

The Waggle

Summer Edition 2022

Newsletter of the Gold Coast Regional Beekeepers

Furthering knowledge in Beekeeping by assisted learning and practical experience



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Gold Coast Regional Beekeepers

The Gold Coast Regional Beekeepers (GCRB) meets on the **third Saturday** of every month, at the Veterans Support Group Men's Shed, 18 Leagues Club Drive, Nerang. Meetings start at **8:30 am**.

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Presidents Report

Hello everyone. It is with some trepidation that I take on the role of Club President, it will be hard to follow in the gallant footsteps of Greg Foster. I on behalf of every Club member, wish him well in his future endeavours.

So, my report for the current issue of the Waggle will open with some wise words from the President's Report that Greg wrote for our recent AGM.

"I'm [Greg] writing this brief annual report with a large amount of satisfaction and gratitude. I say brief because to fully include all our business and highlights from the past year would result in multiple pages from me. The feelings of satisfaction and gratitude come from seeing our little bee club evolve further over the last two years. This is primarily due to the hard work and dedication of people volunteering their time in multiple ways around the club.....

It's all about the bees, and as I reflect on this last year I think as a club we have provided a great assortment of educational, training and hands on opportunities for us all to benefit from. I believe we have also looked outside the square on occasions as seen with the Hives Helping Heroes initiative, our most recent Queen Breeding exercise and our expanding Native Bee's in Kindies program, the outcomes of which all add up to a club been actively involved in the community whilst embracing new challenges.....

No one person is bigger than the club, and as I finish my term, I would like to thank all who have assisted me in this role, we have many interesting people as members, and I encourage you to have a chat with as many of them as you can whenever you find yourself around the club....."

Greg will still be an active member of our great club and like us all, will look forward to the ever-increasing number of members and expertise shared.

I can only add that Greg and the prior committee (most of whom have stayed on for another term) have put in place many opportunities for us all to share and learn from. These will be continued and hopefully expanded along with our, not so little club, of 90 odd members.

I encourage you all to do your part, get bees (they are immensely fascinating insects), get a hive identification number – if you don't already have both. Remember if you provide Drew with your HIN you will get a free sugar shake kit.

There is not much more for me to say at the time of writing as I have only been your president for a month and only been to one committee meeting. Still green and wet behind the ears but eager. As I said when we bought 80 hives in one transaction (from no bees), "either go hard or go home" is my motto. Hopefully I can one day be a wealth of information for you all too.

Michelle Dart

New Members

Since our last edition of the Waggle, the following people have joined our merry troupe.

Bree Luxon, Michael Thrum, Daniel Taylor, Paul Gleeson, Alysha McLachlan, Jasper Hennekens, Simon Mather, Peter Ward, Sharon Condon, Wade Geering, Shaun Fyfe, Hugh Parker, Kate Crocker, Murray Wallace, Phil Baxter, Alex Ratajczak, David Stone, Gizella Mills, Joe Birt, John Blannin, Leon Meares, Peter Nixon, Simone Skrobar, Angela Yong and Kit Anderson

Please make all new members welcome at club meetings.

Club Biosecurity

What you can bring to meetings and What you can't

As the current COVID pandemic started to impact on our lives, the Club also realised that the biosecurity risks to the Club's hives also need addressing. After much discussion way back in 2020 the following biosecurity rules were implemented to keep both beekeepers and bees safe:

Veils/Bee suits - While the club does have a number of veils available for members and guests it was decided that personal veils or bee suits posed a low risk to activities. Members and guests can wear their own veil/bee suit while attending the Club Hives.

Gloves – This is a two-part issue with the bottom line being that only Club supplied gloves are to be worn. The first part is to prevent the spread of COVID. Latex inner gloves are to be worn by all members and guests who intend to put on bee-resistant outer gloves, which are the second part. The Club outer gloves are to be worn to protect both your bees and the Club bees from the transfer of pathogens between apiaries.

Hive Tools – Only Club hive tools are to be used within the Club apiary. This, again, is to prevent the transmission of pathogens between apiaries.

So, the bottom line is please bring along your veil/bee suit for use at the meetings but please leave everything else at home. This way both your bees and the Club bees have one thing less to worry about.

Your summer beekeeping checklist - <https://www.ecrotek.com.au/blogs/articles/your-summer-beekeeping-checklist>

Summer is a busy time for bees. Long, warm days and readily available nectar supplies make for intensive honey production and increased egg-laying. Colony numbers peak and bees spend much of their time building and filling new comb.

