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

October 2000

October Meeting

At the meeting, on 11th October at CIT Weston at 7.30 p.m., Rob Gardiner will instruct us on how to prepare honey exhibits for the show, and Cec Mercer will tell us about the queen-rearing course at Tocal that he attended.

President's Note

Hi members!

A new season is beginning. I hope your bees have survived the winter and you are prepared for the swarm season. Thanks to Environment ACT for putting together a swarm list and distributing it around the various appropriate departments. If you wish to register as a swarm collector it's still not too late.

A great night was had by all at the annual dinner, especially with the announcement and presentation of the inaugural Empty Super Award which was won by Lyn Shiels. Thanks also to Pat Shiels for making the nice mini empty super. To Rob Gardiner and Lyn Shiels a big thanks for organising the dinner.

Having had a couple of meetings so far with the Royal Canberra Show people regarding the honey judging, next year's show is shaping up well. At the October meeting Rob Gardiner will be speaking about honey judging and how entrants can best prepare their exhibits. So come along and get the information. I look forward to seeing you all there, and keep those Empty Super stories coming to Peter.

Honey Judging at the Show

David and Rob had a very successful meeting with the Royal National Capital Agricultural Society officials regarding the Apiculture section of the 2001 Royal Show. They have done everything possible to be helpful to us. You will in all probability have received a letter from RNCAS by the time you read this note. They are approaching potential exhibitors directly to solicit entries, and to encourage membership of the Society.

We will be judging on the Friday of the Show at 4pm. The public will be welcome to watch, and then purchase at our nearby stand. While our primary aim is still to encourage participation and to promote improvements in presentation, we are not aiming to have a marathon judging session this time around. Feedback will again be available after judging. A deliberate decision was made to award ribbons and certificates instead of cash prizes; this was to keep the competition friendly. It didn't escape our notice that a Best of Show award in the 2000 Royal Show was turned into commercial success. Well done, Cec!

The judges and stewards are naturally above corruption, but keep making those offers of dinners, wines, bathing beauties (both kinds, this is an equal opportunity Show).

Rob Gardiner

2001 Royal Canberra Show

Deanna Riddell of the RNCA Society has sent us details of the categories, conditions of entry, etc for Apiculture exhibits at the 2001 Show – see attached flyer.

Bees Turn up the Heat on Invaders

A beehive runs a fever when it gets sick, just like people, say Philip Starks and his colleagues at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Like other social insects, bees keep their nests warm to speed up the growth of their larvae. But Starks found that if the fungus Ascosphaera apis is added, bees increase the temperature of their nests by a further 0.56°C. At the higher temperature the fungus cannot infect and kill larvae.

The fever-like behaviour of the colony is strikingly similar to that of an individual animal and may be widespread among social insects, says Thomas Seeley, who supervised the study.

from New Scientist, June 00

Happy Landings: Bees on Autopilot

The technique honeybees use to touch down smoothly could be an ideal way to control pilotless planes as they land. A team led by Dr Mandyam Srinivasan of ANU monitored the flight paths of six bees as they made over 100 landings on a flat surface. They found that as they descended, the bees' flying speed was always proportional to their height – and this gave them the clue to the simple trick they were using to land safely.

As you travel along, the closer an object is, the faster it seems to pass. It's the same for the bees: if they flew at a constant speed while descending, the ground would appear to hurtle by faster and faster. In fact bees do the opposite. They ensure that the image of the ground always crosses their field of view at the same rate, and so automatically slow down as they land, making their speed close to zero at touchdown. "The beauty of the system is that the bee is on autopilot. To land, it needs no explicit knowledge of its flight speed or its height above ground," says Srinivasan.

A system like this would be ideal for landing micro air vehicles (MAVs), says team member Javaan Chahl. The US military, which helped fund the research, is developing surveillance MAVs with wingspans as small as a few centimetres. The bees' landing technique requires very little computing power. Cameras on board the plane could be used in conjunction with a tiny computer, says Chahl. Srinivasan's team is now building a larger pilotless aircraft with a bee-like visual system that it will use to guide itself in to land.

from an article by Rachel Nowak
in New Scientist, July 2000

Empty Super Award

* The first entry of the 2000 – 2001 competition! *

Bees Miss Out On God's Message

(Jan Johnston)

Richard was in the backyard inspecting his hives one sunny Saturday morning. The doorbell rang and Jan answered it.

