

FRANKLIN BEEKEEPERS CLUB NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2011

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President's report

The annual nightclass at Pukekohe High School has now finished but with significantly fewer numbers than last year. However eight people have decided to become club members and we welcome them. The practical days for the class this year were exercises not only in beekeeping but also weather dodging; we only just made it.

We are approaching the swarming season and as the local council has my contact details, members of the public may phone me to have swarms removed. In the past I would call a club member who lives close by to see if they would collect the bees and thereby gain a very inexpensive new colony. If you are interested in swarm collection and obtaining additional bees please let me know so I can have you on my contact list for swarm collection.

September's Sunday meeting was, rather surprisingly, well attended - considering the conditions. In spite of the particularly unpleasant weather, there were ten members who were introduced to Glen McGrath of Kiwi Beekeeping Ltd who operates out of Pukekohe, www.kiwibeekeeping.co.nz.

Glen demonstrated a hive base constructed largely of aluminium which in its principal form was for pollen collection, but additionally could provide feeding features and varroa control. The various functions are achieved using slide in/slide out trays that perform the various operations. This product is still in development but currently there about 50 of these in the field and results so far are encouraging. If anyone is interested, contact Glen on (09) 239 1771 or go to his web address, above.

Make sure you are watching your hives now we are coming into spring. Check mite numbers and assess treatment requirements remembering that any control measures used must be done exactly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and which often require removal before honey supers are on the hives.

Beekeeping Book (Matherson): The club has several copies of this important manual for sale at \$40.00 each. Contact me or Secretary Graham (after November 1st) for a copy. In this fully revised work, Andrew has teamed up with Murray Reid to produce this 4th edition. Andrew Matherson's book was first published in 1984 and has been regarded as the authoritative reference for New Zealand beekeepers. Peter

Hivemasters Report

In the hives the last few months, we have had some hives die out and now left with 3 hives. 2 of which are strong, and 1 is weak, but doing ok.

This month we had our club days rained off, but the next weekend managed to get our night school students together and went through the hives. The Queens were located and everyone was impressed to get a first-hand look.

This month, you will start to find your bees out foraging, and bee numbers will be getting stronger.

Varroa Strips should now be in, or very close to being put in. Make sure your honey frames are cleaned, and any burr comb removed to make a nicer honey super. Keep an eye out for swarm queen cells and in particular swarms. Matt

Beekeeping with a Top-Bar Hive



Backyard beekeepers are needed to support the honey bee population. Hobbyists, who are not concerned with maximum honey production, can use a natural, sustainable, chemical-free approach to caring for happy, healthy bees to pollinate your fruit and veges. These organic methods are less invasive, reducing stress and encouraging strong immunity and health of the bees. Using local swarms to start a colony also encourages genetic diversity and

adaptation for better bee survival.

I firmly believe that this is the best way for **hobbyists** to keep bees.

Natural vs. commercial Beekeeping



Getting started with bees can be expensive if you use conventional hives consisting of rectangular wooden boxes containing removable wooden frames holding preformed foundation. However there is a simpler and more natural option - top-bar hives.

Pluses of a Top Bar Hive:

Not having to lug heavy boxes around.
Cheap and easy to make. You don't need Frames, Foundation, Queen excluders, or extra honey boxes, or even an Extractor. You can make a top-bar hive yourself,

or buy one already made. In a top-bar hive, the bees are allowed to build their wax comb from wooden top-bars, which simply rest across the top of the box that forms the hive. Bees naturally build comb in deep, catenary curves, (see bottom photo), but the use of preformed foundation inside rectangular frames of conventional hives forces bees to build comb according to human requirements, not theirs. Bees prefer to adjust the size of cells according to their needs. This is also thought to help with varroa management.

Just an observation, I do regular varroa counts with a sticky board and so far we have NO varroa

Top-bar Hive Design



Beekeeping does not have to be complicated. Top-bar beekeeping requires only one of the simple, versatile hives shown here and a sharp knife.

The hive boxes are usually 40 to 48 inches long. Modern top-bar hives are designed with sloping sides. The trapezoidal shape is close to the natural shape of the comb. This shaped box helps to eliminate attachment of the natural comb to the

sides of the hive. Most people build a window for observation, which is good education for the kids too and a mesh bottom can be built in, so as to make it easier to monitor varroa mite.