For beekeepers, summer is a busy time as well. Although the chance of a swarm is highest in spring, it's still a possibility in summer – especially if the hive doesn't expand to meet the colony's space needs – so keepers need to be on the lookout for signs of swarming. Supers should be added when needed, and excess honey collected. In parts of Australia, beekeepers also need to keep an eye on the temperature and protect their hives from the fierce summer heat.

Here's your summer hive checklist:

Inspect regularly - During summer, you should open the hive for an inspection every three weeks. Choose a warm, still day, and inspect in the middle of the day when fewer bees are in the hive. Count full supers, check brood, look for signs of pests or disease, and take notes so you can compare next time you check.

Watch for swarm signs - When bees run out of space for brood or honey, the colony will prepare to raise a new queen, and the old queen will leave to find a new hive – along with half the population. You don't want to lose half your bees in the middle of the season, so keep an eye on swarm behaviour when you inspect. The most significant sign is queen cells in the brood box – these are larger, misshapen cells at the edges of the frame.

Here's how to prevent a swarm if you do notice queen cells.

Check the queen - Your queen bee is essential for the health of the hive. Without her, there's no brood, no new bees to produce honey, and the remaining colony could drift apart without the influence of her hormones. That's why it's so important to check on the queen every time you open the hive.

Make sure she's still there. The quickest way is to check for eggs and larvae, this quickly shows that she's present and laying. Keep an eye on brood pattern too - is it consistent or patchy? Disease or age can affect your queens ability to lay vigorously and consistently. If you are concerned and want to re-queen the hive, get onto it quickly – most breeders only sell queens until the end of February, and you don't want to miss out.

Letting your hive rear their own queen is an option however this will create a brood break which is a period of time when you'll have no new bees adding to the population of your hive, this can significantly affect your crop.

Add supers as needed - Giving your bees plenty of room to move is the best way to stop swarming before it happens. Although every beekeeper has a way of gauging the need for new supers, most agree that sooner is better than later – don't wait until the hive is heaving with honey or brood. Instead, install a new super when around seven of the 10 frames in your current super are full.

Cool and ventilate - The harsh Aussie summer can be too much even for heat-loving bees. Keep your hives cool by placing them in a shaded area, using white hive roofs to reflect the light, adding ventilation holes towards the top of the hive and using a mesh or vented Hive Doctor Smart bottom board for extra airflow.

Maintain a water supply - Bees drink a surprising amount of water, especially when it's hot. If you don't have a natural water source available, place a large trough or water container near your hives. Include rocks or pebbles for bees to land on, and make sure to refill regularly.

Harvest surplus honey - Traditionally, beekeepers harvest honey all at once at the end of summer, but some keepers choose to harvest excess honey throughout the season, breaking

up the job and giving the bees more room to grow. Harvesting honey involves a bit of equipment and practice, but it's pretty straightforward. Get the full guide here.

Whenever you choose to harvest, make sure your bees have a good supply of honey left to see them through the winter. In Australia, most beekeepers recommend leaving around 18kgs of honey – or seven to eight full depth frames.

Get busy in the buzzy summer - Summer is a busy and exciting time for beekeepers. You get to see your hives bustling with activity, watch honey stores grow before your eyes, and finally enjoy your delicious harvest.

Bee Books

Looking for a present or gift idea for the Apiarist in the family, or want to buy a good book on Beekeeping

The following books are good for general bee information and standard (Langstroth) hives. They do also cover off on Warre hives and Top Bar hives:

- **Backyard Bees** – A guide for the beginner beekeeper by Doug Purdie (ISBN 978-1-743-36508-3)
- **The Bee book** – Beekeeping in Australia by Peter Warhurst & Roger Goebel (ISBN 978-0-734-50330-X)
- **The Bee – A natural history** by Noah Wilson-Rich (ISBN 978-1-78240-596-2).
- **Beekeeping for Dummies** by Howland Blackiston (ISBN 978-1-119-31006-8)

The following is mainly to do with Top Bar hives:

- **The Barefoot Beekeeper** by Phillip Chandler (ISBN 978-1-326-19225-9)

For Slovenian (or A-Z) hives this book is about the only one out there:

- **A-Z Beekeeping with the Slovenian Hive** by Janko Bozic (ISBN 978-1-545-50916-6)

If you are interested in Native bees then these books are very informative:

