

# BEEBIZ MARCH 2020

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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## President Report

Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,

And live alone in the bee - loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there.....

William Butler Yeats 1859

Hi All,

Another successful field day was held at Ruthven Hall. An informative forum was held on the topic of small hive beetle with Power Point presentation with the club's equipment. After lunch the 2020 AGM was convened & it was unanimously agreed to change the constitution to create an associate membership for spouses, partners & members of other clubs. All positions were filled on the executive. We need an editor for the newsletter and there are vacancies on the committee.

I was hoping that one of our female beekeepers would step up to fill the President position, letting me off the hook; but it wasn't to be. We have a male secretary for the second time (same person) in the clubs history, and a female President would give a better gender balance.

The club should go forward in a friendly congenial manner with everyones contribution, whether that be washing dishes or doing the barbecue, valued by all,. Happy beekeeping .

Kevin

## Secretary Report

The roll up at the last field day and AGM at Ruthven Hall was an improvement on the previous meeting. This and the breaking of the drought contributed a good atmosphere to the meeting. The forum on hive beetles hopefully answered questions that new beekeepers may have had about how to treat the pest.

The AGM had a good attendance, and most of the committee agreed to serve again. It was a shame to see Greg Booth (Vice-President) and Barry O'Connor (Editor) not seek reappointment due to work reasons, as their inputs since joining the management team have been invaluable. So the committee has two vacancies for members, and there is a vacancy for a new editor, who can be on the committee formally or ex-officio. We encourage members to volunteer- all sorts welcome!

The vote for the new constitution introducing Associate members was unanimous in favour, and this position will become available after the constitution is officially accepted by the Department of Fair Trading. The committee will set the Associate membership fee at that time.

## Update on Last Field Day

Below are summaries of what our panel said on Small Hive Beetles.

**Brian Window:** I have used assorted traps for SHB since they arrived in the area. The best by far is the underfloor type of trap, which is a narrow tray placed under parallel slots in the floor of the hive (First commercial model was the Beetltra trap). Underfloor traps have a major problem with water, either from copious condensation on the inner walls of the hive or rainwater entering the hive through cracks or driven into the front entrance. For these reasons, the trap should be placed towards the back of the hive, the hive floor should be tilted forward, and some means to divert water around the slots incorporated. I use a 3mm high bar on the floor to direct water around the ends of the slots. My trays are made from Gyprock ceiling battens and filled with diatomaceous earth. Aside from an absolute collapse of a hive, I have only seen shb maggots breeding in debris on the floor of the hive. For this reason, it is important to have full width doorways with forward sloping floors, so that there are no regions to trap debris on the floor.

Nearly all my hives have such traps, but they are only operational occasionally. Mostly the slots are blocked. I rely on maintaining strong hives with checks for a laying queen (eggs) and healthy capped brood. I try to maintain a high density of bees on the brood so that the bees can protect it. For weak hives, I remove supers and/or frames, particularly frames clogged with pollen, replacing with foundation, to maximise the bee density on the brood.

My nucleus hives are usually made of three frames of brood, and two of foundation, with 3-4 frames of bees. The bees draw the foundation as required and it is easy to look after.

**Beetles breed better beekeepers.**



Bee eggs; note how they are not parallel, unlike glints in the bottom of the cells

**Kevin Virgen:** I have tried out nearly all the in-hive traps with mixed results. Mostly the bees will block up any holes where the beetles are supposed to enter the traps quite quickly & if they are in the brood box it is quite a task to unblock them. Also, I found that the bees herded the beetles into one back corner of the box and there were very few in the traps. At the moment I have stopped using traps and have adopted Geoff Manning's philosophy of maintaining strong hives. Occasionally if I find a build-up of beetles in a hive I will give the bees a hand & run the hive tool through them. Until an economical entrance trap is available I will continue with this procedure.

**Geoff Manning:** Small Hive Beetle SHB is in all hives hereabouts. It is not a problem as far as I can see until the hive has a problem, mostly in the form of queenlessness. As soon as this happens the bees more or less stop doing much, including removing the SHB eggs. These then hatch in a couple of days and an

unholy mess ensues, with larvae having a ball. Remember about 20% of virgin queens do not make it back to the hive. Actually these numbers are from queen mating nucs which are placed to help with orientation etc. So it may well be worse for hives where drifting is common and hives are placed largely for our convenience.

