



Beekeepers Association of the ACT

PO Box 1482, Woden, ACT, 2606

Newsletter of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT Incorporated

Meetings of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT Inc are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7.30 pm at the CIT, Heysen Street, Weston in Building A

May 2000

President's Note

Firstly, our Editor, Peter Macnicol has been taken ill. Thankfully, Paul Hooper has offered his services to hold the fort in Peter's absence. We wish Peter a speedy recovery.

Secondly, at our last meeting it was brought to our attention by one of our members that there had been an outbreak of Varroa in New Zealand. As this place is close to my heart I phoned my folks in Dunedin for more information. Dad sent some news clippings from the Otago Daily Times to put in the newsletter.

At the end of this month I plan to attend the NSW Apiaries State Conference at Tamworth, as I did last year.

This month's guest speaker will be Colin Marshall from *Brew Your Own* in Kambah. So come along and learn how to brew your own.

PS. Hope your Autumn shutdown went well.

David Lillis

April Meeting

The new meeting format was trialled at the April meeting with some success. At 7.30pm the business/committee meeting commenced and administrative subjects were dealt with. Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed, correspondence received and accepted, monthly Treasurer's report presented, and the new meeting format formally accepted. Electronic delivery of the Newsletter was discussed, along with the advertising potential in the Newsletter and the opportunity to promote the Association through the 2CN community website. Cec Mercer was thanked for his recent demonstration of shutting down hives for winter.

At 8.00pm the general/open forum meeting opened with Paul Hooper reporting the just-received notification of veroa infestation in New Zealand. Dick Johnson reported on difficulties he was currently experiencing with the hiving of feral colonies, leading to general discussion on possible remedies. Cec Mercer discussed his recommendations for winter shutdown (see details below). The meeting was concluded by an informative presentation by Robert Gardiner in which he showed slides of the beekeeping side of the recent trip he and Margaret took to Britain.

What we saw:

Judges at work and play.

Beekeepers at play in Scotland's Larder (the best dining they found there).

Varroa strip insertions.

"Weatherboard" hives from Scotland to Sussex.

The Hive Honey Shop in Battersea, London.

What we didn't see:

The Empty Super entry - Robert thought he forgot to take his camera to the National Honey Show, London. Sure enough, in his bag all along.

The stings after varroa strip insertions. Say after me, smoke settles bees, no smoke....

As usual, after the official meeting closure, informal discussions continued over coffee and, on this occasion, mead was available for tasting.

May Meeting

Our May meeting will be held on 10th May at CIT Weston at 7.30 p.m. During the open forum there will be a presentation by a visiting speaker, Colin Marshall, on "**Brewing Your Own**". This presentation will be based around home brewing of beer, leading to discussion of the brewing of mead.

Autumn Shutdown

Cec Mercer's tips for the Autumn shutdown:

At the last honey flow you should check all hives for disease. Stickies can be left on top of a full super which is, in turn, on top of the brood box. All unsealed honey should be extracted.

Empty stickies can be placed as the first and last frames of the super to insulate the hive over Winter.

A plastic sheet should be placed above either the super or the box of stickies, depending on hive strength, to further insulate the cluster over Winter.

This sheet should have a ventilation cut-out longitudinally above the central half of the gap between the two middle frames. The sheet is placed directly on top of the frames' top bars and leaves 5cm ventilation gaps over the ends of the frames.

Varroa Strikes New Zealand

Since the initial notification disseminated on the Internet and raised at our April meeting, the discovery of the **Varroa mite** (*Varroa jacobsoni*) in New Zealand has been publicised in the NZ Press and international beekeeper Internet newsgroups.

The Otago Daily Times lead story on April 14th included the following description of the problem:

THE VARROA MITE

- *Varroa jacobsoni* is a small, reddish-oval mite 1mm-2mm long, which is found on the outside of adult honey bees. It can be seen with the naked eye. It is also visible on honey bee pupae, and appears as a dark reddish-brown dot. The mite does not affect humans and has no other host other than the honey bee.
- The mite originated in Eastern Asia and spread into Europe via Russia. Since the 1980s it has been carried into most other beekeeping regions of the world, killing thousands of colonies.
- The mite lives by feeding on bee pupae. Infected pupae fail to survive, or may be born with deformed wings. Eventually, the mite population increases to a point where all the bees in the hive die. This can take up to three years from the original infection.
- The mite spreads naturally from hive to hive by bee contact. The rapid spread of the mite worldwide is due to human activities. Beekeepers shift their hives long distances to pollinate crops, or gather honey.
- New Zealand has prohibited the import of live bees for the past 40 years. New Zealand is a major exporter of live bees and queens to the northern hemisphere. This annual \$1.8 million trade is threatened by the discovery of the Varroa mite.

