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From the President

Hello all. Thanks to Peter and Paula for the venue last meeting. It was unlucky for the host to find the dreaded problems in the hives that were inspected. However, it was very good education for newcomers to get a look at a very big problem that affects bees and beekeepers. So I guess it was good experience for you and thanks to Merv for his presentation and for demonstrating how to use an AFB test kit.

We did have a minor incident from a bee sting and I would like to stress the importance of people wearing the protective clothing that is provided by the club, particularly in isolated areas. As a club we shouldn't be complacent and we do have a sign that alerts people not to go near the bees without appropriate attire.

So, next meeting we travel to the Tabulam district. Hoping for some cooler weather. See you all there.

Tony

Last Meeting

Our first meeting for the year was held at the Slaney residence, Smiths Creek. Everyone in attendance was keen for a catch up after the Christmas break.

The day included both a general meeting and a committee meeting. Hives were inspected on the day. Those interested in Flow Hives got off to an early start, and this was well attended.

Unfortunately, the newsletter editor got caught up talking and forgot to take some photos. This is a good point to remind everyone that photos and other contributions for the newsletter are always appreciated.

Thanks to the Slaneys for hosting the meeting and to all those who helped out with the day. The culinary feast was great, as usual.

From The Hives – February

The hive that was being attacked by small hive beetle (SHB) in the January report has survived. The queen was a new queen, not an old one, and it is clear now that the hive had swarmed, leaving insufficient bees to protect the area of comb, allowing the beetles to move in. The removal of the two supers of honey for cleaning on another hive was the correct treatment; four brood frames with large amounts of pollen were also removed, and replaced by stickies (foundation would have been better).

Conditions after swarming can heavily favour a beetle attack, as so many bees can go that there are not enough left to protect the hive. It is a problem with small hives and large hives. The preventative steps are the same; before swarming, make sure they have plenty of room to head off swarming, and after swarming, reduce the area the bees have to defend.

Another problem that arose this month is that one hive was found to have brood above the excluder. The queen was located in the top three supers, and put below the excluder in the brood box with as

many brood frames as could be accommodated. It is probable that the hive had made a new queen through supersedure, and that she had gone through the excluder after mating while she was quite slim. But it could be due to a faulty excluder, so this was changed and the old one taken away to be checked.

Excluders of the wire type can be faulty either through faulty manufacture or damage. Be very wary if using second-hand equipment. The accepted spacing is 4.22mm-4.3mm. An easy way to check this is to use the shank of an 11/64 inch drill bit (4.36mm); try all the spacings. Bad dings are obvious. It is very easy to miss manufacturing errors (not uncommon) where the gap is too big along the entire length. The drill will often pass through, and the beekeeper has to decide which excluders to keep. Certainly, those where the drill is really sloppy should be replaced or repaired in some reliable way (?).



Checking a Queen Excluder with a Drill Bit

It is generally accepted that beekeepers should requeen their hives every year (migratory) or every two years (stationary). This is to minimise the risk of swarming, which reduces the honey yield and increases the risk of the hive becoming queen-less unknown to the beekeeper. Queens and cells can be purchased from many suppliers (see a copy of the ABK), but locally adapted queens are usually preferred. If you require queens or cells, talk to David Fairhall (Lismore 6624 8739), Robert Stone

(Ruthven 6683 2222), or Ross Wood (Grafton 0421 817 710) to ascertain breeding, price and availability.

Brian

February Flowering

I think it worthwhile for me to mention that these days I don't go looking at the floral prospects to any extent.

So my comments here refer only to the Richmond Valley, even though on the Clarence there may be something important happening, such as a spotted gum flowering.

The next major possibility is ti, or tea tree or paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*). Some old timers, and our indigenous folk, called it Bellbowrie, the rain tree.

This leads to one of its two faults. It has good pollen and usually at least some nectar, which stimulate the queen to lay. Then it cuts off. Unless there are other species to take up the slack at that time, the brood is likely to be short of protein. Coupled with that, the flowering coincides with the wet season (usually), and so the effective flowering burst may be cut even shorter. This may be repeated many times and applies to support species such as swamp mahogany. The result is poorly fed adults which will have a short life span. If the hive cannot get quality pollen to feed a few rounds of brood before spring, the hive may go backwards early in the season.

This rain during flowering is the reason that yields are higher around Kempsey. It has a more year-round rain pattern.

Geoff

New Equipment

Don't forget that Stephen and Janet Fowler carry most common beekeeping equipment, including a range of manual and electric extractors. They also carry a range of jars and pots for honey sales.

Remember that you can contact Stephen or Janet a week or two before the next meeting and they'll bring your gear along to the meeting. The

Equipment Officer contact details are at the front of the newsletter.

Robert Stone has pre-assembled and wired frames for sale. Please contact Robert on 6683 2222 for further information.

Hives and Nuclei

Please contact Stephen Fowler if you are able to supply hives and nuclei to other club members.

Steritech

A consignment of bee equipment on pallets will go to Steritech at the end of February. The pallets will be assembled from 9am on Saturday 25 February. They will be delivered to Steritech on Monday 27 February and returned on Monday 6 March (probably!). The equipment can then be collected at 9am on Tuesday 7 March.

