

BEEBIZ SEPTEMBER 2021

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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September Activity cancelled because of COVID

Presidents Report

Hi Folks!

There are no club activities to report due to the COVID lockdowns and I will not make any more predictions about future activities as all my previous announcements of upcoming events have proved to be fruitless. All I can report is that the bees have been oblivious to the lockdowns and have been busy filling supers with honey and making lots of babies causing swarms to issue forth at frequent intervals. Many swarms are what I describe as base hospital swarms ie if you want to capture them without the help of a large cherry picker you are liable to end up hospitalized. Is a swarm of bees worth all that pain and suffering?

As I go to press, an actual case of COVID has been reported in Lismore. What the authorities are going to do about that, I wouldn't have the foggiest idea. That's all from Byrangerry Creek this month. Happy beekeeping .

Cheers Kevin Virgen

Secretary Report

Because of COVID, we are not planning any activity for a while. Any beekeepers who need assistance are invited to contact one of the helpful beekeepers listed in the newsletter. Any beginner can obtain an introduction to beekeeping from any of the office bearers by asking.

Nuclei and hives are becoming more available as Spring advances,

Brian

From The Hives

The hives were moved from Coraki up to Rous, where they occupy a nice sunny site on a custard apple farm next to a couple of macadamia farms. A copy of the pamphlet "HELP THE BEES" was placed in the letterboxes of all the near neighbours, some of whom were Sydneysiders who had recently purchased properties and were not familiar with spraying restrictions.

The hives were all quite heavy when they were moved, even though only two boxes high, mainly because the brood boxes were stuffed full of honey to insulate the brood nest. All hives had a third box added after moving, stickies from in store, each with two foundation frames in the middle.

With the honey flow, the bees have drawn the foundation, and these frames have been inserted in the middle of the brood box, replacing two frames from the outside. This extra room is for the dual purpose of resuppressing swarming, and renewing brood frames.



The frames were rearranged where necessary with the two new combs in the brood box, any removed comb with brood placed in the middle of the first super on the excluder, any foundation to be drawn placed in the middle of the second super, then the clearer board with mainly full honey frames in the third super on top.

The fourth boxes have been removed, and all strong hives are now three boxes high. The honey has been extracted, being a mixture of teatree and macadamia; much of it was very thick, characteristic of macadamia honey.

Brian

The Hives at Rous

Flowering Report

Things are hanging in there. Ironbark and Red Gum are still going well and more to come depending on where you are. Shortly the White Mahogany (*Eucalyptus acmenoides*) will start flowering. The budding of trees I have seen looks good.



White Mahogany

(Most eucalypts have a name that describes the bark, such as gum, box, mahogany etc, presumably because it is what you can see. Leaves and buds are a long way up. Ed)

I have had a bit of a drive around to see if the pinkish flowered Red Gums from last year are doing the same this year. And yes they are.

Some trees seem a little stressed in places, others really good and healthy. Many years ago when the world was young, in fact the spring that I was first really seriously into beekeeping, all, yes all the bud dropped off the Red Gum. The year before had been a bumper winter and spring and summer for farming. The spring and winter in question was very dry, presumably the reason the bud was dropped.

There is plenty of clover around. Great pollen but seldom yields honey here on the coast. It is after all a Mediterranean plant, i.e. winter rainfall. The pollen is a khaki colour.

Geoff

Mad Honey

“The saying "you are what you eat" applies to bees too. The type of nectar they consume to create honey has a lasting chemical effect on the resulting sweet stuff. And, if the bees employ nectar from the toxic Rhododendron flower, guess what? You get toxic, "Mad Honey."

In areas that have Rhododendrons growing wild—Turkey, the Middle East and the Mediterranean, for example—this effect has been well-known for millennia. In fact, the practice of dropping tainted honeycombs in the path of invading armies has been a well-known and often-used military tactic as far back as the Romans.

Mad honey is packed with gyanotoxin, a chemical compound that binds to the sodium channels on a cell's membrane. This prevents the channels from closing, preventing the cell from inactivating—it's essentially the same process as Viagra, keeping blood flowing to a person's—ahem—"extremities." Effects can take from a few minutes to three hours to set in—including, according to Wikipedia, "excessive salivation, perspiration, vomiting, dizziness, weakness, paresthesia (numbness) around the mouth, and low blood pressure." However if one overdoses on mad honey the symptoms may increase to a loss of coordination, severe muscular weakness, and bradycardia—when the heart's pace is too slow.”

