



# 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

## September 2000

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### September Dinner

Members are again reminded that there will be no meeting this month, but rather a dinner on 21 September at 7.00 for 7.30 pm at the Yamba Club, Phillip, as detailed in the flyer sent out to everybody.

### August Meeting

The draft Code of Practice was discussed further. It was resolved to adopt it in principle (some regulatory details still have to be worked out), to aim it beyond Association members, and to promote it through the media (radio, newspaper, shopfront) and Environment ACT. Two representatives of Environment ACT were in fact present at the meeting.

Doug Somerville gave an authoritative talk on Spring Management of bees, which is summarised below. He also gave some information on reasonable pollination fees: (\$35 per hive in an open orchard, \$50-60 for blueberries under netting for 3-4 weeks) as well as the second-hand value of a beehive in good condition (\$110-130 for a double, including bees).

### Queen-rearing Course

This course will be held at the C B Alexander Agricultural College, "Tocal", in the Hunter Valley from 25-28 September. The main lecturer will be John Rhodes, assisted by Bruce White and Doug Somerville. The cost is \$346.50 (including GST) and includes lunch each day, morning and afternoon tea. For accommodation costs etc. contact Kim Griffith at Tocal on 1800 025 520 or 4939 8881, or web site [www.tocal.nsw.edu.au](http://www.tocal.nsw.edu.au). You also need to contact Kim to enrol in the course.

### The Current Season – Notes by Doug Somerville (25/8/00)

There appears to be a higher than normal level of EFB about this year in southern NSW, thus it will pay beekeepers to inspect early to ascertain disease status in colonies and treat infections promptly. Those not wanting to use antibiotics should try using thick sugar syrup instead. Actually the information given to the last ACT Beekeepers meeting regarding sugar feeding could be improved on. Apparently NZ experience is that feeding 66% sugar in syrup (2 sugar:1 water) leads to maximum stimulation and brood expansion in the hive.

Another 4 weeks and we will start getting the first swarm calls for the season. If you are at work all day consider placing an empty bee box containing dry combs and foundation on the roof of your garage. I do this every year and even though I don't keep bees in my back yard I catch annually from 3 to 7 swarms by this practice.

### Spring Management – Doug Somerville

Key aspects to consider during September-October-November are:

- ◆ Starvation
- ◆ Disease inspection
- ◆ Brood manipulation
- ◆ Requeening
- ◆ Space for expansion within the hive
- ◆ Swarm prevention
- ◆ Removal of honey crop

### Starvation

This can be a real problem on the Tablelands, and late August / early September is the critical time, especially if more than a week of cold, wet

weather is experienced. It can be overcome by feeding with sugar syrup (2 sugar:1 water by volume), ½ to 3 litres every second week or as necessary. Protein patties are usually not necessary in urban areas there are usually enough pollen sources. Alternatively, frames of honey can be moved from hives with plenty to those with little – but before doing this it is very important to consider the next point.

### ***Disease Inspection***

Adult bees have to be inspected for Nosema, which is usually the worst problem at this stage of the season. It can be combated by good nutrition, having the hive in a sunny location, and as a last resort requeening.

Brood has to be inspected for EFB, AFB, chalkbrood, sacbrood and exotic parasites such as varroa (look for black nymphs on abdomen of exposed drone larvae). Chalkbrood and sacbrood can be treated with sugar syrup and EFB with antibiotic or supplementary feeding, but in the case of AFB the bees have to be killed and the hive burnt or irradiated.

### ***Brood Manipulation***

This should only be done when the colony is strong (bees covering all brood frames and above queen excluder), with warm temperatures prevailing during the day and good quantities of nectar and pollen in the field. It involves removing two frames of capped brood, or combs of honey and pollen, from the brood box and replacing them with frames of drawn comb (or foundation, during a honey flow); the removed frames are placed above the queen excluder.

### ***Requeening***

This is done for any of three reasons: to improve the performance of an unproductive colony or one that consistently shows signs of disease, or to overcome the aggressiveness of a colony. October onwards is a suitable time.

If the old queen can't be found, there are (at least) two simple tricks to facilitate finding her. One is to split the hive and leave 48 hours: the queenless half will have made emergency queen cells. The two boxes can then be reunited through paper. The other is to move the colony 30 feet away in the morning and look for the queen in the afternoon, when she is easy to find among the young bees, the field bees having gone back to the original site.

### ***Space for Expansion***

If a honey flow is in progress it may well be necessary to add extra combs, or extract full ones, to allow sufficient space for the honey crop to be stored and ripened in. Old black heavy brood combs, damaged combs and combs with a large area of drone cells should be culled. Comb foundation can be put in so that it can be drawn.

### ***Swarm Prevention***

There are a number of strategies:

- ♦ Requeen every 1-2 years; early autumn is the best time on the Tablelands.
- ♦ Allow space in the brood nest; put in empty combs or foundation.
- ♦ Ensure that the colony has room to store and ripen honey
- ♦ Split the colony temporarily (a month or so) and reunite through newspaper.
- ♦ Extract honey if necessary to make room
- ♦ Remove swarm cells may not work as colony may swarm anyway.
- ♦ If rearing own queens, select larvae from colonies that have not swarmed.

### ***Removal of Honey Crop***

Only ripe honey should be extracted; the combs should be at least 2/3-capped. In Spring as much honey can be taken off as one wishes. Removal of full combs and replacement with empty or extracted combs actually stimulates the colony.

