Amateur Beekeepers Association NSW BEGA VALLEY

Bega Valley Beekeepers Inc.

June 2020 Members Update

Establishing Your First Apiary

For many members new to beekeeping there's a lot to be done in advance of spring which will enhance the success of your first colony. Irrespective of where you source your bees, planning and establishing your hive site is the most important first step. If you don't get this right, the chances are your hive simply won't thrive.

The other consideration is the size you intend your apiary to be. This will vary considerably: you might be thinking about expanding its size over time for commercial purposes, or simply keeping it small for the pleasure of seeing bees at work in your garden, and harvesting a little honey for you, your friends and family. Many of the criteria are the same for both options; however in an urban setting some factors are more critical than others.

In this article, we'll concentrate on site location in an urban setting, as many of our members live in towns and villages in close proximity to neighbours and public places where there is a higher risk to the public from bee stings and 'nuisance' bee behaviour. If your hive is located in close proximity to a school, neighbour or community meeting place, the best advice is to have a chat beforehand to let them know the measures you'll be taking to minimise the risk of stings.

This can be easily accomplished by providing physical barriers on the entrance side of the hive to shield the apiary and redirect bee flight paths. The last thing you want is for the flight path to swoop over your neighbour's washing line or BBQ area! Simple measures like locating the entrance close to a natural barrier (such as a large shrub) or other structure like a fence can be very effective.

Stocking rates must be considered whether you're a recreational or commercial beekeeper. Generally, 2 to 3 hives in an urban setting is about right, but if you're choosing to keep more, all neighbours in your area should be consulted.

You will also need to ensure adequate available food (nectar and pollen) which needs to be ideally within about a 2 to 3 kilometre radius of the site. There are many trees, shrubs and weeds that produce little or no pollen or nectar; which is why an urban environment, which often has a great variety of plants, is such a great place to keep bees.

And if you're a keen gardener (or even just mildly interested), you can design your garden to be more bee friendly….but that's a whole topic in itself which we'll cover at another time.

The availability of nectar and pollen sources is greatly influenced by seasonal and plant cycle characteristics. Plant species and their unique pollen and nectar characteristics vary considerably, and climatic factors, such as temperature and rainfall can have a significant effect on the amount of nectar and pollen that a species may produce. I think many of us are concerned about the impacts of recent drought and bushfire events; and I'm hoping we can invite an expert on this subject to speak at one of our future club meetings.

There are some great publications available on this topic and many are listed in the Bee Agskills book by NSW DPI. In particular I've found the following 2 to be very informative:

- *Honey and Pollen Flora of South-Eastern Australia* written by Dr Doug Somerville (book reviewed later in this newsletter); and
- Pollen content and Amino acid profiles: https://www.honeybee.com.au/Library/Pollenindex.html

Proximity to water is essential, as bees use water to break down honey to feed their brood and to maintain optimal hive conditions. Generally a colony may collect up to 1 litre of water per day, however during extreme heat or periods of brood rearing this can be sometimes up to 4 litres per day. Next summer, go outside on a hot night and listen to your hive; the noise can be very loud, and this is the sound of bees actively controlling temperature and humidity in the hive.

A clean water source should be within 500 metres, but closer is best. If there are no creeks or rivers available set up a supply close by. This can be a bucket, bird bath or the like; but make sure you place sticks/twigs or a brick in the container to enable the bees to access it without falling in and drowning. It's a good idea to set up a water station like this in an urban setting especially where there's a swimming pool close by!

Aspect is also an important consideration in positioning your hive, as it should be protected from extremes of weather. If you face the hive entrance north east, the first rays of light from the sun will hit the hives early in the morning, and this will increase bee activity and encourage bees to forage earlier in the day. Try also to protect the hive entrance from exposure to wind, and remember hives should be placed in a warm sunny position in winter and under shade in summer.

For this reason make sure there's plenty of room around your hive so that you can move it slightly to take advantage of either sun or shade as appropriate throughout the year.

The above image is a good example of an apiary site that is just a bit too cramped. Not only is it difficult for the beekeeper to move within the confined space, there's little opportunity to move the hive into a sunnier position during winter months.