WHAT BEEKEEPERS SHOULD LOOK FOR ON HIVES

Infested hives may show the following signs:

- Unexpectedly low bee numbers.
- A patchy pattern on bee frames as would be seen with a heavy sacbrood infestation.
- Small reddish-brown mites on the bodies of bees, and on uncapped drone pupae.
- Weak crawling bees.
- Sudden hive crashes.

Latest NZ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Media Release

2 May 2000

Varroa in feral bees a challenge

MAF and the National Beekeepers Association agree that the probability that varroa is present in feral bees is one of the technically challenging issues faced when the control options are being considered.

A swarm of feral bees found in a wall of a beekeeping equipment factory within the infected zone has been shown to be infected with varroa.

“The issue of our ability to control varroa in feral bees will need to be carefully considered when control options are being evaluated,” said Dr Stone. “From the outset we have assumed that the distribution of varroa in registered hives, the ones we can easily locate and test, would reflect distribution in other bee populations, including unregistered hives and feral bees. This is one

of the issues that makes this operation particularly difficult.”

“We have some evidence of the validity of that assumption, and intend to do further sampling from feral bees in the cluster areas. This may provide us with information regarding whether spread is occurring by natural means or by beekeeping activities.”

Seven new infected places have been identified in the Infected Zone (cumulative total now 103), owned by three new beekeepers (cumulative total 32). Two of the newly identified beekeepers are hobbyists with a single site each.

The movement permit free-phone operation (800 109 383) has begun work with 56 requests for permits received yesterday, and the first permits for movements have been issued under the movement restrictions reviewed on Friday evening.

Dr Stone said MAF is emphasising that there is no charge for testing of hives for varroa. Dr Stone said that MAF has received reports from beekeepers suggesting that MAF is charging \$65 for testing. It is possible that beekeepers have been confused by the recent mailout of invoices by the National Beekeeping Association collecting levies under the American Foulbrood Pest Management Strategy.

23,673 hives on 1,290 apiaries have been inspected.

Information on the varroa mite is available on the MAF website.



Adult female varroa mite on a developing worker bee.
(In colour, for Internet recipients)

Light at the End of the Tunnel

Latest developments in varroa control discussed on the Internet discussion group BEE-L gives hope:

Vita (Europe) Ltd announced at the Stoneleigh Convention that they are introducing Pherovar in November. This is a pheromone (delivered in a small plastic plug which is pinned in the hive) which stops varroa entering cells to breed. Apparently, they are also working on controlling AFB with a bacterium which attacks it.

I have also learnt recently that research is underway to control varroa with pathogenic fungi; apparently other types of mites on crops grown in glasshouses are well controlled in this way at present and there seems to be no reason why varroa could not be similarly controlled.

There seems to light at the end of the tunnel!

**Save the Earth! Reduce Greenhouse Gasses!
 Preserve our forests! Protect our waterways!
 Keep our Association costs down! Receive our
 Newsletter in Living Colour!**

How can I do all these things at the same time, and reduce clutter in my own home as well?

Be the first to receive the latest Newsletter, even before it is delivered to the Post Office for mailing. Take delivery of the newsletter through the WWW.

Yes, those of us with Internet access can get this Newsletter delivered hot off the Editor's computer.

Commencing next month, all members who request Internet delivery of their Newsletter will receive an email message advising of the release of the Newsletter and giving its URL (ie World Wide Web Address). On all modern email packages this will only require you to "click" once on URL and the Newsletter will be delivered to you in glorious colour.

Not only will you get your Newsletter early and in colour, but you will be saving the Association printing and mailing costs, and saving yourself storage

costs/resources. Of course, you will be able to print the Newsletter on your own printer at any time.

