

BEEBIZ JULY 2021

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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Bee Course Saturday July 17 th and July Activity Sunday 25th July

Both cancelled because of COVID

Presidents Report

Hi! Folks,

The extension of social distancing rules in regional NSW severely limits our ability to hold field days. The committee has cancelled them until further notice. But we do like to plan ahead, and a few more volunteers to hold field days in the future would be appreciated,

Our treasurer Paul Towner has been unable to attend many committee meetings, due to the pressures of shift work and a young family, and has called it a day. His input at committee meetings will be missed. The committee wishes him well and thanks him for his services to the club.

We need more members to step up to the plate and volunteer for roles on the committee. Stay safe and looking forward to your support to keep the club viable through these challenging times.

Cheers Kevin Virgen

Secretary Report

The restrictions imposed by the pandemic make it difficult to do the same activities as the club has done in the past. In particular, we have had to cancel field days and the bee course, which are the main ways we teach new beekeepers. We are introducing more mini-field days for beginners, where they get together in a small group with experienced beekeepers to learn the bare minimum about practical beekeeping. If you are in that category, please contact one of the **Helpful Beekeepers** (listed later in the newsletter) near you to arrange a lesson.

Without meetings, the newsletter is probably the main benefit other than insurance to you from being in the club. It contains all the news of beekeeping activities that we hear about, and we try to cover on the beekeeping technique side, issues that differentiate the Northern Rivers from other beekeeping areas in the state, usually involving climate and floral resources. Generally, it is assumed that beekeepers can get most of the general information about beekeeping from books, or from the internet.

If anyone has any ideas on how to improve the newsletter, please let the Editor know. Or better still, volunteer for the job.

Brian

Report on Field Day 27th June

The field day at the home of Josephine and Brian Window in Lismore was after the lockdown was announced, and the attendance was low. But the social interaction was welcome.

Geoff Manning explained how professionals have adapted the design of bee boxes and other equipment to make the lifting and moving of hives more secure. He said it is best to have the lifting cleats rectangular, and mounted at the top of the box so that they can be used to support a super when tilted back.

Brian Window demonstrated using an electrical embedder and a spur wheel embedder to install foundation in wired frames. The spur wheel embedder is lower cost, and does a good job provided the wheel is kept hot by boiling water, and a sheet of newspaper is placed under the foundation to stop it sticking to the board.

Josephine and I were delighted to have the members who came.

Brian

From The Hives

An inspection of the apiary near Coraki was made after one of the rainy periods to check whether the stands were still level (they were) and the cattle had not knocked over any hives (they had not). However, one hive had the brood box knocked askew on the base, and had to be lifted to straighten it. The second super



was empty and the first super had some patches of capped honey in the middle four frames. The brood box was heavy, and was found to have three frames with patches of healthy capped brood surrounded by capped honey, in between seven frames which were full of capped honey. There were plenty of stores, even though all the honey above the excluder was extracted earlier. There were plenty of bees, mainly in the brood box. As winter approaches, the bees fill all the frames around the brood for insulation.

The only flowers in sight were fireweed, which is beneficial.

Brian

Plenty of fireweed at Geoff's hives



Banksia spinulosa

Flowering Report

Again not much has changed, although it appears that the *Melaleuca quinquenervia* has finished for the year. On or near the heathland one may be able to get some of the winter flowers. In particular *Banksia spinulosa*. It gives a nice honey which crystallises readily with a fine grain. The continued rain has been a problem washing out both nectar and pollen. So even if you are on or near Red Gum, *Eucalyptus tereticornis* and Grey Ironbark, *E paniculata* up until the time of writing they have been of limited value. Still there is plenty of time.

On occasion there can be some flora that whilst not of great import can be useful. Fireweed comes to mind. I have a sandy site not all that far from my place that has Coast Banksia, *Banksia integrifolia* on it in good quantity. It is not all that marvellous but bees winter better on this site compared to the adjoining sites that do not have any of this species.

I notice some white clover in a few places. It is excellent pollen, khaki in colour, but is out of its habitat here, being a Mediterranean plant, i.e. winter rainfall. Yes I know we have had some unusual winter rainfall, but what is likely to happen is the grass will beat it. If it can hang on for a month or two we may well get some great pollen. Particularly west of Lismore. More on it at a later date.

Geoff

Report on Professional Apiarist's Meeting on 25th June

The North Coast Apiarists had a presentation by Kalum Windsor, from Ace Ohlsson, Bangalow, the local Ecrotek supplier. He described various items of beekeeping equipment, and handed around samples for inspection. Members are invited to visit Kalum at the store, on the Lismore Road in Bangalow.

Brian

New Stock Resistant to Varroa?

For the first time in 15 years, new bee stock have been imported into Australia through the quarantine facility in Melbourne. The bees are from Holland, and have been bred to remove Varroa mite.

(try <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-16/bee-imports-to-protect-against-varroa-mite/100289356>)

Starting a Hive

Many people have in the last three years taken up beekeeping, often purchasing (or being given) a Flowhive without bees. It does not matter what type of hive they start with, but it does matter that these new beekeepers will abandon beekeeping if their experience is disappointing.

