



**Next meeting** | Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017  
**Where** | Main Hall, Johnsonville Community Centre,  
Moorefield Rd, Johnsonville

**February** is an important month in the beekeeping calendar. Honey extraction should be completed, clears fed back to the bees. Once the honey is off, varroa treatments should be decided and put in the hives. Check on nucs, as they may need further feeding.

### Next meeting's topics

#### Beginner's session: 7:00pm,

Topic: Monitoring and treating hives for Varroa

#### Main session: 7:30pm.

Varroa treatment  
Honey extraction  
Preparing your hives to take them through the winter  
Checking for AFB  
Q & A from the floor

#### Meeting chaired by Carolyn O'Fallon Contents

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## Frank Lindsay – a note from the President

It's been an interestingly wet, cool, windy summer and this has really affected our bees. Slowing colony build-up and slow to bring in any nectar. Some hives produced early but nothing much since. This is perhaps one of the worst honey seasons for twenty years.



### Snow on the Tararua Ranges

Snow on the ranges on the 20th January and massive natural over-irrigating of farm land from the heavens. Our summer seems to be following the northern hemisphere where they also had a bad season last year. I'm still using winter tyres on my truck and this week I used four-wheel drive on some farms.

There could be a bright side. All this cold weather has cause some of our flowering species like pohutukawa and manuka to flower later. Clover still might produce nectar if it dries out. The forecasters are predicting



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## A Note from the President (cont.)

summery weather starting at the end of January. I certainly hope so. Seems the bees think so as some have built up and are swarming again. In the past we have had very late honey flows. Perhaps this is one of them.



### Water-logged pastures

With an eye to swarming, check the second super for queen cells along the bottom bars of the frames. Just tilt the hive back and look (after removing honey supers if you have them on the hive). If you find a hive with swarm cells, create two hives by splitting it in half so you don't lose a swarm. Just make sure you have queen cells in both halves.

This week I have been out looking at the slides under my mesh bottom boards. One or two hives in each apiary are showing high mite falls, so I have given each hive 40mls of formic acid on a paper towel on the slide. This is just a flash treatment and will kill mites in the bottom super but not further up. This treatment is just to keep mite numbers down until I can do a proper treatment when the honey supers are off. Apilife var could be used to do the same thing but just use half a wafer.

In some of my apiaries, you can see robber bees hanging around and some were begging for food. When a bee begs another, the bee will automatically feed it. If the begging bees are from another hive, they will gradually strip out the honey reserves without actually

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## A Note from the President (cont.)

fighting. I have been putting foam plastic strips in the cracks and holes in my honey supers to plug any gaps a bee can get through in an attempt to ward off any robbing should the honey flow suddenly stop.

I have also put rat baits in plastic bottles in my apiaries and at home to knock down the rodent population. Two days ago I found a very sick rat on the back lawn. It had consumed the equivalent of two bates in two different stations so the stations are working.

For those with new hives, feed in the evening so you do not attract bees from another hive to start robbing. Keep the bees building frames and filling them with nectar. A lot of beekeepers around the country will be feeding hives this autumn so the bees have enough food to get through the winter.

February is an important month in the beekeeping calendar. Capped honey should be removed from the hives and varroa treatments put in on the 18th of the month.

The more experienced beekeepers should start making a few nucleus colonies to carry through the winter. These can be used to make up any hives lost during the winter (unfortunately where there's live stock, there's dead stock- it's just part of farming), or they could be sold to new beekeepers wanting to start beekeeping.

What we want to aim at as a club is that all our new beekeepers carry their hives through the winter so they come through with large healthy hives. This means they must have enough honey stored, (six full frames for a single, 10 full frames for a double hive), a queen that is laying well, (a young queen), lots of bees covering most frames and that the hives is relatively mite free. Down to less than one varroa mite per 100 bees using a sugar shake or an alcohol wash.



## A Note from the President (cont.)



Wasps feeding on board under hive



Plum jam attracting small wasps

Wasps are also having a hard time. Note how small they are. These were given a feed of home made plum jam and a spray of fipronil. they had been feeding on sugar crystals that had falling onto the slide by bees robbing the upper supers. the hive had collapsed down from a single box to just two frames because of high mite numbers. I put the bees into a nuc box so they could better defend themselves.

## Swarm in Cleveland Street, Brooklyn

A Wellington street has been held to ransom by a swarm of bees.

Early in January thousands of bees descended on Cleveland Street in Brooklyn.

To everyone's dismay they then decided to re-home themselves outside the local pharmacy. Graeme Blanchard of Brooklyn Pharmacy says the swarm made for chaos.