- **The Australian Native Bee Book** by Tim Heard (ISBN 978-0-646-93997-1)
- **A Guide to Native Bees of Australia** by Terry Houston (ISBN: 978-1-4863-0406-6)

Another handy book regarding the flora to be found that will support your bees is:

- **Honey Flora of Queensland** by S T Blake and C Roff (ISBN 0-7242-2371-1)

Queen Marking Colours

Queen Marking Colours	
Year Ending	Colour
Year Ends in 1 or 6 (eg, 2021)	White
Year Ends in 2 or 7 (eg, 2022)	Yellow
Year Ends in 3 or 8 (eg, 2023)	Red
Year Ends in 4 or 9 (eg, 2024)	Green
Year Ends in 5 or 0 (eg, 2025)	Blue

Varroa Response Team

In late June 2022, Varroa mite was detected in the sentinel hives at the Port of Newcastle. This immediately put a do not move order on all beehives in NSW and a biosecurity response team was set up headed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC). So far there have been more than 100 detections of Varroa mite in beehives in NSW and an eradication process is now taking place.

What we do know is that the Varroa mite has been in NSW since December 2021, and is likely to have entered the country at Williamstown, which is within 10 kilometres of Newcastle. The RAAF base in Williamstown is used as an international gateway for travellers from New Zealand coming to Newcastle. We also know that the spread of varroa in NSW can all be traced back to the same source.

Many people are and have been involved in the response to the Varroa outbreak, and many are still required. Two members of the Gold Coast Regional Beekeepers have recently volunteered to be part of the response teams, helping with the eradication of bee hives. Here are their stories.

John Blannin

Hi all, I've just come back from a week-long shift in Maitland with the Varroa Mite response team. My name is John and although I am a new member of this club I was introduced to bee-keeping, probably like most of us, 50 years ago in my youth, by dear old dad.

I saw the request for volunteer bee-keepers to come and assist with their plight and having "SOME" spare time I thought I'd give it a go. I tried to have no expectations or preconceived ideas of what I'd be doing but I suppose, if I think about it, I didn't think the job would be too difficult a task. I was both right and wrong. Let me tell you about my first week and then you will understand that double sided answer.

I was flown down to Newcastle (Williamstown) airport where I picked up a hire vehicle and then drove for about 45-50 minutes to Rutherford. I'm not sure if it's a large village or a suburb of Maitland but either way it's on the northeast side of the main centre of Maitland. This is where I was booked into a pretty swish Motel, and that, apart from going to the pub for dinner, is the end of day one.

Day 1 and the last day were the same travelling days but in reverse order.

Ok day 2 starts around 1 o'clock in the afternoon with a drive of about 20 minutes north to Tocal where the agricultural college is located. I made myself known to a couple of likely lads standing around chatting who introduced themselves also as bee-keepers. They gave me the guff on where to go, who to talk to and what was happening and so armed with this newfound knowledge I trundled off on the quest for instructions, leadership and a desperate need to find the men's room.

I was given the royal tour as part of the induction and shown "THE VIDEO" on how to decontaminate after each job. I am now inducted. Around 2 o'clock I check the daily roster sheet which had just been posted on the wall near the assembly area. This tells me to which team I have been attached, the name of the leader (Authorised Officer, "AO") and the names of the other members of the team.

There are witches' hats or (Road Cones for the PCs) with Team and a number, 1 to 7, written on them being a bit of an intellect, I figured if I stand near the cone with my corresponding number on it the others are bound to find me. Ya gotta love it when a plan pays off Huh? So, for tonight there are eight others in the team, the AO, the Bee-keeper (that's me in this case) and seven other assistants from other volunteer groups such as Rural Fire Service (RFS), State Emergency Service (SES), Parks and Gardens (or Parks and Wildlife).

Work vehicles were mostly supplied by the RFS and they did the driving and maintained radio communications with the base HQ at Tocal. The AO takes down the sizes of all members for wellington boots, disposable overalls and rubber gloves. We then all go to the stores area and collect all necessary and required equipment which is quite extensive. The RFS people in

the team pack it into their Utes, there are 3 of them, and off we go to the job. Tonight, we have only 1 job with 68 hives and it is only about a 15-minute drive away.