This is just a simple snapshot which I hope will assist those of you who are new to beekeeping to make a good start next spring. Over the coming months, we'll give more hints on hive construction, getting ready to catch your first swarm, and disease prevention.

All the best in beekeeping!

Fay Steward
President

Wintering Bees

A Step By Step Beginner's Guide with Bruce White OAM

Bruce White, retired DPI Technical Specialist in Apiculture and currently ABA Biosecurity Officer, shows us the basics of a winter hive inspection and provides some tips to better manage the colony. It builds on previous articles in our April and May newsletters. This video comes courtesy of the Illawarra Beekeepers.

Follow the link to access the video: https://illawarrabeekeepers.org.au/wintering-bees-with-bruce-white/

New Club Members

The club extends a warm welcome to Joshua Cleverly and Corrie Shepherd!

Club Apiary

The apiary hives are now moving into winter mode.

Our preparations in packing down and ensuring there are adequate stores of honey and pollen will hopefully tie them over through the cooler months ahead.

The next job will be checking our stored frames for wax moth attacks. The smallest of webbing tunnels through your precious drawn comb can soon turn into a disgusting mess if not dealt with early.

A couple of days in the freezer will sort the larvae out, then store in a moth proof container.

Cleaning hive equipment is another important winter job. I spray all my stored hive components with vinegar after scrubbing with a bleach solution. It may sound a bit excessive but is a good step in dealing with mould spores associated with Chalkbrood Disease. I hate Chalkbrood.

Graham Jones

Apiary Manager

And speaking of Chalkbrood…

Latest Research

Using probiotics for prevention and treatment of Chalkbrood Disease

Chalkbrood is caused by the fungus *Ascophaera apis* and can kill a large number of a colony's brood, ultimately weakening a colony so that it is susceptible to other pests and diseases. (Refer to the Biosecurity Manual for Beekeepers for more images and also www.beeaware.org.au/chalkbrood for further information).

Dr Murali Nayudu from the University of Canberra is currently researching the use of probiotics (beneficial bacteria) to boost a

bee's immune system in preventing, and hopefully treating, Chalkbrood disease. Also of interest to us, one of the colonies used to isolate the bacteria which can kill the Chalkbrood fungus is situated in the Bega Valley!

Follow the link to read the article suggested by Graham (he hates Chalkbrood):

https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/media/newsroom/2019/may/a-natural-solution-to-save-the-bees

Club Trading Post

Marg Broadbent has some **broccoli boxes** to give away - handy for catching swarms or they can be used for storing frames. Please contact Marg on 0427 922 405 or via email: scoutsmarg@gmail.com.

If you have any bee related equipment to sell or give away please contact Sandy via begavalley.publicity@beekeepers.asn.au. If you don't sell it, let us know and we'll relist it for you.

DPI Sentinel Hives - Eden

Nothing to report for May.

NB:The committee has decided that until social distancing is over only committee members will undertake the inspections. However it would be great if anyone is interested in leading, or assisting later, could advise me of their details.

In case anyone doesn't have a sugar shake kit, here's a link on how to make one.

https://www.beekeepers.asn.au/news/2018/3/14/how-to-make-a-sugar-shake-jar

Alex Aitkenhead

Biosecurity Officer

Tip for the Month

A friend of mine from Victoria recommended the following method for controlling Small Hive Beetle using a vinyl coated piece of table cloth. He has tried it on his hive and found that it works very well in trapping the beetles. Any hive with a screened bottom board may be able to use this trick.

Rather than describe it at length here, Cedar Anderson does a better job demonstrating how it works and how to set it up. Follow the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z36cJpKtTY

Also, Cedar has another video using vegetable oil in the bottom tray of a Flow Hive 2 (the "tray method") for those who have this hive feature:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67UqPF_bct

If anyone else has some useful tips to share in the next edition please send to Sandy at BegaValley.publicity@beekeepers.asn.au

BVB Committee Update

The committee has recently made a request to the BVSC Library for the purchase of *"Honey and Pollen Flora of South-Eastern Australia"* by Dr Doug Somerville. It has also requested that *"The Australasian Beekeeper"* be made available as an eMagazine if possible. At this point we are awaiting a response, but initial inquiries indicate that there are less funds available for purchase of books due to recent events in the Shire. Cross our fingers.