"A swarm of thousands of bees turned up in the street and terrorised the neighborhood really. There were people staying indoors, staying in shops, in their cars and lots of people getting caught out."

Mr Blanchard said when he contacted Wellington City Council for help he was told to find the bees' owners.

"I wasn't sure how you track bees whether they have tattoos or chips in their abdomens. How do you even track down a bee in the middle of the street and find out who he belongs to?... it wasn't very helpful."

Wellington City Council could not confirm that was the case.

A spokeswoman said if contacted about a bee swarm the procedure is to send a representative out, like a park ranger, to assess the situation. The bees were eventually moved on by a professional at the end of the day.

Who that professional was? Was it you?





## Honey Bee Coalition



### The Coalition

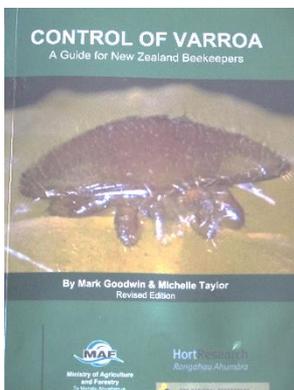
Almost 40 organizations and agencies from across food, agriculture, government, and conservation have formed the Honey Bee Health Coalition with the goal of reversing recent declines in honey bee health and ensuring the long-term health of honey bees and other pollinators.

<http://honeybeehealthcoalition.org>



See this site for videos that demonstrate techniques and products for combatting Varroa mites, including:

Apivar Apistan or Checkmite, Formic acid, HopGuard, Oxalic Acid, Sanitation, screen bottoms, Drone brood removal, Re-queening and Essential oils.



You can also borrow the book, Control of Varroa from the WBA Library, or purchase a copy at Club night.

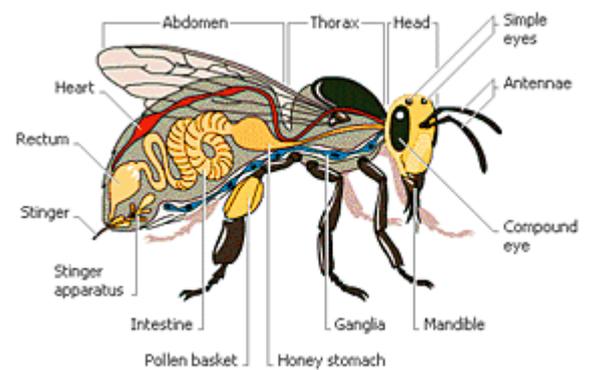
## Beekeeping Quiz

Test yourself on these hard ones!

You might notice a theme to this month's quiz!



Questions provided by Carolyn O'Fallon



1. How many eyes does a honeybee have?
2. How many wings does a honeybee have?
3. What is special about the back pair of a honeybee's legs?
4. What does the expression it's "the bee's knees" mean?
5. Do bees really have knees?



Answers on Page 5



## Beekeeping quiz answers



1. Honey bees have five eyes, two large compound eyes and three smaller "ocelli" eyes in the centre of their head.
2. Four: The front and rear wings hook together to form one big pair of wings and unhook for easy folding when not flying.
3. The rear pair is specially adapted with stiff hairs to store pollen when bees are flying from flower to flower, while the front pair have slots for cleaning their antennae.
4. When something is deemed to be the bee's knees, it means it is excellent, the best, of high quality.
5. Well, the answer depends on who you ask! Some say "no" because while bee's legs do have joints, they don't have a knee cap, so cannot have a knee. Others say "yes" because – like humans – a bee's leg has a femur and tibia connected with a (knee) joint.

Thanks, Carolyn!

If you have some interesting questions about bees and beekeeping, send these to the editor.

## Things to do this month

### February checklist

- Test for varroa mite levels and treat if necessary, especially if in acute phase
- American foulbrood check
- Remove honey before applying varroa treatments
- Extract honey
- Late summer queen rearing
- Check for wasps



API CULTURE  
NEW ZEALAND

## Apiculture NZ Update - January 20

From the CE – Karin Kos

I've been chatting with a few of our members around the country, following interest from various regional media seeking comment about our 2016/17 honey season. Not surprisingly, one consistent theme has come through and that is the unseasonable and variable weather conditions playing havoc with our production. It's not just us though, I see the New Zealand apple industry's also been affected with the cooler weather pushing harvesting out. While that's the nature of our industry and others in the primary sector, I appreciate it's a challenging season for many of you.

Wellington is getting back to business with meetings starting to ramp up, including one with Steve Rich, Manager of the Government Industry Agreement (GIA) Secretariat. Steve tells me that the GIA now has 14 members signed to partnership agreements, with more in the pipeline. It's something we'll be actively working on this year, principally through our Biosecurity and GIA Focus Group. This partnership approach has been clearly signalled by Government as the way forward, with an industry seat at the GIA table a key priority for apiculture.

