



**Wellington Beekeepers Association Inc.  
Newsletter-February 2011**

**Next Meeting: New time and Place  
Wednesday February 2nd, Main Hall, Ground Floor,  
Moorfield Rd, Johnsonville Community Centre. This room is  
at the base of the stairs to the old meeting place**

**7.00pm Beginners meeting  
7.30pm General Meeting**

Return address PO Box 11-089 Manners Street Wellington (ph 04 565 0164)



Wellington Beekeepers  
association inc.

Where to find us  
Meetings Johnsonville  
Community Centre  
Main Hall, Ground Floor,  
Moorfield Road  
**1st Wednesday** of the month  
Main Meeting @ 7.30pm  
Beginners Tuition @7.00pm

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butions to be with editor **by 20th**  
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**Thanks to all that have  
submitted material for  
this issue.**

**Hive, swarm and holiday  
bee adventure stories  
and pictures welcome  
Thanks—Ed**



**MINUTES OF THE WELLINGTON BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION  
MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT THE JOHNSONVILLE COMMUNITY  
CENTRE ON WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 2010, COMMENCING AT 7.30 PM**

Present: Andrew Beach (President) and 49 members signed in.

Apologies: Earnst Segessenmann, Ivan Pederson, Richard Wickins, Brian Cleaver, Amor Walters proposed, Ken Breden seconded, apologies accepted.

Visitors: Colin Nicholson (Wainuiomata), J.B Walker (Upper Hutt), Jane Duggan (Grenada Village)

Minutes of the last meeting: Corrections: Earnst Segessenmann's name was spelt incorrectly. Moved that amended minutes be accepted, Ray Duncan proposed, Barbara seconded, passed unanimously.

Matters Arising: Swarm List updates to Kristen for the newsletter. Two have been collected.

Lobbying – Australian Honey and Associated Diseases. Amor spoke to a local M.P who already knew of the issue. Members urged to get M.Ps to ask the question in parliament: "Why was there such a strong response to the Kiwifruit PSA and no response to Nosema ceranae."

There was a short article in the Dominion Post linking the biosecurity failure on kiwifruit Psa with the failure on Nosema ceranae.

A longer article by Jo Salisbury will be published in the December issue of the New Zealand BeeKeeper magazine.

Tony Coard also spoke to the meeting to update them on PSA

The NBA and the Federated Farmers bee group are to meet with the minister shortly about this issue.

Field Day This went well. No queen was found but members reported they learnt a lot.

Honey Extraction Plant No change.

General Business: AFB Course Those beekeepers who do not have a DECA (Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement) will need to get another person to inspect their hives. The authority which manages this intends to get tougher on non conformers. The deadline of 30 November has now passed. When Andrew Beach inspects he charges \$25 an hour plus 60 cents a kilometre travel. John Burnet charges \$40 including travel. A member commented that it was a good service if you were able to be there at the time as you get feedback on your hive.

The club is in agreement that some members are willing to help to put their names forward as inspectors, please contact Andrew Beach for this. A diseasesathon was also suggested and the club intends to do one in autumn 2011.

The club has it's own GPS for members to use to note the location of their hives when they register as beekeepers with Asure Quality which is required to keep bees in New Zealand. The other way to note exact apiary location if you are in Wellington city is on the council website where you can get north and east references.

Other Business: Question and Answer Session

Q. How do you melt wax into blocks?

A. With a solar wax melter or a double boiler (don't do direct).

Frank Lindsay showed slides then the meeting ended with the social and Xmas food and punch.

Mead Competition 1st - Richard Braezek  
2nd - Andrew Beach  
3rd - Andrew Beach

Meeting closed at 8.45pm. **Next Meeting: The next meeting is 7.30pm, 7pm for beekeepers who wish to attend the New Beekeepers Course. In the new downstairs room of the Johnsonville Community Centre on Wednesday 2nd February 2011, in the big room downstairs from the old room.**

