

August 2017 Members Update

Highlights of the August Club Meeting

1. Garry Mallard shared some ideas on **Preventing and Catching Swarms.**

The buds are bursting all over the Valley, so regardless of what the calendars say, spring is upon us! Now is the time to take advantage of those occasional warm still days to inspect your hives.

If its buzzing room only and your hive is filled with drawn, filled comb, it's time to consider adding another box. This may be another brood box or a super, depending on your preferred hive configuration. The additional space may dissuade a colony from swarming for lack of space.

As the days become increasingly warm, it's important to regularly inspect your brood boxes for queen cells. These are usually produced on the bottoms of frames and in the case of the Langstroth configuration, are best revealed by gently tipping a box on its side to expose the frame bottoms. Some say swarm (queen) cells look like 'peanuts' still in their shells, but whatever their shape, they stand-out markedly from all surrounding architecture. Pinch them off or otherwise cull them throughout the hive and this too may delay swarming, or at least limit swarm size.

Remember, just as they make wax and honey, swarming is what bees do! It is not an indication of failure as a beekeeper. In fact most hives will swarm annually. The best we can do is manage our hives efficiently in hope of limiting natural swarming inclinations, and the key to this is more space and queen cell management.

Of course swarming is not always a bad thing. It's also a great way to create another colony (hive). So much the better if you can catch one of your swarms for this purpose, as you'll know its lineage and it will be less likely to introduce problems to your apiary,

If you don't want to create an additional colony, a swarm may also be re-introduced to the source or other colony, by means of the queen-excluder and newspaper separation process we've discussed at a number of meetings.



Now is also the time for preparing your Nuc and swarm catching gear. Ensure your Nuc is functioning as it should e.g. it's free of spiders, last season's dross etc., that vents are unobstructed, doors are hinging properly and importantly, lids seal securely. Finally, make sure your Nuc is kitted-out with frames of either foundation or, best of all, drawn comb.

Assemble your swarm toolkit and leave it in a handy location; perhaps the boot of your car. You'll need a large and sturdy cardboard or foam box to initially contain the swarm. In it you can pack your protective gear, smoker & fuel, hive tool, bee-brush, perhaps a small spray pack containing sugar water, and tape to secure your box of bees for the journey home.

Finally, a personal suggestion. Do not be in a hurry to settle your new swarm in a hive the moment you get it home. Pop it into a Nuc, supplementary feed it and keep an eye on the development of the swarm for a few weeks to ensure it is not harbouring disease. When you're satisfied it is a clean and vibrant little colony, introduce it to its permanent home. In this way you can avoid introducing nasties such as American Foul Brood, which can be a disastrous acquisition if you're forced to irradiate or even incinerate one of the more elaborate and expensive hives in order to eradicate it.

Bee seeing you...

2. Flowhive Beekeeping Support Program

As a member of the *Flowhive Beekeeping Support Program*, the Club has now received its free Flowhive. Once its been assembled by Apiary Manager, Graham Jones, the hive will be relocated to the Club's apiary at the Old Bega Hospital.

Being a Program member also entitles Club members to access advice and support on managing Flowhives. We also hope to arrange a live link with founders of the company at a Club meeting later this year.



Club Swarm Coordination

The swarming season is just around the corner, and this provides a great opportunity for members to increase their hive numbers. The Club is often the first point of contact for swarms reported by the public, Council or media. When this happens, Tim Crisp our Swarm Coordinator will send an email to all Club members advising its location, and the first person to respond to Tim can collect the swarm.

New Club members or members who have never caught a swarm can let Tim know in advance if assistance is needed; in which case he will try to arrange an experienced member to assist.

Any members who are new to the Club and yet to obtain bees should let Tim know as they'll be given priority. Tim can be contacted on BegaValley.ord1@beekeepers.asn.au.

The Art of Beekeeping

Bega Valley Beekeepers and Bega Rotary have partnered with the Bega High School to provide a Beginning in Bees course for a group of very enthusiastic students over Term 3. The program is held over 9 weeks and each session includes theory and practical elements; including how to build bee boxes and frames.

Although the course is about learning basic beekeeping, the aim is to give students the opportunity to learn basic woodworking and painting skills, and think about the 'big picture' environmental and community issues (especially food security) associated with biosecurity threats to bees world-wide. Students are also painting their own unique designs on hives, which will be unveiled at a formal celebration later this year. Seed funding for the project valued at just under \$600 has been provided by the Rotary Foundation.



September Meeting Learning Topic –Splitting Hives

With spring fast approaching, it's time to decide if you intend to expand your own apiary by splitting and creating new hives. Our learning topic for September will be led by Fay Steward who will share some insights into the recommended (and not so ideal) techniques she has used to split her hives.