We arrive with plenty of daylight as the first thing I have to do is inspect all the hives to see how active they are. But for me it's more so important to check for any hazards that may cause issues after dark. At the same time the AO is with me as we discuss any problems, where to start working, how many assistants I will require and so-on. In this case many of the hives are in poor condition, not that we are here to judge on another's bee-keeping abilities but if the hives are a little shaky, then when it comes time to move them around we'll have to take precautions so they do not come apart while we are wrapping them up, more on that later. A lot of the hives are sitting on the ground with the entrances covered with tall grass. Ok initial inspection done we make a plan and wait for dark.

While we are doing this the other assistants are busy setting up the decontamination point. This is just as important a part of the job as is the euthanising and wrapping of the bees. This comprises of a blue tarp about 3 metres square with a line drawn across the middle of it and a cross on 1 side of the line.

The Tarp is pegged out flat on the ground and the cross establishes the contaminated or dirty side. They lay out all the equipment required for the job and the beekeeper and his required helpers suit up for the tasks ahead. Shoes off overalls on and boots on. I chose sizes that were 1 or 2 sizes larger than my size so as to make removing them at the end of the job easier. Just on dark, gloves and veils on and I took a smoker as well as the hive tool and foam to block up the entrances.

As there was a large number to do, I was lucky to have a fellow in the RFS who was confident with the bees too, so after giving him a lesson on the basics of bee-hive blocking up and with one helper each we started our un-envious job. It took us about an hour and a half to 2 hours to complete that task as there were a few hives with more than one entrance and a few of them seemed to have emergency escape doors in them that weren't quite so obvious until the hives were closed and the masses started, massing on the sides of the hive. There were also some experimental hives that required some improvisation to complete the sealing up processes.

After blocking up the entrances to all the hives, it was all hands suited up and commence the ugly part of the job, the euthanising of the bees. This is done by removing the lid of the hive and having an assistant lay a square of cloth over the top of the frames and the bees and then pouring five hundred millilitres (half a litre) of petrol over it all. I would then replace the lid and move on to the next one. There were more than a few extremely angry bees we had to deal with before we started but by the time we got to the laying down of the cloth they were ready for chemical warfare. And with a sad heart, I guess that's just what they got. The buzzing inside the hive increased to the loudest hum I ever heard but over the next minute or so it diminished to final silence as they succumbed to the fumes. With all Hives now silent it was time to wrap them up.

We used rolls of black plastic to completely encapsulate each hive and although it stuck to itself like gladwrap, we ensured security by encircling each plastic covered tomb with cloth-tape. The final step is to place a large red sticker on each one with the required information including date and for removal. They will be left on site for 21 days and will then be collected.

I wandered back through the new graveyard of shrouded hives, with head bowed to the decontaminating station.

Not yet finished for the night, we now have to decontaminate everything on this side of the line. There are black rubbish bags marked for different items laid out on the dirty side for rubbish, boots and veils, so first thing is to get all the gear like smokers, hive tools, rolls of tape plastic, and necessary hand held or head-worn lighting all sprayed off and dropped on the clean side of the line where members of the team not involved in the euthanising, usually the AO and one other, spray it off again before they can handle it and put it away into its

proper storage container. With all the gear decontaminated and transferred across it's time to decontaminate the personnel.

This starts with removing all tape around the wrists and veils and anywhere else you've had it put so as you can remove the overalls. All of the removed tape goes into the contaminated rubbish bag along with empty tape and plastic rolls and the overalls.

I found the easiest way to get out of the overalls was to unzip to the bottom of the zip then just rip down each leg and then remove the upper part like a jacket. It was then rolled inwards and placed into the rubbish bag. As I wore my veil under my suit, I would then take it off spray it before putting it into the bag marked for veils. The rubber gloves came off next and they went into the rubbish. Finally, the boots, but only after standing in a tub of soapy water and giving them a decent scrub with a brush and having the soles inspected and sprayed down, could they be allowed to cross onto the clean side where I slipped out of them and straight into my own shoes.

RFS personnel completed the task by spraying down the Tarp and folding it up in a particular way. I must add that over the following week I did notice that some teams were more particular than others!! All gear stowed away and with the AO having all the photographs and paperwork completed, we got in the in the cars and headed home. It's about 11 pm.

This is the same routine for every job. Tonight, we had just one job with a lot of hives, but the next night we did 9 hives but at 5 different locations. One job had 3 hives, two jobs had 2 hives and the other two hives, which meant 5 pairs of gloves, 5 suits, 5 veils, 5 tarps and the same amount of effort during the decontamination process 5 times. The team was made up of 5 in total with me going in on every hive but only needing one assistant each time so they took it in turn to get suited up.