**HONEY SIEVES:** You can extract anytime and we recommend you extract more than once over the summer so you can better experience the variety of nectar sources and honey flavours. **Remember the club has a four-frame tangential extractor available for hire (\$10 per 4 day hire period)** The Club is able to purchase a further supply of 250mm sieves (same as supplied to members in April/May 2010) ideal for filtering your honey after extraction. These two sieves nest neatly together or individually inside the rim of a standard 20 litre bucket. The fine mesh sieve is 40 strands to the inch and the medium sieve is 12 strands to the inch. Nested together the sieves will filter all honey comb debris following extraction e.g. all wax and bee parts removed from the honey. However I suggest you lift the medium sieve about 4-5 cms above the fine sieve using two small blocks of wood on the rim of the lower sieve to better allow the honey to flow between the two and then into the bucket. Each sieve costs \$52 (incl GST & freight in bulk to Wgton) and while there are plenty of fine mesh sieves available there are only three of the medium mesh size sieves available so first in - first served. Payment required either by direct credit to the Club's bank account (031534-0009311-00) or by cash or cheque to the Treasurer at the Feb meeting or on collection. Please forward your sieve orders immediately to the Treasurer - numbers will be collated and forwarded to the manufacturer immediately after our Feb 2 meeting.

Attention club members: I am wanting to purchase a manual honey extractor, so if you have one or know of someone that does, please give me a ring or send me an email with the details. Cheers: Sasha Legetich ) 0274 727 429

## International Bee News

### New York Times:

MIKE BARRETT does not have much of a yard at his two-story row house in Astoria, Queens. But that fact has not kept him from his new hobby of beekeeping — he put the hive on his roof. When it was harvest time this fall, he tied ropes around each of the two honey boxes in the hive, and lowered them to the ground. Eventually, Mr. Barrett loaded the boxes into his car, took off his white beekeeper suit and set off for a commercial kitchen in Brooklyn.

There, along with other members of the New York City beekeeping club, he extracted his honey, eventually lugging home 40 pounds of the stuff. He was happy with his successful harvest, but he also reaped something he did not expect. “I was surprised how much I really care about the bees,” said Mr. Barrett, 49, a systems administrator for New York University, in reflecting on his inaugural season as a beekeeper. “You start to think about the ways to make their lives better.”

Until last spring, Mr. Barrett would have been breaking the law and risking a \$2,000 fine for engaging in his sticky new hobby. But in March, New York City made beekeeping legal, and in so doing it joined a long list of other municipalities, from Denver to Milwaukee to Minneapolis to Salt Lake City, that have also lifted beekeeping bans in the last two years. Many towns, like Hillsboro, Ore., have done the same, and still other places, like Oak Park, Ill., and Santa Monica, Calif., are reconsidering their prohibition.

Nationwide, hives are being tucked into small backyards and set alongside driveways; even the White House has installed some. Beekeeping classes are filling up quickly, and new beekeeping clubs are forming at the same time that established ones are reporting large jumps in membership. At Mr. Barrett’s club, for instance, membership has more than doubled, to about 900, in the last year. In Los Angeles, the Backwards Beekeepers club has 400 members — up from six members two years ago. And in Denver, a club that was formed last year already boasts a roster of 200. “Everyone who teaches a beekeeping course is finding themselves popular all of a sudden,” said James Fischer, 53, an instructor at New York City Beekeeping.

One force behind this rise of beekeeping is the growing desire for home-grown and organic food. Another, more complex one is the urge to stem the worrisome decline in the nation’s bee population. The number of bees has been falling since the end of World War II, when farmers stopped rotating crops with clover, a good pollen source for bees, and started using fertilizers. Pesticides and herbicides became common as well. In cities, native plants were ripped out in favour of exotic ones that were not good for bees.

Then, four years ago, honey bee colonies mysteriously started to die around the country. This drop-off, called colony collapse disorder, added to the mounting health problems, like mites and diseases, that bees are facing. About 30 percent of the country’s managed colonies have died; around a third of the deaths are related to colony collapse disorder, according to the Agriculture Department. We don’t know the primary

cause, but we know the combination of poor nutrition, heavy pesticide use and bee diseases have put bees into a tailspin,” said Marla Spivak, an entomology professor at the University of Minnesota and a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant for her work on honey-bee health.

Whatever the cause of colony collapse disorder, “People want to feel that they are doing something to help,” said Dave Mendes, president of the American Beekeeping Federation in Atlanta. “Having a few beehives in your backyard can make you feel better.”