Why would it be disappointing? Beekeeping looks deceptively easy, and it is easy for beginners to make mistakes. They can often be given poor advice.

What experiences are the worst? Two that can be readily identified are catching the disease AFB in their brood box early on, and having the hive swarm early on, possibly leading to the hive becoming queenless and dying out. This article has some suggestions about minimising the chances of such disasters.

Minimising American Foul Brood.

Probably the worst experience is when a brood inspection of the hive reveals that they have the disease known as American Foul Brood, or AFB (look at the DPI website or any beekeeping book). As beginners, they usually recognise this late, when the signs are very obvious. The treatment for this disease is that the bees should all be killed and burnt, except for the hardware, which can be irradiated to kill the AFB organism. There are irradiation facilities in the eastern states at Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, run by Steritech. This is a very demoralising end for the beekeepers first hive.

It is a loss for any type of hive, but has more severe consequences for flow hives. The flow frames must be irradiated to eliminate the disease, but there is a limit to the number of times this can be done of about three. Most plastics become brittle with irradiation.

The disease is spread by the bees feeding contaminated honey to very young larvae. Bees are inveterate robbers, and the honey could have come from an infected hive or a dead hive in the vicinity, or even a bird feeder. There is not much that an individual can do to stop this occurring; obviously all beekeepers have a duty to minimise the disease in their hives and to follow good hygiene practices. If the contaminated honey is stored in the hive rather than consumed, the AFB may break out at any time in the future.

People purchasing bees and beehives have to trust the seller to do his best to avoid any chance of transferring AFB. If the bees develop AFB, where it came from is always uncertain. It can occur much later if there are spores trapped in stored honey, and it will not be clear where it came from.

Here are two approaches to starting off to reduce the chance of acquiring a potential source of infection.

Force the bees to use all the honey

This occurs naturally when the hive is set up without combs and foundation (as it is supplied by Flowhive). This can be done as follows.

1. If a purchased **package** (not commonly used on the North Coast) is used, the bees will use all the honey in their honey stomach in making wax to make the combs, eliminating AFB spores.

2 If a **caught swarm** is introduced into the box without any combs, the bees will use the honey they are carrying to manufacture the combs for the queen to lay in. It helps to leave the swarm in the catcher box for a day to eat some honey before installing in the brood box. But of course, only strong hives make decent swarms, so they are unlikely to have AFB, but the actual hiving will reduce the risk even further.

3 A “**shook swarm**” from an established hive can be used. In this case, the queen and the bees from half the brood frames of a strong established hive are shaken into a catcher box. The shaken frames are returned to the original brood box, and a caged queen or a cell introduced (or it can be left to make a new queen). The shook swarm can be installed in the new brood box like a caught swarm. Again, it would help to wait a day before installing to allow the bees to consume any honey.

(Ed Note. These procedures have to be used to stock Warre hives.)

Most beekeepers when following one of the recipes above to stock a hive would use full sheets of foundation in frames rather than frames with a waxed top bar or starter strip. This would be to improve the quality of the drawn frames ie with little drone brood comb and little cross bridging. It has been established over many years that beehives do not contract AFB through the use of recycled wax in the foundation.

Another point is that the new hive should be set up a few kilometres from the old hive, so that the bees do not return to their old home.

Cycle the purchased frames out

This can be done if the flow hive is stocked using a purchased nucleus. It takes a little time.

Cycling the purchased equipment out including any stored honey is best done using two boxes. The purchased nucleus of 4/5 frames is installed in the new brood box, and the full complement of frames made up by adding foundation frames, After these are drawn and the queen is laying in the new frames, another box of foundation frames should be placed on top above an excluder to be drawn. (if fully drawn clean combs are available, they can be used.)

When drawn, the frames in both boxes are rearranged so that the bought frames are in the second box immediately above the new frames the queen is laying in, with the other combs, which are all new, spaced on both sides. Obviously, the queen is in the bottom brood box below the excluder. After a month, all the brood in the top box will have hatched, and the bees will have started to fill the combs with honey. The bought frames can be removed at a later date and the honey extracted. They can probably be reused as honey frames safely, but the beekeeper may prefer to destroy them.

Most experienced beekeepers would not go to this sort of effort to clear out AFB spores. They would rely on the supplier, who is usually known to them. But in the case of a combination of flow hives and beginners, it is probably worthwhile.

Premature Swarming

One major disappointment for beginners who start off a flow hive occurs when their purchased nucleus builds up nicely into a full one box hive, but after they add the box of Flow frames, the hive swarms rather than expand into the new top box. Flowhive do suggest a number of approaches to encourage the bees to work there.