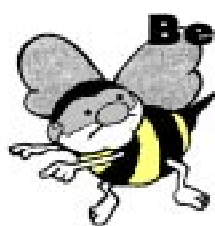
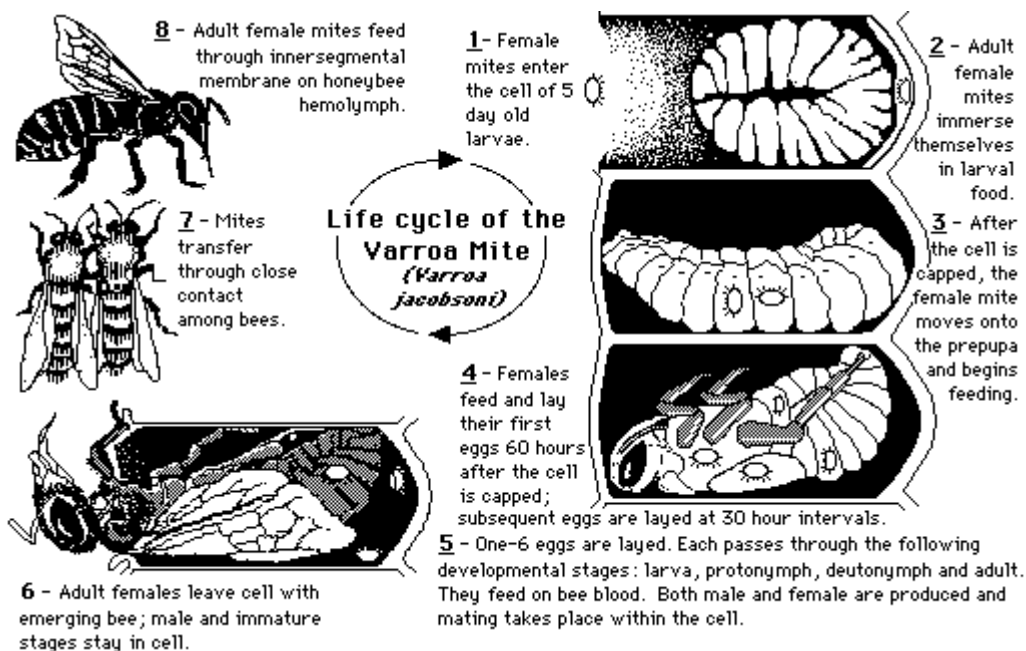
The Newsletter will be stored on the Bindaree Web site (thanks to Richard Johnston), along with all past copies back to August 1999, so you will be able to access it whenever you need to in the future.

To achieve all the above environmental, community and personal benefits, simply send a short email to Dick Johnston at bindaree.bee@bigpond.com saying, in less than 100 words, that you would like to receive your Newsletter by the Internet. If needed, you can return to normal snail-mail delivery, at any time.

Don't delay. **Do it now!**

Unfinancial Members

Members are reminded that membership renewals fell due on 1st January. Those who have not yet renewed their memberships are encouraged to do so as early as possible. Newsletters will continue to be sent to unfinancial members until 1st July only. Newsletters will continue to be available on-line to unfinancial and non-members alike through the Bindaree Web site.



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Tentative Program for Next 12 Months

Tentative programme of talks and events (weekend activities in italics) for the association over the coming year. If you have any comments or better suggestions, please let a committee member know and they will consider your input.

Date	Month	Topic	Possible Speaker
10	May	Brew Your Own	Colin Marshall (confirmed)
14	June	Innovations in Equipment	Bring along your innovations or favourite tool/equipment to share.
12	July	Commercial Beekeeping	Des Cannon, Bingleys, or other
?	<i>July</i>	<i>Mid-Winter Madness (Social Picnic)</i>	
9	August	Spring Management	Doug Sommerville or other
13	September	Dinner (coincides with School Holidays)	Empty Super Award
11	October	Flora, In and Around Canberra	SGAP rep?
	<i>October</i>	<i>Not a Hive Crawl</i>	
8	November	Extraction Demo and Honey Judging Refresher	
13	December	Christmas Function (instead of formal meeting)	
10	January	No meeting	
14	February	Preparations for the Canberra Show	Bring competition honey
14	March	TBA (+ AGM)	

Empty Super Award Entries

There is no Empty Super Award entry for this month, unfortunately, due to the lack of any contribution. Please remember that the Empty Super Award is a gentle contest for the best/funniest/strangest/most useful story about a bee related experience. Send your contribution to Peter Macnicol (62814713H) or by email to Paul Hooper at phooper@pcug.org.au for consideration and publication.

Advertising Opportunity

Advertising space is available in the Newsletter. The cost is in the order of \$15 per half page. Details may be obtained from the Editor. Advertising for sale of equipment by members will not attract a fee.

Bindaree Beenotes: Dick says ... start thinking about your Spring equipment requirements early.



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Shop open: Wed, Thur, Fri 4 pm to 6 pm, Sat 9 am to 4pm
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