But beekeeping is forbidden in many places. Some of the bans arose after World War II. Cities, seeking to eradicate any traces of agriculture within their limits in order to show they were full-fledged municipalities, forbade the raising of livestock, chicken and other creatures used in food production. Another wave of prohibitions came 20 years ago with the arrival of “killer bees” from Mexico.

“People thought, ‘Oh, my God, I’m going to die, my kids are going to die and my dogs are going to die,’ ” said Kim Flottum, editor of Bee Culture magazine in Medina, Ohio. “At the time, people didn’t know what killer bees would do because they kept moving.” (Fortunately, the bees turned out not to be the threat that people feared.) Nurturing flowers, fruits and vegetables is another factor in the rise in beekeeping, and it ranks high for Marygael Meister, who runs the Denver Beekeepers Association. In 2008, when Ms. Meister took a beekeeping class and set up two hives in her backyard in Denver, her goal was to help her more than 300 rosebushes thrive. Ms. Meister said she had initially called the city information line and had been told it was legal to keep bees. The information was incorrect, and she received a cease-and-desist order when a neighbour complained about her hives. But instead of giving up, Ms. Meister decided to fight, showing the zeal of the nation’s new crop of beekeepers.

“I was livid,” Ms. Meister said. “I really enjoyed my bees and it was not like I was keeping a mountain lion in my backyard. It was absurd to me that the city was perpetuating the idea that Denver is so green and we’re not.”

Ms. Meister spent the next five months urging city officials to legalize beekeeping. In November 2008, the Denver City Council did so, and shortly thereafter Ms. Meister started the city’s first beekeeping club. But legalization does not give beekeepers free rein. Cities often impose conditions on beekeepers — an annual fee, a permit, a minimum required distance between hives and nearby structures.

The City of Minneapolis, which legalized beekeeping last year, has set particularly stringent restrictions. Besides paying a \$100 annual fee per hive, beekeepers there must obtain signed permission from all the neighbours within a 100-foot radius of the hives, and for neighbours within a 300-foot radius, they need 80 percent of the signatures.

For Jacquelynn Goessling, having her neighbours sign off on her hives was hardly a problem. People in her Minneapolis neighbourhood of Kingfield, which she calls a “hotbed of liberal politics,” were so supportive that some wanted to host one of her

hives in their own yards, or to help by planting their gardens with the kinds of flowers bees like. “Power to the bees” became a rallying cry for many of her friends. A year later, she has 12 hives citywide.

Ms. Goessling has also forged new relationships with neighbours — including the grumpy ones. Since she became the neighbourhood’s “bee lady,” people want to buy her honey, either with cash or in trade for things like raspberry jam. Grateful neighbours also tell her they are getting more apples on their trees and, for the first time, seeing fruit on their arctic kiwi plants. ( Their Wot! - Ed )

Eventually, Ms. Goessling would like to become a full-time beekeeper. She will be working with a local business centre this winter to draft a business plan. “If I could make \$50,000 from bees, I’d quit my job so I could spend more time with my kids and have the summers off,” said Ms. Goessling, 48, a database administrator.

As Ms. Goessling dreams of a new career, other bee lovers, like Daniel Salisbury of Santa Monica, are fighting for the same opportunity. Santa Monica models itself as an environmentally conscious city, but it has long banned beekeeping. So when city inspectors found three hives in Daniel Salisbury’s backyard two years ago, they insisted he move them. He took the hives north to his mother’s house in San Luis Obispo County, where beekeeping is legal, but he also began a drive to legalize hives in Santa Monica.

He has become so well known that people at his city-owned trailer park call to alert him when exterminators, retained by the Santa Monica housing agency, are headed toward bee swarms. “I would chase down the swarms and literally run with my clippers to get the branch before Orkin showed up,” said Mr. Salisbury, 47, an antiques dealer, referring to a large pest-control company.

Over the last two years, Mr. Salisbury has attended Santa Monica City Council meetings, recruited a Los Angeles beekeeping club to help, and launched an e-mail legalization campaign joined by hundreds worldwide. On Tuesday, the Santa Monica City Council is scheduled to reconsider the beekeeping ban, and supporters of legalization are optimistic.

Max Wong, a Los Angeles beekeeper who has been helping Mr. Salisbury with his drive, hopes to wield some of the same political techniques in a legalization push in her city. Beekeeping rules there are a patchwork, with the hobby legal on one side of a street and illegal on the other.