Government is now indicating it will progress the introduction of cost recovery of industry-related biosecurity incursions from those sectors not part of GIA. For these sectors this means cost but no say in how the money is spent. We need to play our part in helping prepare for, and to minimise, the potential impact from any biosecurity pests and ensure that biosecurity at the border is effective, robust, and secure.



## Garden plants beneficial to bees

Some plants, e.g. citrus, reliably produce abundant nectar despite environmental conditions, whilst other species may not produce much at all.

Once flowers have been pollinated they produce less nectar. Cucumber flowers are a good example as they only produce nectar on their first day of opening.

Environmental conditions that affect nectar production are: air temperature, soil moisture, soil fertility, sunlight levels, plant processes such as photosynthesis, respiration, growth and flower age.

### Poached Egg Plant (*Limnanthes Douglasii*)



### (one half) *Banksia* spp.



Honey bees seem to prefer nectar with equal quantities of glucose, fructose and sucrose. Avoid planting species that have double flowers, i.e. masses of petals. Select single-flowered spp. and cultivars as these are easier for the bees to visit.

It's a good idea to identify and record good bee plants in the 2-3km radius of your apiary. Make a list of the species that have good nectar and pollen supplies and the months that these plants flower. This will give you a good indication when your bees will be most active.

## Common and botanical names of plants

- (one half ) *Banksia* spp.
- Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*, *M. citriodora*)
- Bottlebrush (*Callistemon* spp.)
- Borage (*Borago officinalis*)
- Brassicas (*Brassica* spp.)
- Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*)
- Cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*)
- Californian lilac (*Ceanothus* spp., cvs)
- Catmint (*Nepeta* spp.)
- Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
- Clover (*Trifolium repens*)
- Cucumber, melon, zucchini (*Cucurbita* spp.)
- Dahlia (*Dahlia imperialis*) & varieties
- Echium spp.
- Gum tree (*Eucalyptus* spp.)
- Harakeke / NZ flax (*Phormium tenax*)
- Ice plant (*Sedum spectabile*)
- Kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*)
- Karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*)
- Kohuhu (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*)
- Lemon, grapefruit, orange (*Citrus* spp.)
- Koromiko (*Hebe macrocarpa*) & varieties
- Manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*)[/one half]
- Kumarahou (*Pomaderris kumeraho*)
- Lavender (*Lavandula* spp) & varieties
- Mexican aster (*Cosmos* spp) & varieties
- Mimosa (*Acacia baileyana*)
- Northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*)
- NZ lacebark (*Hoheria populnea*)
- NZ jasmine (*Parsonsia heterophylla*)
- Persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*)
- Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.) & varieties
- Phacelia *tanacetifolia*
- Poached egg plant (*Limnanthes douglasii*)
- Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*)
- Rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*)
- Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)
- Sage (*Salvia apiana*, *S. fallax*, *S. officinalis*) and other spp.
- Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*)
- Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)
- Symphytum grandiflorum*
- Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)
- Tree lucerne (*Chamaecytisus palmensis*)
- Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
- Wharangi (*Melicope ternata*)
- Zinnia (*Zinnia* spp.) & varieties



## Last meeting's minutes

### Wellington Beekeeper's Association. December 2016 Meeting

Meeting held at the Johnsonville Community Centre from 6.30pm (main meeting at 7.30pm) Wednesday 7th December

Chair: Carolyn O'Fallon

#### 7.45-8.30 Guest Speaker – Simon Holst

Simon Holst and Elaine D'Sa from MPI

Food Act 2014. Risk-based approach and a shift from the prescriptive nature of the Food Hygiene regulations. Move to what people do are more important than the premises.

See below for a summary of Simon's talk.

#### 8.30 – 9.00 Mead Competition Results

Jacob van Ruiten judging

15 samples tested. No sparkling mead entries

Dry – 5 entries, Entry no 1 with 8/10 points won – showed good clarity and presentation

Sweet – 3 entries, Nos 18, 11, 12

Open – (melameads) 7 entries. Meads with the addition of fruit and flavours to the must to add extra essence to the honey. Tight selection tonight – no 27 the favourite with 9.5/10 Good nose, clear, smooth. No 30 also very good, scoring 8.5/10. Berry mead (plum, blackcurrant, boysenberry) scored 9/10

Overall winner – no 27. Luke Potion (melamead) 2<sup>nd</sup> PK with no 1 (dry). 3<sup>rd</sup> equal Richard with no 2 (dry).

