

BEEBIZ JANUARY 2022

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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Membership Officer and Editor Brian Window

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January Activity 30th January 2022

There will be no organised activity at the end of January because of the danger of spreading COVID to our club members and their families. With the expanding number of cases in the Northern Rivers, it is prudent to avoid gatherings.

Members are reminded that if they want advice or assistance to contact the helpful members listed in the newsletter.

Presidents Report

Hi Folks!

Firstly, welcome to the newly-elected committee members. I look forward to working with you in the coming year. We now have a full committee of seven, as per the constitution, representing different sorts of beekeepers. The next goal is to have the membership engage more with the club activities. Lately we have only had about a 10% attendance of members at field days. COVID probably contributed somewhat to that but not fully. To make the club viable we really need about 25% minimum of members engaging with the club activities. As president I would like to see the membership drive the club forward into 2022.

Cheers

Kevin Virgen

Secretary Report

It did not seem fair to ask a member to host a field day, with the possible result that COVID could be the outcome for the family. Also, it seemed highly likely that with the increasing unofficial lockdown mentality, the attendance of members would be very low.

Look forward to the end of February for the next field day. We are still looking for people to volunteer for field days through the year.

Brian

From the Hives

The hives went quite well out at Bungawalbyn, but the (incessant) wet weather has made access difficult at a number of times. The flowering after the iron barks was quite limited and the swamp mahogany did not



Flowering grey gum

tree sheds bark in late summer, and the resultant orange trunks are very attractive. It holds bud for two years, so when it finally flowers, the flowers are hidden to some extent by the new growth of leaves, Short budders like bloodwoods (coming soon) have a very showy flowering.

Brian

American Foul Brood

There have been a number of reports of AFB cases in postcodes in our vicinity (including one from the secretary). Members should be alert for the symptoms (look at the DPI website) when looking through brood boxes. Check all hives and double check hives that do not seem to be expanding.

If there are enough requests for a trip to Steritech (at which there is a backlog), one will be arranged. One pallet holds something like 40 bee boxes and contents. Let us know if you have any gear to go for sterilisation.

Toad Alert

Cane toads are everywhere at present. Hives should be on a stand or have a cage structure made with mesh in front of the hives to keep the toads away. The bees have to fly up as they leave the entrance to get above the front of the cage.

Beginner Lessons

Remember that the club is still offering to give beginners an introductory session on a beehive to get them started. Contact the secretary, or a helpful member near you.

have the usual burst. The hives are in the process of being reduced to a brood box and a super, ready for removal to a tea tree site near Coraki. Unfortunately, one weak hive was found to have AFB, and has been wiped out and shut down. Tracking back through my records, it seems probable that the hive had early AFB in the home apiary in Lismore, which was missed when it was inspected before being added to the out apiary.

Brian

Flowering Report

No flowering report this month, because our reporter broke his hip, playing table tennis. He is recovering well, with the assistance of a number of screws as well as a walking frame.

At the back of my house, a large grey gum (*euc. propinqua*) is flowering. This

Crop Spraying

Some members may have seen the recent report in the SMH about large scale bee poisoning by crop spraying in the almonds near Mildura. Thousands of hives are put there in early Spring, some from our area, to pollinate the almonds. Bees do quite well on almonds, provided growers adhere to the instructions on the chemical container; those dangerous to bees are so labelled, and the conditions of use include an instruction not to spray when bees are foraging. The cause of the bee kill is being investigated.

There are many crops here on the red soil in particular, such as macadamias and avocados, which are very attractive to bees, and growers, particularly inexperienced new growers, need to be reminded of the conditions of use for dangerous chemicals. Our club has produced a brochure for distribution to macadamia growers within range of your bees. To get copies of this for macadamias and other crops, contact the secretary.

History of Beekeeping in Our Area

(Geoff Manning has contributed an article about the early days of beekeeping in our area-- Ed.)

No flowering report this month. Since hip breaking I am not traveling about unless someone takes me. So I am telling some of the local beekeeping history so you can become better informed. I will test you all at the end of November.

The first major beekeeper hereabouts was Major Shalad. His major, sorry can't help it; claim to beekeeping fame was that he moved his bees by barge up the Bungawalbyn Creek to access the forest.

When Gilbert (Bert) Roots came back from the First World War he had to decide whether to take up lorrys or bees. He had some hives before he enlisted, and during the war he became skilled in motor lorrys. He must have decided that beekeeping would satisfy both occupations.

Initially based at New Italy, he soon moved to Woodburn because it was a port. In those days the honey was packed in sixty pound tins (four gallons). It would be loaded onto the steamer at Woodburn and sent to Sydney. This was also the way one traveled to Sydney, arriving overnight fresh and bushy tailed to do battle at the Wentworth hotel where each years NSW Apiarists' Association Annual meeting was held. They were pretty boisterous affairs apparently, fist fights being common. No doubt Queensbury Rules were followed.