“We’re in trouble and the bees are in trouble,” said Ms. Wong, 42, a member of the Backwards Beekeepers club. “We need to do something.” Ms. Wong, a film producer who started keeping bees a year ago, wants to legalize bees not just to help hobbyists like herself, but to help feed and employ others. She sees bees as the best way to increase vegetable pollination in local community gardens and thinks that some people, like a few members of her club, could even become professional beekeepers.

Like Mr. Barrett from Queens and other new beekeepers, Ms. Wong is developing a close relationship with her bees, and she wants to ensure that others can enjoy the hobby as much as she does.

"It's like having 35,000 pets," she said. "I'm hyperactive, so anything that shuts down my brain is a good thing. When I'm working at a hive, I'm quiet and meditative."

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### **And from the UK's Independent, Exclusive: Bees facing a poisoned spring**

New kind of pesticide, widely used in UK, may be helping to kill off the world's honeybees

By Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor A new generation of pesticides is making honeybees far more susceptible to disease, even at tiny doses, and may be a clue to the mysterious colony collapse disorder that has devastated bees across the world, the US government's leading bee researcher has found. Yet the discovery has remained unpublished for nearly two years since it was made by the US Department of Agriculture's Bee Research Laboratory.

The release of such a finding from the American government's own bee lab would put a major question mark over the use of **neonicotinoid** insecticides – relatively new compounds which mimic the insect-killing properties of nicotine, and which are increasingly used on crops in the US, Britain and around the world.

Bayer, the German chemicals giant which developed the insecticides and makes most of them, insists that they are safe for bees if used properly, but they have already been widely linked to bee mortality. The US findings raise questions about the substance used in the bee lab's experiment, **imidacloprid**, which was Bayer's top-selling insecticide in 2009, earning the company £510m. The worry is that neonicotinoids, which are neurotoxins – that is, they attack the central nervous system – are also "systemic", meaning they are taken up into every part of the plant which is treated with them, including the pollen and nectar. This means that bees and other pollinating insects can absorb them and carry them back to their hives or nests – even if they are not the insecticide's target species. In Britain, more than 1.4 million acres were treated with the chemical in 2008, as part of total neonicotinoid use of more than 2.5 million acres – about a quarter of Britain's arable cropland.

The American study, led by Dr Jeffrey Pettis, research leader at the US government bee lab in Beltsville, Maryland, has demonstrated that the insects' vulnerability to infection is increased by the presence of imidacloprid, even at the most microscopic doses. Dr Pettis and his team found that increased disease infection happened even when the levels of the insecticide were so tiny that they could not subsequently be detected in the bees, although the researchers knew that they had been dosed with it.

Dr Pettis told The Independent his research had now been put forward for publication. "[It] was completed almost two years ago but it has been too long in getting out," he

said. "I have submitted my manuscript to a new journal but cannot give a publication date or share more of this with you at this time."

However, it is known about, because Dr Pettis and a member of his team, Dennis van Engelsdorp, of Penn State University – both leaders in research focusing on colony collapse disorder (CCD) – have spoken about it at some length in a film about bee deaths which has been shown widely in Europe, but not yet in Britain or the US – although it has been seen by The Independent.

In **The Strange Disappearance of The Bees**, made by the American film-maker Mark Daniels, Pettis and van Engelsdorp reveal that they exposed two groups of bees to the well-known bee disease nosema. One of the groups was also fed tiny doses of imidacloprid. There was a higher uptake of infection in the bees fed the insecticide, even though it could not subsequently be detected, which raises the possibility that such a phenomenon occurring in the wild might be simply undetectable.

Although the US study remains unpublished, it has been almost exactly replicated by French researchers at the National Institute for Agricultural Research in Avignon. They published their study in the journal *Environmental Microbiology* and said: "We demonstrated that the interaction between nosema and a neonicotinoid (imidacloprid) significantly weakened honeybees."

Neonicotinoids have attracted growing controversy since their introduction by Bayer in the 1990s, and have been blamed by some beekeepers and environmental campaigners as a potential cause of CCD, first observed in the US in 2006, in which billions of worker bees abruptly disappear from their hives.