On the doorstep stood an elderly lady and a young man both clutching "Watchtower" and smiling bravely despite the bees which were encircling them and which they were nervously trying to fend off. Jan saw their plight and invited them in which they gratefully accepted. After a few minutes (during which time they did not mention their mission, so overcome were they to be out of danger) Jan peered cautiously outside to check that the bees had gone.

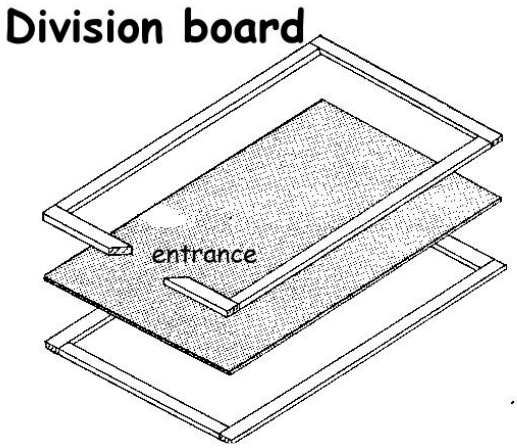
All seemed clear and they were advised to make a hurried exit. First the lady made a successful escape, then the young man crept furtively down the front steps. All seemed to be going well but those bees had been lying in wait for him. They allowed him to reach the letterbox but he was last seen running the sprint of his life down the street, Watchtowers fluttering and bees in hot pursuit. We have not seen these two, or their colleagues, again but wish them all the best.

Bindaree Notes

Requeening With a Division Board *(No need to find and kill old queen?)*

Beginner and experienced beekeepers alike are often daunted by the prospect of requeening. Most other methods start with 'kill the old queen'.

A simpler first step is to create a nucleus colony within the same hive using a division board. The division board consists of a sheet of hardwood, plywood or metal fitted with 10 mm risers top and bottom. A gap in one of the risers on the short side makes an entrance.



Method

1. Use a strong two or three deck colony. Ensure the queen is in the brood chamber - she will be if a queen excluder is used.
2. Take two frames of brood with nurse bees attached but not the queen and replace with good brood comb or foundation.
3. Place the division board between the brood chamber and honey super or below the top honey super depending on hive size and strength. The entrance should face the opposite way to the original hive.
4. Lift the two frames of brood and bees without the old queen into the honey super above the division board, making sure honey and pollen are available in the box.
5. Place the new queen in her cage between the two frames of brood with the candy entrance facing slightly downwards so as not to collect debris.
6. Check the top section 14 days later by which time the new queen should be laying.

Once the new queen is laying, there are several options:

1. Increase your number of hives by transferring the nucleus to the brood box of a new hive placed beside the old hive. Because the entrance of the division board faces the opposite direction to the original hive, bees will soon find their way back into their new hive when it is placed alongside the parent.
2. Kill the queen in the hive below and replace the division board with a sheet of newspaper that the bees will chew through. Place the queen excluder under the lid until the hive is checked one or two weeks later. Find the new queen, put her in the brood box and replace the queen excluder. Requeening is complete.
3. If you can't find the old queen – or don't want to, simply remove the division board and newspaper the two units together without looking for the old queen at all. According to one reference (NZ Beekeeper No 192 Summer 1986 pp 20-22), in almost 90% of the cases, if you unite two colonies with the young queen on the top of an old queen, the young queen will be left to head the resulting hive. Why this happens is open to argument. One explanation is that the young queen's bees are confined in the top box when you replace the division board with newspaper. As well, her field bees returning cannot use their normal entrance, the slot on the division board. They then drift down to the main colony entrance. As they are foragers returning with a load, they will be accepted without causing outrageous fighting at the hive entrance. The old queen is then probably killed by a scissor effect. Bees foreign to her will be coming at her from two directions: down as the bees confined above the newspaper chew through and move down in the hive, and up by the foragers from the top unit coming in through the bottom entrance and finding a strange queen in their hive.
4. Bindaree has eight frame division boards in stock at a cost of $15. All they need is a coat of paint.

Dick Johnson