Bert was able to get all his hives on the heath land for the winter flowering of the rich mixture of flora. At this time one avoided Jelly Bush/Manuka and tended to move out before it started flowering. Depending on the year the next move was to the Scrub country where macadamias are all the go now. At this time it was all dairy farms. Or it may have been to the early flowering Grey Ironbark in Bungawalbyn. This was valuable, as in those days the first choice honey into the Sydney market achieved a premium price.

The disadvantage was unless it was a Red Gum year as well, the bees would be knocked about by the lack of pollen in the Ironbark. Bees off the heath were well fed hitting the Ironbark flow, the trick then was to judge it correctly, take some honey and get the bees off the Ironbark and onto pollen somewhere so they could build again. This was usually the Scrub country but on occasion west of Lismore where there may have been Red Gum and/or ground flora for pollen. Once back in condition they would probably be off to the Richmond Range Forest.

Because Bert was early in the beekeeping game and a major player, he helped lay the foundation for us today. He employed a lot of people, possibly too many at times, but he seemed to regard it as a social service. Many of these employees later became prominent beekeepers in their own right.

In his day the flowering patterns were still to be worked out and also what species yielded nectar and/or pollen and how good the pollen was. So he could see what a slice of country might contain he would send the men off in the vehicle to the next site they were to work and he would walk through the bush to get a handle on how many of a useful species there were in range of the bees. Bert was an innovator, for which

reason he received the coveted Goodacre Award from the Australian honey bee industry. For instance he tried two queen hives in the thirties.

I mentioned 60lb tins used for bulk honey above. Petrol and kerosene also came in the same size tins. There was the temptation to use the petrol tins for honey, well cleaned of course. The fuel tins came in a wooden crate. This crate was an ideal size for bee hives, and many hives were made of them while they lasted in use. The timber was high quality and the Roots establishment still had many in service until the third generation sold out recently.

While the industry was moving ahead down here on the coast the Tablelands was also going ahead. Some of this was them coming down to make use of the heath lands and the Scrub country. They then went home for Yellow Box, also a pollen deficient tree.

More to come next time.

Geoff

NSW Apiarist's Activities

The local branch of the NSW Apiarist's arranged an interesting presentation by Dr Cooper Schouten of SCU on 10th December 2021. Cooper is Project Manager for the Bees for Sustainable Livelihoods Research Group at SCU He has experience working with beekeepers in the Indo-Pacific region.

Cooper discussed his experiences and management practices for beekeeping with Varroa and Tropilaelaps Mites. The Tropilaelaps mite (pictured) seems to be an even bigger problem than Varroa, with four times the reproduction rate, and spreading the same viruses. He showed a video of them scooting around on the combs.



There will be a talk by Dr Simon Williams from SCU at 7.30pm on 28th January at the Casino RSM.

Simon is a Honey Chemist at SCU. He undertook research into Leptospermum species for his PhD, in order to enhance Australian Leptospermum (Jelly Bush) species identification and activity quantification for Australian medicinal honey production.

All welcome. But notify David Fairhall (0444 513 771) if coming.

Recovery of Laying Worker Hives

An earlier segment emphasised the importance of checking the brood in a hive for disease and for eggs. It did not describe what to do if there were no eggs present, and the hive had reached the laying worker stage.



The clearest sign of a laying worker situation is a number of drone cells spread over the brood frame. Large areas of drone brood and little or no worker brood can also be due to a drone laying queen, and the two cases are treated differently.

Drone Laying Queen

The brood should be carefully inspected to see if there is a queen or if there are any worker cells among the drone cells. If there is a queen, the hive can be re-queened in the usual way using a caged queen after the original queen is eliminated



Laying Workers

Usually this situation occurs in a hive which has been unsuccessful in getting a new queen back from her mating flight. With no queen pheromones in the hive, a number of workers will start to lay, but of course being unmated, they can lay only unfertilised or drone eggs. The clearest signs of a laying worker situation, besides plenty of drone cells, are multiple eggs in the cells in the comb, often on the walls of the cell and not in the middle of the bottom of the cell.

If a queen is introduced in a cage, she will be killed on release because the bees think they have a queen. There are a number of recovery methods listed below.

- **Open Brood Method**

In this approach, a frames with open brood (eggs, larvae and capped) is taken from another hive, and placed into the brood box of the laying worker. This has to be done a number of times spaced about a week apart, until the hive finally draws a queen cell. This queen has to hatch and be successfully mated before the hive can be considered saved. This process will take some time, and the hive will be unproductive all this time. Inserting frames from other hives does also carry a disease risk.