Between 20 and 40 per cent of American hives have been affected, and CCD has since been observed in several other countries from France to Taiwan, though it has not yet been detected in Britain. Although Bayer insists its products are bee-safe, French and German beekeepers have blamed them for large bee losses. Neonicotinoids have been banned, to different degrees, in France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia, although they are freely sold and widely used in the US and Britain.

In the UK, the Co-op has banned them from farms from which it sources vegetables, but the Government has rejected appeals from beekeepers and environmentalists for their use to be suspended as a precaution. This week, however, an Early-Day Motion was tabled in the Commons by Martin Paton, the Labour MP for Gower, calling again for the Government to suspend use of the compounds following major new controversy in the US surrounding Bayer's latest neonicotinoid – clothianidin – which is increasingly being used in Britain. In November, a leaked internal document from the US Environmental Protection Agency showed that it was continuing to license clothianidin, even though its own scientists reported that the tests Bayer carried out to show the compound was safe were invalid.

Leading the calls for neonicotinoids to be banned in the Britain is Buglife, the inverte-

brate conservation charity, which last year published a review of all the research done on the chemicals' impact on "non-target" insects such as honeybees and other pollinators.

Yesterday the Buglife director, Matt Shardlow, said of the Pettis study: "This new research from America confirms that at very, very low concentrations neonicotinoid chemicals can make a honeybee vulnerable to fatal disease. If these pesticides are causing large numbers of honeybees, bumblebees, solitary bees, hoverflies and moths to get sick and die from diseases they would otherwise have survived, then neonicotinoid chemicals could be the main cause of both colony collapse disorder and the loss of wild pollinator populations.

"The weight of evidence against neonicotinoids is becoming irresistible – Government should act now to ban the risky uses of these toxins."

Bayer insists its neonicotinoids are safe for bees when used properly. Dr Julian Little, a spokesman for Bayer Crop Science UK, said it was difficult for it to comment on an unpublished study. "It makes it impossible to look at their methods, it makes it impossible to check whether you can repeat the work, you don't know where they got the imidacloprid from, you don't know how they gave that to the bees," he said. But he added: "I'm sure there are some very interesting effects Dr Pettis has seen in a laboratory, but in reality, when you get to what's important to everybody, which is what happens in the field, you don't see these things happening. Bees are very, very important insects to Bayer Crop Science and we recognise their importance."

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### **Bay of Plenty Times: Organics: Beekeeper's buzzword**

Mankind must heed the message of the bees and switch from conventional to organic systems of agriculture believes Gilles Ratia, of France, who is president of Apimondia, the International Federation of Beekeepers' Associations.

"Around the world, bees are dying and we have to ask why," said Gilles, who last week visited the long-established Tauranga beekeeping company Mossop's Honey. "What the bees are telling us is that we have to stop fighting and begin working with nature, because we can never win the battle."

Gilles is in a unique position to understand the threats to bee health globally. In the past 24 years he has visited 114 countries, travelling for the last seven on his BMW motorbike, visiting beekeepers and lecturing at universities and public forums.

The bees' fate was high on the list of topics at the international convention he coordinated in Montpellier, France, in 2009, attended by 10,000 delegates including 600 scientists and 178 journalists. The next congress will be in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in September this year.

Gilles said a number of pests and diseases threatened the health of honey bees but he

believed the factor which tipped the balance for their immune system was the use of agricultural pesticides. "Chemical companies will say their products are safe for bees but bees are, after all, insects," he said.

Tests by companies producing the pesticides to discover "safe" levels for bees were conducted only on adult bees, not larvae, and seldom took into account the cumulative effect of the toxin. New-generation pesticides, the neonicotinoids, were of particular concern because they were 7000 times more toxic than DDT, so toxic that 30 to 60 grams per hectare was enough to kill insects, he said.

The most dramatic evidence of bee deaths was to be found in colony collapse disorder, not yet seen in New Zealand but existing in Europe and the US. "Almost overnight, all the bees will have disappeared from a hive, and there will be no dead ones anywhere. What is interesting is that other bees will not rob the hive of honey as they normally would - it is as if they know it is contaminated."

Gilles said no one factor was likely to be responsible for the disorder. Instead, a combination of diseases, pests, lowered immunity due to pesticides, plus poor diet and stress could be the cause. "Many bees in the USA don't have a very happy life. They may travel [on transporters] 20,000km a year to different pollination sites, be fed on an artificial diet and dosed with antibiotics."