Club Apiary

Graham has now assembled the Club's new Flow Hive in readiness for a finishing coat and a swarm in Spring. Good news is that our other 2 hives have held their own over winter, despite the cold conditions, with the help of a few jars of sugar syrup.

Our first Club activity at the apiary will be on Saturday 2nd September, 10 am, when we plan to clean up the bottom boards, tidy up the burr comb, and if weather permits, inspect the brood for signs of swarming and disease.

Any members interested in joining Graham are welcome!



Bega Agricultural Society Honey Competition Classes 2017

Following consultation with the Club, the Bega Agricultural Society has decided to expand the classes of honey and related products in the 2018 Bega Agricultural Show.

Entries will now be accepted in the following classes:

- Light, medium and dark honey
- Honey comb (chunk) 10 cm square
- Frame of capped honey
- Bees wax block (size to be advised).



And on that note, after the great success of the Club's first hive produce competition in 2016, it has been decided to hold yet another in December to coincide with our annual Christmas Party. As you can see from last year's photos there was a lot of light hearted fun, despite the stiff competition.



Spring Workshops

Just a reminder, the next *Beginning in Bees* Workshops will be held on 23rd and 24th September. If you or anyone you know is interested please contact Treasurer, Sandy Farrell on 0407 959312 or by email at BegaValley.treasurer@beekeepers.asn.au

New Members

Welcome to our latest new member Anthony Gamble!

Biosecurity News

The buzz is that many beekeeping clubs throughout NSW are protesting at the high registration fees proposed by the Department of Primary Industries – and for good reason!

Biosecurity is a shared responsibility of all beekeepers, whether commercial or recreational, and registration is a cornerstone to ensuring everyone has access to vital information about keeping their hives free from disease, knowing how to recognise and treat disease and where to report any findings. Last year our Club wrote to the Minister and head of DPI seeking their agreement to making registration free for all small scale operators; as the fees being contemplated at that time were so high this could be a disincentive to beekeepers registering. Unfortunately to no avail.

The latest news update from ABA NSW gives a comprehensive overview on this issue and important biosecurity matters, and invites members to send their comments on the issue of registration fees to biosecurity@beekeepers.asn.au. Alternatively contact Fay who is also the Club's Biosecurity Officer at BegaValley.publicity@beekeepers.asn.au.

Beekeeping Resources

Anyone with internet connection knows just how easy it is to find great information, but sometimes there's nothing better than browsing through a book.

The Club has now taken delivery of some great publications which can be borrowed by members at monthly meetings for up to one month. You will need to record your loans in a library register which will be kept with resources. Loans will be on an honesty basis so please remember to return borrowed material at the following meeting. Here's a list of what we have available:

- Australian Native Bees
- Honey Harvesting and Extracting
- Queen Bee Breeding; and
- Healthy Bees.

Over time we aim to expand our library and one way is through donations. So if you have (or know someone who has) any books that are no longer needed, their donation to the Club would be very welcome.

Tip for the month

A reminder from Graham that bees will be responding to this ting of spring in the air and a close eye on the hives would be very good idea. Don't be caught short - plan your first hive health inspection soon and check for early signs of impending swarming – and have your swarm catching gear ready for action. Fay reports catching a neighbour's swarm on 1st October last year (straight after the AFL Grand Final)!

Another tip - even if there's plenty of bee activity on the landing board, outward appearances can be deceiving. One mistake that beekeepers sometimes make is not recognising the signs when feeding is needed to maintain hive health. Weather can play a big role. For instance a very dry or overly wet Spring can result in an absence of blossoms, which in turn can result in insufficient honey stores needed to sustain the hive.

There are various ways to feed your hive, one of these being with a sugar candy mix. Garry Mallard has been running trials over winter and recommends the 'Candy Board'. Fay can vouch for this technique having used one of Garry's full boards to sustain a late arriving swarm caught in late March over winter. For more information see Garry's paper titled '*No Cook Candy Board*' on page 7.

If you have some useful tips to share for the next edition of *Members Update* please email to Fay at BegaValley.publicity@beekeepers.asn.au

Next Club Meeting

**Tuesday 12th September 2017, 7 pm
at the Meals on Wheels Rooms Bega**

'Techniques for Splitting Hives' – presentation by Fay Steward



All contributions to supper most appreciated!



Do you have anything of beekeeping interest to share with other members?

If yes please send your contribution to Fay at BegaValley.publicity@beekeepers.asn.au.

Swarm Notification

Tim Crisp is the Club Swarm Coordinator, so if you become aware of a swarm in need of catching please let Tim know asap on 0448301220.