The assembly and collection points have changed since the last shipment. Andrew Ware has moved to a property in Caniaba, and has agreed to let us assemble and disassemble the pallets there. The address is 93 Spring Grove Road, Caniaba, and can be reached by going straight at the roundabout in Caniaba, winding down the hill, and continuing on the bitumen, past the left-hand turn towards Clovass. Spring Grove Road starts at this junction, and the Ware home is 1km further on, on the left. The number 93 is on the mailbox.

The costs will be divided according to the number of full-depth boxes, and have in the past been about \$13 per box, eight or 10-frame. The preferred units are three or four-deck hives, i.e. a base, three or four supers and a migratory lid, strapped with an Emlok. No landing boards above 50mm wide allowed. Loose bases, boxes, lids, etc, can be accommodated. There is room for a limited number of telescopic lids. Hive designs other than eight and 10-frame Langstroth may be accommodated by prior arrangement.

The contents of the boxes are up to the owner, but can include clearer boards, excluders, lids, bases, etc, as well as frames and stickies. They must not contain any honey other than the small amount in stickies, and no live creatures. When transported

to the assembly site, all gear must be wrapped so that bees cannot get in.

Other beekeepers are welcome. If a club member cannot make the assembly time, Brian will accept by arrangement small amounts of properly secured equipment at his house.

Further inquiries to Brian Window 6624 2864 or Stephen Fowler 6622 8534.

Brian

The Great Cake Bake Off

As you may be aware, this year the Colonel Pulling Competition (CPC) will be held in Ballina on Sunday 21 May. Part of the CPC is a honey cake competition.

The rules are simple:

1. One cake per club;
2. The cake must contain honey;
3. A copy of the recipe must be provided.

What's more, we only have to transport our entry to Ballina.

We plan to have a trial run (or two) beforehand. The first trial will be at Peter Laughton's meeting on Sunday 26 February. So all of the lovely cooks in the club, ladies and gentlemen, get cooking!

Bring your entry along, preferably on a plastic plate so that they all look similar, and we are not judging the plate decoration. I will organise judges and a prize for the winning entry.

Anyone entering, please let me know either by email or phone, so I have an indication of numbers. Contact details are at the front of the newsletter.

Shirley

Colonel Pulling Competition Honey Entries

Please remember that samples of light, medium (amber) and dark honey are required for the CPC. Entries consist of three 500g jars of each, and one full-depth comb (frame).

If club members could start putting them aside now, it will save us searching at the last minute for entries.

Update – Townsville Varroa Mite Incursion

There have been no further detections of Asian honey bees in the Townsville area since the tenth nest was destroyed in November 2016. Every street within a 10km radius of where Varroa mite was found has now been surveyed.

The surveillance program is continuing.

Battle Against Small Hive Beetle

Dr Diana Leemon, from Queensland's Department of Agriculture, is warning beekeepers to stay alert for small hive beetles (*Aethina tumida*), following a hot start to the year. When it's warm, the "bees hang outside the hive to help cool it and that's an opportunity, it appears, for the beetles to take advantage and run around and lay a lot of eggs," Dr Leemon told the ABC. She is leading a research team who are developing a synthetic lure and trap for the beetle, with field test results expected in mid-2017.

For the full report:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-24/researchers-and-farmers-battle-bee-pest/8207920>

An Interesting Way to Move Bees

An article appeared on the ABC News website recently about a Tasmanian beekeeper who airlifted beehives onto leatherwood using a helicopter. Access to the sites had been cut off by flooding that washed a bridge away.

The story, including some video footage of the move, can be found at the link below:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-22/tasmanian-bee-hives-get-airlift-to-beat-flood-damage/8200238>

Upcoming Events

26 February – NRABA monthly meeting, Tabulam

18-19 May – NSW Apiarists' Association Inc. Conference, Ballina

21 May – Colonel Pulling Competition and AGM of the ABA, Ballina

Newsletter Submissions

Thank you to all members who contributed to the newsletter. It really is appreciated.

Newsletter submissions can be emailed to Newsletter.NRABA@bigpond.com by the 10th of each month. Photos are always appreciated.

Next Meeting – 26 February, 2017

The next meeting will be held at the home of Peter and Lyn Laughton, Tabulam.

Location: 'Undilla', 11610 Clarence Way, Tabulam, NSW 2469.

Time: 9.30am Flow Hive meeting; 10am for a 10.30am group meeting.

Directions: From Casino, follow the Bruxner Highway towards Tabulam for about 50km. Turn left onto Clarence Way (Old Grafton Road – the road sign says Baryulgil Grafton). Follow the gravel road for about 2.5km. The Laughton property is on the left. The property name 'Undilla' is on a sign on the gate.

Bee meeting signage will be in place.

Transport: Personal transport.

Activities: Hives will be inspected on the day.

What to bring: Please bring the following items:

- Either a morning tea item or a salad to share;
- Raffle items are always appreciated;
- \$5 per head for morning tea/lunch;
- Beekeeping protective equipment;
- Chairs.