- **Replacement Methods**

The replacement methods basically replace the laying worker hive in the apiary with a hive (nucleus or single box) with a known productive queen and good bee numbers. It could be productive within a short period.

The main concern when using the replacement method is to ensure that the bees from the laying worker hive do not kill your valuable queen when the hives are merged.

- If the hive is weak and there are other beehives in the apiary, it may be best to shut down the laying worker hive completely. The laying worker hive can be moved some meters away, and all the bees shaken off the frames on to the ground. The empty hive should be removed. The bees will make their way into the other hives; the new hive can be placed in the location the next day.
- If the new hive is in a matching box, it may be united with the laying worker hive by placing the brood boxes on top of each other with a sheet of newspaper with slits made with the hive tool between them. Put the queenright box on the bottom, with the queen excluder and paper on top. The bees will chew out the paper and become merged.
- If the new hive is in a nucleus, the frames should be removed from the laying worker brood box, the nucleus installed to one side with the queen over towards the wall. The bees from the laying worker frames should be shook off some metres away, and the best frames used to fill up the brood box. Sometimes a dusting with talc over the frames is used to create more confusion among the bees.

List of Helpful Members

Kevin Virgen	Federal	6684 9213	Brian Window	Lismore	0466 790 736
Ray Smith	McKees Hill	0427 734 954	Paul Towner	Rous Mill	0418 321 305
Geoff Manning	Bentley	0400 221 602	John Bull	North Casino	0414 842 903
David Fairhall	Richmond Hill	0444 513 771			

Services Directory

Summary of available products and services

NRABA Members

David Fairhall(queen cells, mated queens, nuclei) (Lismore) 0444 513 771

Brian Window (nuclei) (Lismore) 0466 790 736

Geoff Manning (hives) (Bentley) 0400 221 602

Ray Smith (nuclei) (Lismore) 0427 734 954

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

Ross Wood (mated queens, nuclei)(Grafton) 0421 817 710

Hives and Equipment for Sale

A retiring beekeeper in Ballina has for sale two hives (three box and two box), as well as assorted beekeeping equipment, some quite old. Contact is Nell Orchard Ph 0400 166 183

An experienced beekeeper has donated two small colonies to the club. One is already spoken for by a beginner. The second will be given to the first new beekeeper member who contacts the secretary. The hive is in Lismore.

MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE July 8th 2021

Time 3.00 pm Thursday 8th July 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

- Members present KV, GM, BW
- Apologies
- Minutes of Committee meeting June 10th 2021 (m BW s GM passed)
- Matters Arising

BW had been refunded money owed.

BW had welcomed Shane Odea

- Correspondence

- Reports

-Treasurer

June field day Expenses Sausages \$45 Groceries \$28.39

Income meals \$20. Raffle \$24 sale embedder \$16

-Editor BW proposed to get notice of meetings on the ABC and the local free newspapers

-Membership

Full John Millard, Nathalie James, Lenneke Serjeant, Elizabeth Essey

(approved m BW GM passed)

Agenda Business Items

(1) Field Day June 27th attendance affected by lockdown

(2) Field day July 25th cancelled

- General Business

-It was decided to cancel the next committee meeting in August

-BW accepted the treasurer role.

-BW and KV to send a thankyou letter to Flowhive

-BW and GM to offer personal tuition to new beekeepers

- Next Meeting

Time 3.00pm Thursday 2nd September 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights

Meeting closed 3.36pm

MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE October 14th 2021

Time 3.00 pm Thursday 14th October 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

- Members present BW, GM, KV
- Apologies RS
- Minutes of Committee meeting July 8th 2021 accepted (m GM s BW passed)
- Matters Arising
- Correspondence
- Reports

-Treasurer Income Sales DPI books \$55

Report accepted (m GM s BW passed)

Grant from ABA. Secretary to write requesting grant of \$1000 for possible expenses, eg bus trip, Steritech subsidy, extraction equipment (m GM s BW passed)

-Editor asked for more articles from club members

-Membership New members

Full Kevin Lamb, Trevor Graham, Ben Walder, Dion Lavis, Peter Johnstone, Geoffrey Uhrhane, Michelle Mcpherson, Sean Moore, Phillip Relf, Justin Marshall, Martin Stautner, David Finlay , Patricia Robinson Accepted as members (m GM s BW passed)

Associates Sam Rababi Accepted as associate (m GM s BW passed)

- Agenda Business Items
 - (3) Year program Field Days and AGM
 - No October meeting because of COVID uncertainty
 - November meeting perhaps at Colin Purkis farm and to include AGM
 - (4) ABA Forum BW to participate.
- Next Meeting

Time 10.30 am Thursday 11th November 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights

Meeting closed at 3.33pm