If a hive is weak because of disease a similar situation can occur, only more slowly. Mating nucs and nucs for increase are often low in bee numbers, so as to improve acceptance of the queen cells during the breeding season. However the best solution seems to be to not have empty combs in this case. Any empty spaces should be filled with frames of foundation. The bees will draw cells as required and fill them with brood or honey.

People sometimes say that the hive died from SHB. I am inclined to liken this to seeing a cow dead in the paddock, walking over to examine it, and blaming the death on blowflies. Correlation is not causation.

**Ross Wood:** Today I am introducing you to “The Guardian” hive entrance beetle blocker perfected by Clark Taplin. It prevents small hive beetles from entering at the main entrance to the hive. Look it up on YouTube. These are available through Northern Rivers Beekeeping Supplies at Alstonville. They are easy to install, and whilst they do not kill beetles they confuse them and prevent entry to the hive. I am presently installing them on my queen rearing nucs. They will fit Nuplas brood boxes with no modifications whilst two “Guardians” may be necessary for full strength production hives.

The other device I use internally is a small rectangular Corflute trap which is primed with a mixture of Promite and boric acid. These traps kill any beetle that gains entry to the hive and enters the trap. The larger size Corflute may be obtained from Bunnings and boric acid is available on Ebay.

My main problem with beetles is with queenless hives, especially when hives abscond due to harassment by beetles or by swarming. I previously used Corflute traps primed with Maxforce (fipronil) in my nuc and mini nuc hives but had problems with vaporisation in hot weather, thus killing the nucs. Coopex cockroach powder instead of boric acid can also be mixed with the Promite in Corflute traps if used in non production hives.

There are many other control methods for hive beetles, but all take more time and effort than the above methods.

Ed. Note Boric acid  $H_3BO_3$  or boric oxide  $B_2O_3$  is different from Borax or sodium borate  $Na_2B_4O_7 \cdot 10H_2O$  but both are used in baits for ants and roaches mixed with icing sugar or honey.

## **Flowering Report**

This month is largely like last month. Tea Tree burst and rain. Tea Tree burst and rain. Everywhere I look the grass is knee high, well sort of, and mostly the useful weeds for bee pollen have been swamped. The main exception I have noticed is Billy Goat Weed, Ageratum. It has a powderpuff blue flower and is worked for pollen. We have never had it tested as far as I know and experience is problematic. Because of the amount of grass even Ragweed is rarer than normal. A good thing as the pollen is worse than useless.



Billy Goat Weed



Easter Senna



I am sure you will have noticed the excellent budding on the Red Gum. At this stage I expect it to start to flower in May.

Geoff Manning

Ed. Note The Easter Senna (cassia or yellow pea)(pictured) that is flowering everywhere would have little nectar and possibly good pollen, according to Somerville.

### **From the Hives March 2020**

The hives at Mongogarrie were moved to a broad-leaf tea tree site at Codrington near Coraki. Although only two boxes high, they felt quite heavy during the move, which was put down to either having acquired some honey or the mover having weak muscles due to weeks of inactivity. Thankfully, it was the former, and some of those hives with extra from the tea tree have a full box to remove now.

The other hives at Afterlea were moved later, because the ute could not get up the hill they were on until the ground dried out. Most of those hives had no stores in the top box at all, and were very light. But inspection of the brood boxes after moving to Coraki showed that the queens had responded to the improving conditions by increasing the brood, and hive strength was looking good.



Melaleuca quinquinervia flowers usually white but red can be purchased

At Coraki, there has been at least one good flowering of the teatree; the aroma in a good flowering is quite overpowering. There were also swamp mahogany still flowering and the iron bark are very well budded. Maybe the iron bark will flower before the usual move on to the macadamias in July.