BIB Workshops - dates are 17th and 18th October, 2020. These will again be led by Graham Jones. Tickets are now available and

can be purchased at buytickets.at/begavalleybeekeepers.

(Should the workshops not go ahead due to Covid restrictions, fees already paid will be refunded).

Club Library

I picked up the club books from Meals On Wheels last week and found what appears to be an 'old' inventory of club books! - if you are in possession of any of the club books or magazines could you please contact me?

There was a January list of books borrowed, unfortunately not all those were returned.

I will be phoning / emailing those on the January list to ask if they still have the books so I can update our resources.

If you have recommendations for other books which may be of interest to members, please contact Alex Aitkenhead via

begavalley.biosecurity@beekeepers.asn.au

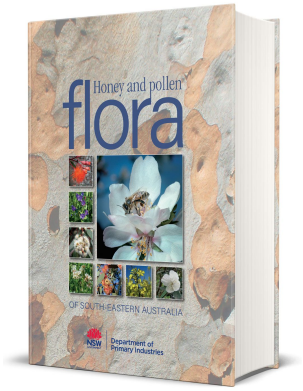
or Fay via

begavalley.president@beekeepers.asn.au

Book Review

Honey and Pollen Flora of South-Eastern Australia

by Dr. Doug Somerville



Doug Somerville`s *"Honey and Pollen Flora of South-Eastern Australia"* is an impressive collection of generations of accumulated botanical knowledge from beekeepers. Doug does a great job at explaining the book's intent as a source of information to all beekeepers. It's very timely as Allen Clemson`s *"Honey and Pollen Flora"* is very hard to come by and was my go to book for identifying flowering plants and trees. It certainly won't be gathering dust on my bookshelf.

Graham Jones

Follow the link as Dr Doug Somerville presents his new book on *"Honey and Pollen Flora of South East Australia"* at the 2019 Tocal Beekeepers Field Day.

https://youtu.be/9AePHRzM9qQ

From the Media

Terry Leiper came across an article from *Time* magazine intriguingly entitled ***"The bee whisperers of Slovenia have a plan to save colonies from climate change"*** and it is shared with you here. It gives the backstory as to how World Bee Day came about and how deeply beekeeping is embedded in Slovenian culture. An interesting read - hope you enjoy it.

https://time.com/5815141/slovenia-bees-climate-change/

An urban beekeeper tends to apiaries on a Ljubljana rooftop. One in every 200 Slovenes keeps bees.

World Bee Day - so here's a short poem about the importance of BEES

THE LAST BEE

After the last .ee had .uzzed it's last .uzz, the .irds and .utterflies did what they could.

.ut soon the fields lay .are, few flowers were left, nature was .roken and the planet .ereft

.rian .ilston

Club Shop

Don't get caught out next spring! Winter is the best time to repair beekeeping equipment, or restock supplies in readiness for the next season of bee activity. The club keeps a range of basic beekeeping supplies to sell to club members.
We have all you will need for setting up 8 frame Langstroth hives either made up ready to use, or flat packed ready to build. We also have a range of feeders, beetle traps, emlock straps, queen excluders, honey buckets, honey jars, labels, hive tools, smokers and bee brushes. If what you need isn't on the list, ask Lyall to add it to the next stock order.

Click the **Club Shop** link in your browser for a full price list, contact details for orders and arrangements for pickup. **Please note that social distancing requirements must be observed during the COVID-19 pandemic**.

For any enquiries contact Lyall via begavalley.treasurer@beekeepers.asn.au

Fast Facts

Beeswax is produced by **metabolizing honey in fat cells** associated with the **wax glands** and converting it to beeswax; workers cannot produce beeswax unless there are **adequate honey stores**.

Worker bees start to secrete wax about 12 days after emerging. About six days later the gland degenerates and that bee will no longer produce wax - her next role will be that of a forager.

NB: Drones and queens do not have abdominal wax glands and therefore don't produce wax.