTIN

membership@beekeepers.asn.au

"Remember that fragrant floral shampoo and curls make for a very dangerous combination when you are standing right next to your hives."



RUNNING THE ABA

The executive team is made up of volunteers who are elected at the AGM. They each take on a range of duties to represent amateur beekeepers, provide services to clubs and members, and keep the organisation running smoothly.

Are you interested in joining the ABA team?

We are looking particularly for members with accounting, marketing or training skills who are prepared to lend their expertise to our organisation.

Or maybe you have some professional skills outside of beekeeping and could volunteer on an as-needed basis?

Get in touch at secretary@beekeepers.asn.au

This year's AGM will be rescheduled once COVID-19 restrictions have lifted.