As most of the hives we destroyed were backyard hobbyists' hives, they were in great condition and easy to handle physically but led me to one of the most difficult jobs emotionally I had to do. As usual I was introduced as John the bee-keeper, to the very upbeat and extremely nice landowner, who then introduced me to the Apiarist, his 11 year old son. Although saddened by the whole affair the 11 year old had accepted the fact that he was about to lose his hives. I spent a few minutes with the boy and he talked about the hives and his intended future. It was an 11:30 finish that night.

My third night was a bit easier, work wise. We were a band of 3 and had one job of 2 hives about 45 minute drive away. Gear loaded then hives inspected and we still had over an hour and a half of daylight left. It was a little warmer than last night so the bees were not going to be coming home any earlier than necessary. Even at sunset there were still quite a few flying out of the hive, we got started on when darkness was complete. The hives were located on a farm and were, as usual, well cared for so they were easy to deal with quickly. It still takes a little time to complete the tasks and the owner was a friendly lass that was very talkative. Although the AO didn't want to be rude by running off quickly, we were gone however by 7:40 pm, and then headed off to our second job of the night which was to assist another larger group that had, I believe, 85 hives to process but they were nearly 2 hours away.

With a stop off at base camp to pick up some extra equipment requested by the other group, we arrived when they were well into the wrapping process so we 3 just suited up and grabbed a couple of rolls of plastic and tape and got stuck in. Finished about 11 pm.

My last night with 4 others was 7 hives in 4 locations and all in the same neighbourhood, which was relatively close to base camp. It all went well and we were finished really, really early so the director gave us 1 more job with one hive not far away. We still finished early but not before Hungry Jacks was closed.

So, about my double-sided answer way back in the second paragraph. Physically the work was challenging and that was what I was hoping for. I'm retired and although I'm busy with life my activity level has waned somewhat so I am in need of and desire physical activity.

I'm not sure if you noticed but at one point there, I was starting to shed a tear because I was remembering the emotions that were running rampant through me as I hadn't prepared myself for the emotional yoyo I experienced. Yeh it was difficult dealing with some of apiarists like the 11 year old boy and the 75 year old who had inherited his hives from his father when he was a boy, and watched on as his bees were euthanised.

Having said that we have a chance and possibly only one chance to eradicate the Varroa Mite, we don't really have a choice do we so we have to take that chance now.

I'm going to put my hand up for at least one more stint. Will you join me?

Steve (Windy) Hill

Part 1: I would like to start with a disclaimer. Due to the great mentors I have and the awesome club we belong to, I probably have a very strong bias that all hives and equipment are maintained to a high standard, all beekeepers keep very good records, and all beekeepers have a base knowledge of how to keep bees. Due to this bias some of my comments below may seem harsh.

In response to the call for volunteers to help with the Varroa outbreak in NSW I found myself assisting with the eradication of hives in the Nana Glen region near Coffs Harbour between 20 – 26 Sep 22. I was part of a team made up of Dept of Primary Industries (DPI) personnel, and the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) who assisted by providing vehicle and personnel support. The senior DPI member was the Authorised Officer (OA) whose task was to liaise with the hive and/or landowner to arrange access to the hive and complete all the required paperwork. I was there simply as the bee wrangler and subject matter expert (SME) though at times I wasn't too sure about that.

Prior to starting my first day on the job I was lucky enough to be put in touch with the other member of our club, John Blannin, who was just completing his time in Maitland. John gave me some great tips about how prepare myself for the task ahead including ensuring I grabbed boots and disposable overalls two sizes too big. The bio-security requirement while doing the eradication was to change the personnel protection equipment (PPE) at each site, and it was easier to both get into and out of with the slightly larger gear.

As eradication took place after dark the teams would meet at the DPI site approx. 13km north of Grafton at around 2:00pm, and then drive at least 80km down to the infected area. Once in the area we could have several jobs (sites) to visit for the night which could be a single hive or up to 100 hives, so prior to darkness we would survey the site(s) and work out a plan of attack for each site. While waiting for it to be dark enough to ensure the majority of bees were in the hive, we would have the DPI provided meal, usually a salad. I also had a small thermal travel mug of coffee and a backpack for water to keep up my fluids.

My first night I was paired up with a beekeeper who was on his last night, so I was able to get a great understanding of the way things were done as the next few nights I was the lone beekeeper in my teams. As luck would have it our first job of the night was a single hive in excellent condition that the beekeeper had only started about ten months earlier.