For your own protection, wear a veil and close-fitting gloves. You can use a smoker to calm the bees when you open the hive to inspect bees or harvest honey, or you can use a hand-held spray bottle containing water.

Managing a Top-bar Hive



In many ways, managing a top-bar hive is easier than managing a framed hive, but you cannot ignore the bees completely. To get started, you can capture a swarm and put it in the hive or buy a nucleus of bees from a local apiary. Sometimes bees will naturally swarm to an empty top-bar hive and populate it.

To attract a swarm to the hive, put it out during the swarming season, Baiting the hive with a few drops of lemon grass oil will improve your chances of attracting a swarm.

Harvesting honey is simple: Take one comb at a time, cut it from the bar and replace the bar for the bees to build more comb. Cut up the honeycomb and store in sealed containers. or you can crush and strain the honey leaving you with some lovely beeswax as well. Take only a few bars of honey in summer, leaving a surplus for winter. Then harvest more the following spring after winter is over.

Top-Bar Hive links

Top bar plans, (free) Barefoot Beekeeper's TBH Plans

Websites: www.biobees.com

Book: The Barefoot Beekeeper by Phil Chandler.

Forum: <http://www.biobees.com/forum/index.php>

Thanks for reading, and if you need any more info or would like to have a look at my setup, please contact me at graham@thewheelers.co.nz

What research is going on for our bees in NZ?

Plant and Food Research.

- VSH queens have gone out on trial to 6 beekeepers. Assessment for VSH levels , production , temperament etc of these queens will be undertaken during this next season. Negotiations are underway with Bee Breeders re the management of the rest of the VSH population.
- Investigation into ways to make organic varroa controls more effective in New Zealand.
- Pollination manual. This will be written in plain language that will clearly lay out the relationship between bees and their crops and how growers can best manage that relationship to ensure good crop outcomes and maintain healthy bee populations.

Landcare Research

“Flowers for Healthy bees in times of Pollen dearth”

An SFF project running 2010-2013 with both NBA and BIG Federated Farmers involvement.

The objectives are to:

- Extend the plant database
- Put together local community plant shortlists
- Get pollen profiles of short listed plants
- Conduct tests of high protein plants
- Conduct public workshops, attend field days and conferences to distribute information gained from research

Key outcomes:

- Farmers will have more reliable pollination services.
- Bee health, population sizes, and disease/pest resistance will improve
- Beekeeping and farming will be more profitable and sustainable and can claim environmental benefits for Farm Quality Assurance Schemes with native plantings for bees.

Institute of Environmental Science and Research

Looking at microbiological loadings of honeybees.

Institute for Innovation in Biotechnology

Interested in the dihydroxyacetone and methyglyoxal concentrations in stored manuka honeys.

Manuka Research Partnership

Aim of the MRP is to develop knowledge to produce Manuka plantations capable of greater yields of honey suitable for medicinal products.

Lincoln University

Bee behaviour, foraging ecology, bees in the agricultural landscape.

University of Otago

Queen retinue pheromone: royal manipulation of worker bee brain and behaviour, the genetics of polyphenisms in bees.

GNS Science

Adulteration of honey with sugar.

Authentication – identification of honeys of foreign origin.

Scion (NZ Forest Research Institute Ltd)

Scion have shown interest in collaborating with Trees for Bees with regard to including good pollen producing plants (for bees) in the functional forests for the future.

Oritain

Scientific proof of country (and even region) of origin of food through chemical and isotopic signatures. Database is being developed from honey samples.

Catalyst R & D

Investigation into Plant Alkaloids.

Six Keys to Successful Beekeeping

Successful beekeepers need to know:

1. Proper Nutrition
 - Proper Nutrition
 - Proper Queens
 - Proper Equipment
 - Proper Population Dynamics
 - Proper Control of Diseases & Pests
 - Proper Knowledge
1. Proper nutrition
 - Means access to food (year-round)!
 - Good Pollen and Nectar sources
 - Starvation is the main cause of winter losses not cold
 - Nectar provides the carbohydrates for energy
 - Pollen provides the protein for building
 - High protein pollen (> 20%) → longevity & amount of brood reared
(Also makes bees resistant to viruses!)
 - Annual requirements for one hive are 60-80 kg honey and 25-55 kg pollen
 - Beekeepers may need to feed or shift hives
 - Important to know your local nectar and pollen plants
2. Proper Queens!
 - You don't want bees that sting you!
 - Genetics is important (*i.e. gentleness, honey gathering ability, resistance to disease, etc*)
 - Physical condition of queens is more important than the genetics!
 - The queen must be well reared (1-day old grub, well finished, large cells, 3 abdominal segments below wing, etc)
 - Properly mated (at least with 13.2 drones!)
 - Pheromone production must be high
 - Queens are best when young (re-queen every year, especially now with varroa)
3. Proper Equipment
 - Must be used correctly!
 - Must have the Bee space (6-9 mm)
 - Mouse-proof (< 8 mm)