Brian

### **Another Old Recipe from Geoff**

The question has been much agitated, whether a hive should be rubbed internally with honey or odoriferous herbs, previously to the swarm being put into it. Some persons use bean stalks for the preparation of a hive, which is something similar to fumigating an apartment with asafetida, as being agreeable to the olfactory nerves of human beings. It is my decided opinion that there exists not any necessity for the preparation of the hive at all.—If the Bees take a dislike to the hive, it is not the odor of the honey of Hybla which will induce them to remain in it; but should the prejudice for the preparation of a hive exist strongly in the mind of any particular individual, I will recommend a liquid to him, which, singular as it may appear, will be found more gratifying to the Bee, and possessing a greater inducement to it to take possession of the hive, than all the odors, real or artificial, which can be administered—and this liquid is—human urine; if any thing will induce a swarm to remain in a hive, it is a copious sprinkling of this liquid—it is a cure for almost every distemper of the Bees—and HUHLEN, the celebrated German apiarian was right when he said, on

speaking of this liquid, that no person had any occasion to apply to an apothecary for a medicine for his Bees. – Robert Huish. London, 1820.

## **Coronavirus stings world's top honey makers with China beekeepers locked down**

BEIJING (Reuters) - Beekeepers in China, the world's top honey producer, are bracing for a bleak start to the key spring pollinating season as travel curbs aimed at containing a coronavirus outbreak keep them at home while their bees go without food for weeks.

Jue, a beekeeper from Xinjiang in northwest China, said he has not slept for days, worrying about his 300 beehives that are stuck in wooden boxes about 200 miles from where he has been confined due to the curbs.

"I am really anxious," said Jue, who wanted to be identified only by his family name. "If all my bees die, I will lose my entire year's income," the 55-year-old nomadic beekeeper added. Jue's pain is widely shared.



Beekeepers check a beehive at a farm in Longli county, Guizhou province, China March 15, 2018.

Bees missing the flowering phase of plants due to virus-related curbs, together with a drop in bee numbers, threatens to hurt the livelihood of China's 300,000 beekeepers as well as the output of honey and crops that rely on bees for pollination.

Acknowledging losses due to virus measures, the Apicultural Science Association of China has urged beekeepers to contact local authorities if they need to move or arrange feeding trips.

"You must not take your life, no matter what," it said after a beekeeper from China's southwestern Yunnan province, Liu Decheng, recently hanged himself.

China makes about 500,000 tonnes honey annually, or about a quarter of global output, making it the world's top producer.

It exports more than 100,000 tonnes to places like Europe and the United States.

But the outlook for production is grim this year.

Normally, beekeeper Jue would be tending to his bee colonies now to prepare them to pollinate apricots in Turpan in March, before they go on a flower-chasing journey starting from pear orchards of Korla, the No.2 city of Xinjiang, in spring to Ruoqiang to collect nectar from the famous red dates in May.

Jue, however, said that this time he was running a "devastating" three weeks behind schedule.

Like Jue, Zhang Miaoyan, from Jinhua in Zhejiang province south of Shanghai, is also struggling to reach her 120 cases of bees that have been starving for over 20 days.

"We beekeepers always say that we are in a bitter-sweet business. But this year, probably it is all bitterness," Zhang said, noting the virus had also put a dampener on sales during Lunar New Year period.

China's honey output has already been falling amid climate change, an ageing labor force and overuse of pesticides.

Jue, a 30-year veteran beekeeper, makes around 60,000–70,000 yuan (\$9,982) in good years doing a job that entails driving in the evening and sleeping in a tent in barren places.

"None of the young people want to do this job. There is too much hardship," Jue said.

Beijing has asked local governments to minimize disruptions to transportation of animal feed and livestock, and specifically mentioned bees. But implementation has been slow amid the severity of the outbreak.

The flu-like virus can be transmitted from person to person, and has killed more than 2,700 people and infected about 80,000, mainly in China.

Jue is still trying to coordinate with the local government to rescue his bees, while Zhang got a go-ahead from local authorities over the weekend to save her beehives.

But it might be too late.

"Wild osmanthus here are in their prime time now. You can smell the sweetness," said Zhang.