Note: It is good to use escape boards in urban areas, to avoid stirring the bees up when frames are removed for extraction.

*All these points are set out in greater detail in Doug's Agnote; I can print out or email a copy for anyone who wants it (Peter Macnicol, 62814713 AH; P.Macnicol@pi.csiro.au).*

### ***Killer Bees May Be a Godsend***

Condensed from an article by Debora MacKenzie in New Scientist (1/7/00):

Africanised bees, which are hybrids of an African subspecies and the European honey bee, have spread across the Americas and are expected soon to reach California and Florida. Owing to their aggressiveness and the large number involved in their attacks, they have caused thousands of animal and human fatalities in the four decades since they escaped from Brazil. Nevertheless, a number of researchers and others regard them as a potential saviour of the honey industry, for two reasons.

Firstly, in warm regions they are much more efficient at honey production than European bees. Secondly, they are resistant to the varroa mite, which is devastating hives in Europe and north-eastern USA.

So the idea is for bee breeders to select some mix of African and European genes that gives good honey production and resistance to varroa, but “doesn’t kill the neighbours”. A team at Purdue University has mapped 3 major genes involved in stinging behavior. “The one with the strongest effect seems to help determine whether a bee becomes a guard or merely a worker. A high proportion of guards is typical of the Africans”. There seems to be general agreement that it will be possible to breed gentler Africanised bees, but that it won’t be possible to remove all their defensive behavior. This means learning to live with them - handling them more delicately (shunning dark colours, strong scents; moving calmly) and locating them farther from people and animals.

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### **Three Entries for the Empty Super Award**

#### ***How to Lose Credibility in a Hurry (Lyn Shiels)***

Last Spring Pat and Lyn Shiels went to collect a swarm from public land near Gowrie Shops. The bees had been there for a few days and had been harassed by the local yokels throwing sticks and stones at them. They were in a patch on the ground not far from the pathway from the shops. Lyn donned the beesuit and set up a box suitably laced with sugar syrup to persuade the bees to move in. Pat took up a position on the pathway and soon collected an admiring audience and began a dissertation about how the sugar and smoke were used to persuade the bees into the box. The audience of preschoolers and their mums were suitably impressed with the skill and knowledge displayed. On cue the bees began marching in to the amazement of all. However when only about four bees remained outside the tide turned and out came the whole swarm, even faster than they had entered, took to the air and decamped to a nearby tree. Not so impressive. They were eventually collected but by then audience and credibility were completely dissipated.

#### ***How to Lose a Hive in a Hurry (Lyn Shiels; does Roy get a kick-back?)***

Recently Roy Bray received a request to provide a pollination service for some plants in a research glasshouse at CSIRO. On Saturday Roy took a strong two-box hive to the glasshouse and settled the bees into a comfortable Spring-like

environment. He was just a little concerned that the unseasonable conditions might encourage the bees into early brood raising and increase the chance of an early swarm. The next day there were quite a few dead bees around the hive and four days later all the bees were dead. Not the most successful beekeeping experience in Roy’s beekeeping life. Certainly no problem with swarming though.

#### ***Last Autumn’s Requeening (Rob Gardiner)***

Doug’s talk reminded me of last autumn’s requeening. Margaret and I carefully discussed all actions and contingencies. Having reached agreement, she went off to suit up. I got out a match to punch a hole in the candy. It seemed a bit hard, so I pushed harder. BIG MISTAKE!! It was the cork end. When Margaret came out I was chasing the queen around the yard. With one mighty swipe I plucked it out of the air. Putting it back in the cage was another story. Surprise – that particular queen didn’t survive. When it was noticed that I had tried to do a delicate task without my glasses on.....

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### **Bindaree Notes**

**Queen Bees** will be available from Bindaree from the first week in October -

Orders are necessary; contact Bindaree

For high productivity, fewer swarms and gentle bees, regular requeening is recommended. Your queen from Bindaree will come from the breeder in a cage with some worker attendants, and some candy for food blocking one of the two entrances to the cage.

#### **Hints for introducing queens**

1. The old queen in the hive should be killed, and the new queen can be introduced in the one operation. The old queen may be very difficult to find especially for new beekeepers.
2. The cage may be placed between combs in the brood nest, or on top of the frames over the brood nest, screen downwards. Some beekeepers spray the cage with sugar syrup or smear it with honey from the hive.
3. Leave the hive undisturbed for seven days.

## Notes from the queen breeder

1. It is best to introduce the queens as soon as possible, but they should keep for up to two weeks
2. The attendants will usually die first
3. If not introduced immediately, queens should be stored in a quiet dark place away from insecticides and given a drop only of water every few days in hot weather

4. It is best to introduce on a honey flow. If introducing in Autumn, make sure there is plenty of unsealed brood to ensure there are nurse bees capable of looking after the queen. this is more important in autumn than Spring.

*Reference and further information: Beekeeping, Victorian Dept of Agriculture, 1991, p121.*



## Bindaree Bee Supplies

16 James St Curtin ACT 2605

Richard Johnston

Phone: 02 6281 2111

Email: [bindaree.bee@bigpond.com](mailto:bindaree.bee@bigpond.com)

Website: [www.bindaree.com.au](http://www.bindaree.com.au)

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

Closed: Sun, Mon, Tue.



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