Hints for next year – use spring water not rain or tap water. Don't heat the mead. Be sparing with the spices. Keep experimenting. Cappings is a good source of honey for mead.

## Last meeting's minutes (cont.)

Aim for sugar gravity of 20%. Will give a medium to sweet honey. Instead of a hydrometer, float a fresh egg with the size of a sixpence showing.

Mead will improve with age and change over time.

What makes mead too strong? Shouldn't get stronger than 14%, but wild yeast may raise the alcohol level a bit higher.

Jacob happy to organise another mead workshop at his meadery.

8.50 **Meeting ended** with Supper and bring and buy.

### Summary of Simon Holst (MPI) talk to the WBA December 2016.

Honey businesses are subject to the National Programme Level 1 for food safety control, which is the level of least risk. All beekeepers wishing to sell their honey need to have honey extraction and packaging procedures that follow the National Programme L1 guidelines. These procedures don't need to be written down, but you must be able to explain your procedures and demonstrate you are following them. Beekeepers wishing to sell their honey must follow these steps:

Step 1 – Confirm your business Fits in L1

Step2 – Make safe food

Step 3 – Find an auditor (verifier) WCC in process of becoming a verifier

Step 4 – Register with MPI or local council - \$150 for two years

Step 5 – get your business checked by the verifier. Verifier will check

1. Training and competency in keeping food safe



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## Last meeting's minutes (cont.)

2. Cleaning. Free of visible dirt, anything in contact with food must be thoroughly clean.
3. Basic hygiene – basin, soap, towels, etc. Don't work with food if ill
4. Sourcing and tracing. Batch or lot number on your honey. Especially if selling to another business
5. Control points. E.g managing agricultural chemicals, environmental hazards, tutin

Tutin control subject to the Tutin Standards Rules – this is the major risk for honey production. NB Tutin control is quite separate from getting your honey extraction process verified.

E.g Verifiers might check – location, storage of chemicals, waste management, etc

New businesses must register now, existing by March 2018

NP Level 1 – guide in final draft form is an overview of the requirements of a National Programme, available now.

Hobbyists – anyone can trade in a food product once a year without being registered. If you want to sell more often, you need to be a business and get verified. This is a one-off fee, registration is a bi-annual fee with MPI or council.

### Q&A:

Q: What about a one-off sale of a large quantity vs occasional sales of small quantities. A. Anomalies will occur, hard compliance is not expected

Q. What about tutin testing? A: Tutin testing is not the same as the registering of a business for Food Safety

Q. What about bartering? A. Bartering is a form of trade. Gifting not included.

Q. What does once a year mean? A. At one time or for one day

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## Last meeting's minutes (cont.)

Q. Do I need to use a registered/commercial kitchen? A: No, but you will need to be a registered business to sell. Honey can be extracted in a home kitchen, if it has been checked and verified.

Useful links:

Food Safety Act:

<http://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/>

National Programme 1 overview:

<http://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/food-act-2014/national-programmes/steps-for-national-programme-1/>

List of Auditors (verifiers):

[http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/register-lists/auditors/index.htm?changes\\_since=&sort\\_by=&rows\\_to\\_return=10&new\\_hits\\_seen=20&setup\\_file=exemptions-auditors.setup.cgi&submit\\_search=See+the+next+269+results#top](http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/register-lists/auditors/index.htm?changes_since=&sort_by=&rows_to_return=10&new_hits_seen=20&setup_file=exemptions-auditors.setup.cgi&submit_search=See+the+next+269+results#top)





## Meeting location

Johnsonville Community Centre, Moorefield Rd



## Who can I speak to?

### President

Frank Lindsay (04) 478 3367  
[lindsay.apiaries@clear.net.nz](mailto:lindsay.apiaries@clear.net.nz)

### Treasurer

John Burnet (04) 232 7863  
[johnburnet@xtra.co.nz](mailto:johnburnet@xtra.co.nz)

### Secretary

Jane Harding (04) 499 4123

### Newsletter editor

Eva Durrant (04) 470 7879 or (027) 3118700  
Please submit contributions by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to:  
[edurrant@xtra.co.nz](mailto:edurrant@xtra.co.nz)

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## Interesting websites

### A Review of Treatment Options for Control of Varroa Mite in New Zealand

#### Important Disclaimer

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<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests-diseases/animals/varroa/paper/varroa-treatment-options.htm>

#### Tutin toxic honey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZsEipIOcmI>

#### Honey bee health (see page 4)

<http://honeybeehealthcoalition.org>

#### Trees for bees for the North Island

<http://www.treesforbeesnz.org/farms/regional-brochures-north>