There is a well accepted practice used by commercial beekeepers to get the bees to operate on plastic foundation in a conventional hive. They coat the plastic foundation with beeswax by some means like

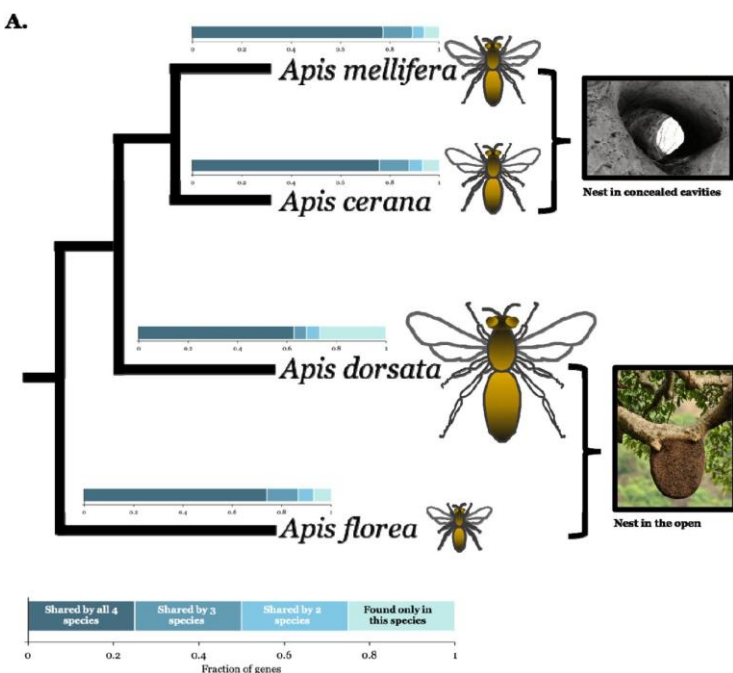
dipping, rolling or painting on molten wax. These procedures do not make a uniform coating of wax, but the dispersed particles of wax seem to be enough to encourage the bees to use it. The flow frames should have wax rolled or painted on to them to encourage the bees to use them. It would be important to use very clean wax, as any detritus may carry AFB spores. (try <https://beekeepinglikeagirl.com/how-to-get-bees-to-use-your-flowhive/>)

Biosecurity

Some news about the biosecurity course is imminent.

There is news about an interception of Dwarf Honey Bee (*Apis florea*) in Melbourne.

On 28th June, 2021, a nest of dwarf honey bees (*Apis florea*) were reported on a ship docked at the Port of Melbourne. This ship had originated in Taiwan and had docked in Brisbane and Port Kembla. The nest was destroyed and subsequent examination found no mites. The mite that *Apis florea* carries is *Euvarroa sinhai* and not either of *Varroa destructor* or *V. jacobsoni*. The length of the voyage makes it a reasonable likelihood that the nest was in poor health before arriving in Australian waters based upon the life stages and amount of resources present in the nest. Checks by staff at the three ports i.e. Brisbane, Port



Kembla and Melbourne have found no foraging *Apis florea*. Further checks will be made over coming weeks. So at this stage there is no evidence to suggest that the *Apis florea* destroyed did represent the full nest. From AHBC

Volunteers

The club requires more volunteers for the Committee, and we need new office bearers. The AGM will be postponed until the COVID restrictions are in the past. We also need people to host field days; our meetings have been quite small since COVID started, and just about any home could fit us in. Speak to Kevin or Brian.

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

Correction and additions welcome

Subscriptions are Due

Beekeepers are to join as full members of both the NRABA and the ABA, as many of the expenses of the NRABA are paid from the payment to the ABA. Associate membership is an honorary membership, intended for non-beekeepers (including family of members), and members of other ABA clubs. It does not carry voting rights in club affairs.

MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE June 10th 2021

Time 3.00 pm Thursday 10th June 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

- Members present BW, KV, GM, RS
- Apologies PT
- Minutes of Committee meeting May 6th 2021 (accepted m BW s RS passed)
- Matters Arising

BW reported giving a talk to Lismore Girl Guides

- Correspondence

Flowhive have donated the Flow hive used at Primex. KV and BW to work up a thank you letter to the company.

- Reports

-Treasurer

May field day Expenses bus \$244.83 Fuel \$44.67 embedders \$32

Ink cartridges \$179.93

PT to refund \$822.17 to BW (m KV s RS passed)

Report accepted (m BW s KV passed)

-Editor

-Membership

Shane O'Dea was accepted as a member (m BW s KV passed)

There were no new Associates

- Agenda Business Items

(1) Field Day June 6th at Beenleigh. Numbers were disappointing. Those who went enjoyed the day.

(2) Field day June 27th to be arranged by BW (equipment, embedding)

(3) Year program Field Days Possible AGM in July.

(4) Beekeeping course to be mapped out by BW similar to what the club has provided in the past. (Maximum 12 students on 3 Saturday mornings)

(5) Primex Display was very successful, with many brochures distributed. The flow hive and the bees in a glass case (supplied by GM) were the main attractions.

(6) Biosecurity course There seemed to be a good response to the expression of interest in a Biosecurity Course.

(7) Membership rates to stay the same for 2021=2022 (m RS s GM Passed)

- General Business

- Next Meeting

Time 3.00pm Thursday 8th July 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights

Finish 4.03 pm