Unfortunately, this excellent hive gave me a false sense of what to expect as the next three jobs for the night were less than desirable. The hives were on the ground, some in long grass, most badly constructed with multiple entrances which made the task of effectively closing the hives up and then killing the inhabitants quite difficult.

The format for eradicating a hive was quite simple; close up all of the entrances with foam and gaffer tape, place a petrol laden cloth on top of the frames, pour in the remaining petrol and close the hive up. The amount of petrol used was 250ml per box, so a hive with a brood box and a super took 500ml of petrol. Additionally, ethanol was used to subdue any bees that weren't in the hive when the petrol was poured in.

Unfortunately, some hives were a little more difficult to deal with than others, especially those with mesh bottoms or Flow Hives on stands. Hives with mesh bottoms had to be flipped upside down and the petrol poured in through the mess and then find something, usually corflute, to act as a top while the petrol did its job.

The Flow hives on stands were even more fun – not. The inner lid had to be sealed and the hive flipped with the stand still in place. With the hive upside down the stand and associated hive gear was quickly removed and a piece of board or corflute was put in the stands place before continuing to kill the hive. Once the hive was dead it was wrapped in black plastic and gaffer tape. For those hives that were up for disposal a red label was attached for collection in four days, while those being retained had a yellow label attached and could not be touched for 21 days.

Due to the rain that went through the area on 22 September, my second night was cancelled so it was a rather boring day sitting around the hotel. This gave me a chance to catch up on some sleep as the next few nights would be full on. On the third night the team I was with attended four sites for a total of 37 hives. We had one site of 27 hives which we managed to knock over in just over an hour. The other three sites took another four hours making for a long night. Luckily for the team the rain held off while we were dealing with the hives, but we did have some heavy showers while in transit between sites.

The fourth night was a bit of a disaster as our first three jobs for the night were double ups of those that were destroyed on my first night which took some time to sort out as the beekeeper seemed quite elusive on where and how many hives we were dealing with. The number of lean-to sheds with a red tractor, near a dam, down a dirt track, in an area dedicated to growing blueberries is quite daunting without an actual address or GPS location!!

The last job for the night involved hives that were not the best to say the least. Again, they had been on the ground for so long mice had set up home under them, and the grass was nearly a metre high. Luckily, snakes had not set up home or it could have been very interesting!! It took our team of three nearly four hours to deal with the 12 hives as every time we plugged up one entrance the bees would come out of another hole.

My final night was the longest, over 11 hours from the time we left Grafton till we got back to Grafton, and only three jobs. There was only the AO and myself to deal with 27 hives which seemed simple enough – famous last words. One site was supposed to be 24 hives in a blueberry orchard; however, after the best part of an hour of trudging up and down rows of blueberries on a sloping block prior to darkness we could only find 22 hives despite the hive owner being adamant there were 24 hives.

Then there was the organic beekeeper with two hives who believed that the varroa mite threat was a government conspiracy. Once I explained that the threat was real, and if we had to start to use chemical strips they would lose their organic status, they came to their senses and allowed the hives to be destroyed. Then it was back to the 22 hives and more trudging up and down the slopes to carry out the destruction. That night I covered nearly 10km just in the blueberry orchard alone.

Overall, I learnt quite a bit while in Grafton and consider myself much better prepared if we have an outbreak here in Qld. Some of the more important lessons I learnt were:

- Not everyone keeps their hives in a good condition. You like a nice home and so do the bees.
- Not everyone keeps accurate records of where their hives are located. When we get an outbreak here the fastest way to deal with the disease is to be able to tell the authorities exactly where our hives are.
- Not everybody should keep bees!!
- We are likely to lose the battle against varroa unless the Government (Federal, State and local) take the threat seriously and assign sufficient resources to the apiary industry.
- Good record keeping is critical in the event of any disease outbreak. Where your bees and equipment come from will assist the authorities to make the decision on whether you keep your bees and equipment or not.
- Always take the opportunity to learn new information about beekeeping. Talking to other beekeepers from varying parts of Australia can be very informative as different areas

can have distinctive beekeeping practices due to numerous factors in those areas including climate.

I would recommend those that have the time, and energy, to volunteer to assist DPI over the next 2 – 3 years that surveillance and monitoring will likely be carried out, do so. The knowledge you gain will ultimately assist all of us when varroa arrives in Queensland. To that end I will be heading back down to Grafton for a two week stint the Sunday after our AGM and will be volunteering for further periods down the track.