American Foul Brood

There has been a report from the NSW ABA of AFB cases in the 2480 postcode. Members should be alert for the symptoms (look at the DPI website) when looking through brood boxes. Check any hives that are not expanding under the excellent conditions.

In the past, the club has arranged for consignments of equipment to be sent by carrier for irradiation at Steritech in Narangba north of Brisbane in the past. The irradiation is done using a cobalt-60 source, which nuclei emit two gamma rays (high energy X rays) of just over 1 Mev in energy when they decays; it does not make any object radioactive.

Typically, over three pallets were involved, totalling over 100 supers. None of our members have had outbreaks even approaching that number of supers, but there were usually a few beekeepers who had acquired second hand gear of unknown disease status which they wanted sterilised.

Notify the secretary if you have any gear that you want irradiated.

Authenticity of Honey

Good article on leatherwood and authenticity of honey.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-23/honey-library-to-prove-authenticity-of-tasmanian-leatherwood/100397638>



Corflute box 5 frame nucleus

Making up Nuclei

Are you thinking of making up Nucs? Short for Nucleus hives. Really baby hives. Any hive can be used but it is of course normal to use a strong one. At this time of year one that is about to swarm is ideal. It also acts as swarm control.

Nucs are normally three, four or five frames. If the hive is showing a number of swarm cells, you can take say four frames of brood out. You can use one of these frames for each nuc if so desired, or two for each nuc or four for one nuc. Your decision. The idea here is that one of the queen cells will become

the new queen for that nuc.

Choose a frame of sealed brood with at least one cell and gently shake most of the bees off to avoid taking the queen. Place in your nuc. Shake in plenty bees from the super or the lid, the rest of the space can be filled with another three frames of brood. If it is not desired to fill with for frames of brood put in as many as you wish and then make up the spaces with either honey or pollen. Do not use empty comb. You may use foundation as it will deny the small hive beetle a place of refuge, unlike empty comb. The bees will draw it upon need and put something in it. Now move the nuc a distance away, say five kilometres. Otherwise the nucs bees will likely all go back to mummy.

It is possible to make up nucs without using swarm cells. You could graft some of your own cells, or buy some, or even buy a queen. Or even do what is very popular with the Yanks, make a 'walk away split'. Same deal, just leave them to make their own queen. But you must ensure that at least one brood frame will have eggs or day old larvae.

Geoff

Volunteers

The club requires more volunteers for the Committee, and we need new office bearers. The AGM will be postponed until the COVID restrictions are in the past. We also need people to host field days; our meetings have been quite small since COVID started, and just about any home could fit us in. Speak to Kevin or Brian.

List of Helpful Members

Kevin Virgen	Federal	6684 9213	Brian Window	Lismore	0466 790 736
Ray Smith	McKees Hill	0427 734 954	Paul Towner	Rous Mill	0418 321 305
Geoff Manning	Bentley	0400 221 602	John Bull	North Casino	0414 842 903
David Fairhall	Richmond Hill	0444 513 771			

Services Directory

As a guide, queen cells should be available at about the end of August, mated and tested queens should be available late in September, nuclei with new queens should be available a bit later.

Summary of available products and services

NRABA Members

David Fairhall(queen cells, mated queens, nuclei) (Lismore) 0444 513 771

Brian Window (nuclei) (Lismore) 0466 790 736

Geoff Manning (hives) (Bentley) 0400 221 602

Ray Smith (nuclei) (Lismore) 0427 734 954

Not NRABA Members

Stephen Fowler (nuclei, hives, all sorts of bee equipment, buys wax) (Alstonville) 0418 412 621

Merv McDonald (nuclei, hives, hive care)(Alstonville) 0439 166 016

Rob Stone (mated queens, nuclei)(Casino) 0487 598 105

Ross Wood (mated queens, nuclei)(Grafton) 0421 817 710

Correction and additions welcome

Subscriptions Due

New members are to join as full members of both the NRABA and the ABA, as many of the expenses of the NRABA are paid from the payment to the ABA. Associate membership is an honorary membership, intended for non-beekeepers (including family of members), and members of other ABA clubs. It does not carry voting rights in club affairs.

I think the period of grace for paying subscriptions ends at the end of September; anyone who is not financial by then will not receive a newsletter. Make sure you have paid by logging in to beekeepers.asn.au.