## **Services Directory**

Summary of available products and services

### NRABA Members

Paul Davey ( hive care)( Mullumbimby) 0491 608 272  
David Fairhall( queen cells, mated queens, nuclei) (Lismore) 0444 513 771  
Leland Eglington (Steel beehive stands) (Alstonville) 0455 555 136  
Brian Window (nuclei) (Lismore) 0466 790 736  
Ross Wood (mated queens, nuclei)(Grafton) 0421 817 710

### Not NRABA Members

Stephen Fowler ( nuclei, hives, all sorts of bee equipment, buys wax) (Alstonville) 0418 412 621

Merv McDonald (nuclei, hives, hive care)(Alstonville) 0439 166 016  
Rob Stone (mated queens, nuclei)(Casino) 0487 598 105

Corrections and additions welcome

### **An Item supplied by Geoff Manning**

The Count von Hruschka, having observed a naughty boy swinging round his head a lump of honeycomb tied to a piece of string and sprinkling the bystanders with the fine streams of honey thereby projected from the cells, conceived the notion of making the combs revolve round a movable axis in a kind of pail or cylinder of tin.

from: ON SOME OLD BEE-MASTERS. Day, RC The Gentleman's magazine; Feb 1890

### **March Field Day March 29th**

The March field day will be held on March 29th at the Rous Mill Hall, Rous Mill. commencing at 9.30 am and finishing before 1 pm. The activities planned include a demonstration of re-queening hives, where the old queen is found by looking through the hive, and a new queen is inserted in an introducing cage with a candy plug, and hive inspections for beginner beekeepers. Different ways to locate the queen will surely be discussed.

All beekeepers are welcome at the field day.

Morning tea will be available from 9.30am, and the program will start at 10 am with a welcome from our President. Lunch at about 12 midday will be BBQ sausages and mainly contributed salads, and will cost \$5. Plates, cups and utensils will be provided.

All attendees are asked to bring an item for morning tea or a salad for lunch.

So, remember to bring

- A morning tea item or salad
- Chairs ( your own may be more comfortable than those at the hall)
- Nametags

#### *Directions*

From Lismore, take the Bruxner Highway towards Ballina. At the top of the Goonellabah hill, turn right at the roundabout into Rous Road, heading toward Wardell. This road takes you past Tregeagle, over Marom Creek, and turns into Dalwood Road. At the next major intersection, turn right and stop at the hall a few hundred metres further on your left.

Look for the bee signs.

Be considerate when you park.

## MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 2020

Time 5 pm Monday 3rd February

Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

- Members present B Window, Greg Booth, Ray Smith
- Apologies Kevin Virgen, Paul Towner
- Minutes of Committee meeting January 6<sup>th</sup> 2020
- Matters Arising

-No action on Manager for accounts-

--No action taken on opening a new account at the Greater because of impending committee changes at AGM.

- Correspondence

-Acknowledgment from Peter Dickson-Smith to letter to Barbara Lukas; Peter Dickson-Smith and Neville McTernan are two foundation members of the club still around.

-Secretary has sent welcoming emails to new members.

- Reports

-Treasurer

-.Steritech and Andrew Ware have been paid

-January field day raffle \$26, lunch \$60 attendance 15; poor attendance perhaps due to heat.

- Agenda Business Items

(1) Field Day Program ( Tentative)

February 2<sup>nd</sup> (January) Rob Blair Pimlico

March 1<sup>st</sup> (February) Ruthven Hall. Forum on Living with SHB and AGM (after lunch)

March 29<sup>th</sup> (March) Rous Mill Hall Paul Towner

May 3<sup>rd</sup> (April) Greg Booth Dunoon

(2) Acceptance of New Members No new members

(3) Editor resignation

Secretary reported that Barry O'Connor was probably going to resign after the next newsletter because of work reasons. A new editor should be called for at the AGM.

(4) AGM

-Constitution was ready to be sent to the ABA for circulation to NRABA members. Because this change requires a Special Resolution, it should be circulated 21 days in advance.

-Nominations for positions were circulated to those present

(5) Letter to ABA.

There was discussion about a letter to the ABA requesting that the words "Membership Fee" be replaced by the word "Supplement" in the NRABA section of PSO, and that the ABA be asked to stop issuing \$5 memberships in the NRABA. The committee felt that the NRABA should be in control of what goes in to the PSO for the NRABA. Apparently, Jamie Mudge and Sheila Stokes arranged quite a few such \$5 memberships with the FNC club in December 2019 without the committee approval . There was strong support that \$5 is not the membership fee for the NRABA, just as \$0 was not a bit over a year ago.

(6) Brochure postponed, but will have to be organised for Primex.

- General Business None
- Next Meeting

Time 5pm 2nd March 2020 (subject to availability of members)

Place 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights.

Meeting finished at 6.10pm.