Part 2: After a three week hiatus I travelled back to Grafton to assist with the Varroa Mite emergency taking place in NSW. The difference this time is instead of eradicating bees the task was to conduct surveillance of hives in the Purple Zone (10-25km from Infected Point).

The surveillance is undertaken in a two part method with every hive being subjected to an alcohol wash followed up a while later by sticky mats and mite strips being placed in hives. The alcohol washes are still a test on the mental side of things but a necessary evil if NSW is to get on top of the outbreak. The sticky mats and mite strips remain in the hive for three days and then have to be removed. If they are left any longer there is a chance that the honey and wax will be contaminated with miticide from the strips. The mats are sent off for testing while the strips are disposed of by first freezing for 24 hours then place in general rubbish.

The weather was not kind to the teams in Grafton with rain just about every day for the first eight days, which slowed down both the washes and the deployment/retrieval of mats. No-one likes going into hives on rainy days and the bees definitely take offence to it!! The girls managed to find their way into the tiniest of entrances to suits and veils and made their presence felt. Unfortunately though, to try and keep up with the schedule there were days when only light rain/mist was falling that the opening of hives had to go ahead.

Another issue with the weather was how it affected access to the sites. Some of the (goat) tracks were impassable because of the mud even for 4x4 vehicles. Others were cut off by rising water in the creeks and streams making it impossible to get to the sites.

Unfortunately, there were a mixed bag of hives, and owners, which has made the deployment both a joy and a misery. There was even one job where we had to have armed police protection to visit a hive to eradicate it. Thankfully the Authorising Officer (DPI) and the police kept the owner at sufficient distance from me and my partner as we dealt with the hive!!

Toward the end of my deployment the weather became better which should have allowed us to get on with the job but then we had personnel issues; other beekeepers finished their time but no new beekeepers to take their place; only one AO who had to take a forced day off, and a miss-match in the days the OIC was present contributed to some hard decisions. Luckily, another AO was found at the last minute and yours truly was tasked with organising the hives to be visited for the next day where seven jobs were taken on of which six were completed. The job that was not carried out was because the beekeeper had become frustrated at the process and did not want his hives touched.

All in all it was a satisfactory deployment. Again, I got to meet some interesting people including Jacqueline the ABA treasurer, and Simon who is an Australian running a beekeeping business in Uganda. My skills at spotting the queen bee also improved quite remarkably which I hope will put me in good stead in the future.

Yours Aye

Windy

La Nina and Your Bees

With another La Nina forecast it is time to think about how you are going to prepare your hives for another prolonged bout of wet weather. The team at Flow have prepared this list of helpful suggestions.

Sunshine and ventilation are vital for the health of your bees, so with La Niña confirmed for a third year, it's worth thinking about how you'll keep your colony dry and well fed, despite the rain.

Be mindful of not harvesting too much honey – prolonged periods of rain will mean your bees can't forage as normal and may need the food supply.

Protect your hive from the rain as much as possible. If your hive is exposed, make sure it's lifted off the ground. You can also try constructing a simple roof made of plywood secured in place with a tie-down so rainwater doesn't enter the hive.

Damp conditions can lead to issues like chalkbrood. Consider the amount of sunshine your hive is exposed to and relocate it if it's in a shady spot.

Bunnings Christmas Night Market – Drew Maywald

Once again Bunnings Nerang, will be holding their special night market for all the family on the evening of Thursday December 8, between 5:00 and 8:00 pm. The club will be selling honey, bee badges and lanyards on the stall and members are invited to bring along some of their homemade products to sell on the stall. On past stalls members have sold products like bees wax candles, furniture preserver, moisturiser creams, lip balms, and jams.

If you would like to be involved please contact me. Similarly, if you are available to help man the stall for an hour or two please get back to me. This was an extremely well attended event last and a lot of interest was shown by members of the public. We are also hoping to have a display hive at the market. Members selling products are asked to donate 10% of their takings to the club. We will also have EFTPOS available on the night.

Honey Competition

2021 saw the success of our first club honey competition. We have expanded the event this year to include beeswax candles and mead. Here is a link to the classes and regulations for this year's competition. 2022 Classes & Schedule The judging for this year's event will be held during the December meeting while the hive inspections are being carried out. You can download an entry form at this link: [2022 Entry Form](#)

Christmas Raffle

We like to have a large raffle for our Christmas meeting, so if you have anything to donate that can be used as prizes, or are able to procure some vouchers please Drew know at gcrb.secretary@beekeepers.asn.au. A little bee told me that there could also be a surprise for everyone attending the December meeting.