However, even in New Zealand bees were under pressure, he said: "Number one is pesticides, and number two the varroa mite and the disease side-effects it brings." Gilles, with beekeepers worldwide, is also concerned at the threats to bees from plants genetically modified to produce their own insecticides. "We don't know what the impacts will be on bees taking nectar and pollen from these plants."

Farmers and orchardists knew the importance of bees to their crops and were generally careful not to use pesticides when bees were around but GM plants would produce toxins all the time they were growing, Gilles said.

The general public should be concerned about the bees' plight because 35 per cent of all foods humans ate relied on bees for pollination. "There are around 22,000 different species of bee in the world and, of those, only 20 are kept by beekeepers, but they account for around 80 per cent of the pollination of 35 per cent of our food crops," said Gilles.

"Without bees, our diet would not only be much poorer but our world less colourful as bees pollinate millions of wild flowers." Chemical companies were extremely powerful and it was unlikely significant change in the use of pesticides would be promoted by politicians, he said.

"Mankind has maybe 50 to 80 years to change, but I'm optimistic the change will come; however, it is up to the people to make it happen. "They have the means in their hand," he said, producing a fork to represent the food people ate.

"If consumers demand only organically grown foods in their supermarkets, supermarkets will demand producers use organic methods. "The statement that we cannot feed the world using organic methods of production is a lie. We can easily do so. "Before the wars, pesticides were not used. They are a result of companies manufacturing chemicals for warfare and then needing another outlet for their products."

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**When Things go Wrong. 1** While looking at my bees at the rear of my section overlooking the airport, I noticed that one of the hives was crowding outside suggesting that there was a lack of space inside. On taking off the top board, sure enough the top super was almost completely sealed. I got a spare box ready and put it on top. As the hive was leaning, I decided to straighten it up. It was balanced on top of a crib wall, and you can guess what happened next! The whole lot slowly tilted, and disappeared over the wall.

The bottom two brood boxes remained stuck together but upside down, and the other four boxes separated further down the slope. Bees of course were everywhere. After saying an extremely rude word,( only one?! - Ed ) I prised apart the two brood boxes, one 3/4 and one full depth full of honey. I straightened up the floorboard, making sure that it was level and secure! I put the first brood box on the floor, and lifted the second brood box, a full depth one, on to the wall and then climbed up and put it on the other box. In lifting these boxes, I had to be careful as they were upside down, and the frames were all loose!

This had to be repeated with the other 3 full 3/4 boxes, One of these had obviously landed on its corner as it had "losenged" and was certainly not square! With 30,000 plus disturbed bees, mostly in the air I didn't have time to get a new box, so I just reshaped it and put it back on with the last empty box on top. I finally put the cover board and roof back on and left the bees to repair any damage. I retired to a nice cup of tea and remarkably ended up with only one sting. Lessons learnt - make sure that your hives are on level ground and don't rock. I was lucky as this was a docile stock (a swarm that just arrived at my apiary). Who says beekeeping is easy and predictable. **Andrew Beach**

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**When Things Go Wrong 2;** We have had our first run in with the council over our bees due to a complaint about someone being stung. So the officer has been round & seen the hives & been told that they have been here for 18 mths with no complaints & hopefully gone away happy. This has been caused, I think, by the hot weather & the bees looking for water. They have been bothering someone around a pool. So we have put a water tray with rocks & twigs in it for landing, directly on top of the hive. Being cooperative seemed to be the best option, that & telling the council man that the complainant is welcome to contact us direct in the future should bees cause a nuisance again. But it has brought home to us the responsibility you take on as an urban beekeeper to care not only for your hive but also for your neighbours. Being the only one that is known to keep bees in your immediate area means all the complaints will come to you. I have since found out about 2 other beekeepers with hives within 500m of ours so will 'fight my corner' so to speak in the future—prove they are ours! Having the council here was not my first wish for the new year as now they know about the chooks, how many there are, how close to the boundaries they are etc.....oops. Still Upper Hutt has 'recommendations' about urban farming and not rules. So is somewhat easier to deal with than other Wellington urban authorities.- **Kristen Morse**