Club Equipment for Hire

Frame wiring jig eyelet tool, embedder and battery - \$5 hire charge per session (Friday to Sunday night, and Monday to Thursday night). Contact Fay on 0423889486 or BegaValley.publicity@beekeepers.asn.au or

Honey extractor - \$15 hire charge and \$20 deposit with the same hiring sessions as above. Contact Garry at BegaValley.ord2@beekeepers.asn.au

Contact Bega Valley Beekeepers

Follow us on <https://www.facebook.com/begavalleybeeclub/> or by email to BegaValley.secretary@beekeepers.asn.au

No Cook Candy-Board Recipe

First build a candy board frame



A frame is easily constructed using 42 by 19 centimetre pine cut and assembled to fit atop your hive like a super or telescoping cover. Hive dimensions can vary slightly, so it's best to measure your boxes to determine their exact dimensions. However, if you cut your 42 x 19cm pine into the following component parts, it will result in a frame of a serviceable fit:

8 frame: 2 lengths at 35.4 cm – 2 at 51cm – 1 at 47.2cm

10 frame: 2 at 40.4cm – 2 at 51cm – 1 at 47.2cm

The 4 sides of the frame should be assembled with the addition of a support strut running from front to rear, down the centre of the frame. This additional support is essential if sagging is to be avoided. It also provides an anchor for your wire.

Ensure the frame is nailed and glued or dowelled and glued very securely. The completed frame must carry substantial weight.

After painting with a suitable outdoor paint or sealer, 6mm square wire mesh, such as that used in gutter-guards, should be firmly and tightly attached to the bottom of your frame.

In the rear corners of the frame, cut-away the mesh to leave 3 ventilation/access holes. If using 6mm gutter-guard mesh, create holes 3 squares by 6 squares in the 2 rear corners of the frame and another of the same dimensions at the centre front.

A hole around 12-14mm should be drilled at the front of your frame, just above your wire ventilation hole, to facilitate outside ventilation and to act as a bee escape. The hole can be stoppered if it provides too much ventilation, or covered with wire screen if robber bees are an issue.

The candy: It is essential that all ingredients are measured precisely and by actual weight as opposed to the manufacturer's weight on a bag. Liquids too, should be weighed precisely. A frame built to the dimensions above will hold 7kg + of candy. The recipe which follows makes half this amount, as it's easier to handle.

You will need:

- 3.5 kilos white sugar (use only white sugar, as brown and raw sugars contain elements toxic to bees)
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- Sufficient tank or spring water to make up to 375 grams total fluids.

Begin by combining your vinegar and water to a total of 375 grams by weight. Add 3.5kg of white sugar to a large plastic or stainless bowl, making sure any lumps are crushed. Slowly add your water/vinegar, making an effort to drizzle it evenly over the surface of the sugar.

It may appear that the liquid is insufficient to wet 3.5kg of sugar and it is. The object is to damp the sugar, not wet it. If too much liquid is added, it will have to drain off and this will slow the setting process.

Mix the sugar and water together with a wooden spoon until all the sugar appears damp. At this point the sugar will take on a shiny semi-opaque appearance.

Place your frame on a plastic sheet of some kind (a garbage bag perhaps) on a firm surface. Then place an off-cut from your frame timber over the holes in the wire at the rear corners and centre front of your frame.

Using a robust scoop of some kind, lay the sugar around the off-cuts, pressing it very firmly into place. Continue to load the frame with sugar, being sure to press and tamp it down as firmly as possible. Once again, an off-cut of your frame timber makes an excellent tool for this process.

Once you have loaded half of your frame with this first batch, remove the off-cuts from the corners to expose the access holes. You should find no (or very little) liquid seeping from the bottom of the frame.

Once you have repeated the process to complete your frame, you should very lightly spray the surface of the candy with water into which a little additional vinegar has been added, using some kind of spray bottle that has not been used to spray chemicals of any kind.

Spray the surface very-very lightly, but evenly, remembering the sugar is already adequately coated and if too much additional water is added it will have to drain-off or dry before it can set. Once sprayed, do not tamp or disturb further.

By the following day the candy should be set so firm you can knock on it.

At this stage I recommend lifting the frame gently at each end, sufficient to wedge a piece of wood under the frame, so's to elevate it just above your plastic sheet. Leave for another 24 hours, exposing the underside to the air and allowing any excess syrup to drain away.

The longer you leave the frame, the dryer and harder it will become, but the dryer it becomes, the more brittle too, so use your judgement.

Your candy frame is now ready to be placed between your top box (brood or super) and the hive lid.

If you have any questions, feel free to call Garry on 02 6492 0355.