Bee Suit for Sale

A member has a medium sized Flow bee suit for sale at \$125. This is brand new, never been used and still in its original wrapping. If you are interested in purchasing it please get back to me ASAP.

Catching Swarms in Medieval Times – submitted by Drew Maywald

I had an interesting conversation recently with several of the more experienced beekeepers in our club. We were talking about swarms and how to catch them, when one of the group mentioned that if a swarm is high up in a tree you can coax them down by banging pots and pans together.

Before you laugh yourself silly and think that I have lost my mind, you need to know that banging pots and pans together is an ancient beekeeping custom, perhaps as old as Medieval times when beekeepers routinely promoted swarming. In those days you could not go out and buy a nuc so the only way to increase the number of hives in your apiary was to encourage the bees to swarm and then catch the swarm.

Common Law in those days, established the principle that if a swarm came from your hives, it became your property. As a result, if you were pursuing a swarm, and hoping to establish an ongoing claim to it, you needed a way to signal your intention without being able to send out a group text or email to nearby beekeepers and neighbours.

When a medieval beekeeper saw a swarm leave one of their hives, they would chase it to recapture it and return it to the apiary. While chasing it, the beekeeper was likely to cross the property of several people, and by rhythmically beating on a pan while chasing the swarm, they were able to let property owners know that the swarm of bees is theirs, and the beekeeper is not there to trespass and offers no danger to the land owner.



In Medieval times it was also thought that banging pots and pans may convince the bees that a storm with thunder is approaching and they need to find a place to land, and then the beekeeper could capture them and return them to their home.



It was also believed that the noise and rhythmic sound created by beating the pots and pans, would coax the bees down to settle in a new hive or 'skep', lined with honey, to further entice the bees into the skep.



Langstroth was not only a beekeeper in Oxford, but he did a lot of research on bees and swarming. He and his colleagues tried banging pots and pans, but could find no evidence that it actually worked.

Interestingly, Langstroth found that in the UK June was the most popular month for bees to naturally swarm. He also discovered that bees like to swarm on warm, calm days, when there is less danger to them. He also suggested having an empty hive nearby under a tree. The bees will flock around the said tree and the scout bees should find the hive. Langstroth said that the reason the bees will prefer being under the tree is because the shade will not remind them of the sweaty, hot, overcrowded feeling of the previous hive. According to Langstroth, swarming was a positive thing and there was always the possibility of creating another hive when it happened.

My research showed that banging pots and pans is still widely used in India and around the world, including an instance here on the Gold Coast.

The technique is quite simple. When the bees start to swarm you need to run into the garden with pots and pans and bash them together rhythmically, making as much noise as possible. Apparently, this causes the bees to settle down low and not fly away so that they can then be gathered up and put into a box. This technique is called Tanging.

So, the big question is does tanging work or is it merely an Old Wives tale? There are a number of instances on Facebook and on the internet of beekeepers who have rhythmically banged pots and pans to successfully coax bees down low and into boxes, and I have been made aware of a beekeeper here on the Gold Coast who has used the technique successfully.

Scientifically there is little foundation that 'Tanging' works but then who I am I to question old wives and hundreds of years of beekeeping. I guess we will never ever know unless we give it a go!

Drew Maywald

September 2022

Catching the ones that got away

Initially, the swarm will not travel very far at all, perhaps only 20-30 metres, and will often cluster temporarily in a suitable tree or structure that has previously been identified by scouts. Up to about 50 scouts – the most experienced foragers – will then seek out an appropriate permanent home site. Generally, this is within one kilometre of their original nest. European Honey Bees typically require a clean, dry space with a minimum volume of about 15 litres.

Returning scouts will communicate details of prospective sites via a dance, which also conveys an indication of their level of excitement. When about 80% or more of the scouts have reached an agreement, the swarm will relocate to the chosen site. Usually, this occurs within a matter of hours, and it is unusual for the bees to remain at their temporary encampment for more than three days. Sometimes, the temporary camp can become a permanent residence by default when a consensus cannot be reached.



Photos supplied by Fiona Fernie

Editors Notes

Submissions for the Autumn 2023 edition – please have to me **NLT the 20th of February**. Prefer you use the dhewett5865@gmail.com address. Members we need your submissions.

Cheers for now

Don H