- Lids and feeders must not leak
 - Don't poison your bees with tanalised timber!
 - Maximise worker brood for varroa control
(Wooden frames V's plastic frames?)
 - Buy old equipment V's building new?
4. Proper Population Dynamics
 - Strong hives produce the most honey!
 - Also must achieve a balanced population in the hive;
(Look at Ratios: open/sealed brood, young/forager bees, etc)
(Also brood produces a bee pheromone!)
 - Achieve the maximum number of foragers at the start of the main honey flow
 - Give queens plenty of room to achieve maximum bee numbers (early on)
(Don't have queens stop/start laying!)
 - Super early to give bees plenty of room to store crop
(Empty comb produces a bee pheromone!)
 - Takes a lot of skill!
 5. Proper Control of Diseases & Pests
 - Know what diseases look like
(Parasitic mite syndrome V's American Foulbrood)
 - I believe viruses are the silent killer!
 - Cull out frames with heavy viral infections
 - Early detection is the key!
 - No one knows everything about beekeeping!
 - Learn from your mistakes!
 - You must be continuing learning about bees
 - Try to find a mentor (a experienced beekeeper)
 - Spend a day with a commercial beekeeper
 - Join organisations like the NBA and/or beekeeping clubs
 - Attend courses
 - Read beekeeping magazines & books
 - Be careful about what you read on the internet!
 - Network with other beekeepers

Hives wanted

The club has been contacted by several people wanting hives placed on their properties, and they are:-
Shirley Gilzean has 1.5 acres at Drury Hills, phone 09 9807316 for more details.
David Philips of Pokeno has about 5000 trees and bushes on a 45 acre organic orchard and is looking for bees. If interested call Paul Leck on 021 02489279 for more details.
Chris Clark has an avocado orchard and wants hives through October, phone 09 2392008 for details.

Also Bob Tom of Waiau Pa has a 460 acre dairy farm with diverse plantings including clover and natives, and is interested in having hives on his property. If anyone is interested in placing hives phone him on 09 2321944 for more details. Also, Jim who works at Middlemore Hospital is looking for a beekeeper in the Pukekohe area who is willing to supply a bottle of about 50 - 70 worker bees per week for bee-sting treatments. If anyone can help, please phone 021 968632 for more details.

Trees for Bees

Some time ago Federated Farmers in conjunction with several interested parties put together a factsheet listing native and non-native trees and shrubs that provide good pollen and nectar sources for bees. See www.fedfarm.org.nz/ourcampaigns. This site provides useful information on flowering months as well as maximum heights of the plants. Bee health is of great concern as in terms of the foods we eat, about one third of the calories and three quarters of the diversity rely on bees for pollination.

Nucs for sale

Nucs for sale, \$90 plus GST phone Peter Smith at 078263380 or email honeybeenz@yahoo.co.nz or honeybeep@slingshot.co.nz

Dates to Remember

Sunday October 9th, 2011

Venue: At the club hives.

Program: 10.00 am Cuppa and discussion, 10.30 open the hives.

Sunday November 13th 2011

Venue: At the club hives.

Program: 10.00 am Cuppa and discussion, 10.30 open the hives.

Venue at Cub Hives: Rapid Rural 733 on State Highway 22, Paerata. Travelling east along SH22 (from Drury), it is on the left hand side: travelling west (from Puke), it's on the right.

At 733 there is a red letterbox and a driveway that forks- left goes to a house, take the right that travels 100m past old sheds and terminates at a turntable by a disused concrete-block cow-shed. Adjacent to this shed is the apiary site. When visiting the site, please ensure you park on the old turntable, taking care that the driveway is kept clear. **WHEN LEAVING THE SITE, TAKE**

GREAT CARE JOINING THE TRAFFIC, VEHICLES APPROACHING FROM THE RIGHT ARE NOT THAT EASY TO SEE.