

Wellington Beekeepers Association Inc.



Our Next Meeting:

When:

**Monday 8 September 2003,
at 7.30 p.m.**

Where:

**Terrace Centre,
Union Church,
Dr Taylor Terrace.
Johnsonville**

Theme:

**FRED BEYELER on Varroa
treatments used on the
Continent**

**Wellington Beekeepers Association Inc.
Monthly Newsletter – SEPTEMBER 2003**

This newsletter is available to members via e-mail using Adobe Acrobat v3 format. The reader software is available from Adobe free of charge. Contact editor@beehive.org.nz for additional details.

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MINUTES OF WELLINGTON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION INC MONTHLY MEETING HELD IN THE JOHNSONVILLE UNION CHURCH HALL JOHNSONVILLE ON MONDAY 11 AUGUST 2003

PRESENT: Frank Lindsay (Pres.), John Burnet (Sec.), Mary Ann Lindsay (Treas.) and 30 members as listed in the attendance book.

APOLOGIES: Cliff Hulston, Fritz Fuchs, John Wallace, Andrew Yung (Acceptance proposed: Andrew Beach, Seconded: Bob Porter – CARRIED)

NEW MEMBERS & VISITORS: Susan Ord (Wgton weekdays and Manawatu weekends)

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: Minutes of meeting held 8 June were read and confirmed.

MATTERS ARISING:

Varroa Update: No change to the infected areas as detailed at last month's meeting. President recommended all members should be monitoring their hives and suggested the sugar shake method (full details are given in MAF's Varroa Control booklet).

Although Paul Bolger has reverted from his role as MAF's Varroa Program Co-ordinator to his previous Apicultural Advisory Officer position, there are now only five AAOs nationwide, based at Hamilton, Christchurch and Invermay – there were originally nine.

BL Fund: Secretary clarified the situation concerning the Club's BL fund balance. Members were also reminded that this fund was similar to an insurance policy but claims would only be accepted for hive deaths caused by AFB not varroa. Destruction of the hive by burning and reporting to MAF are still essential.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Disease Control: MAF Biosecurity Authority was currently distributing a new leaflet to all beekeepers containing information on identifying exotic bee diseases including Parasitic Mite Syndrome. The North Island Movement Control line is being removed but controls remain on movement of bees and beekeeping equipment across Cook Strait.

There were also a couple of new product developments:

- An AFB diagnostic kit which Ceracel would be shortly marketing. This should make early detection of AFB possible.
- Apiguard, a Thymol based product had now been registered in NZ and would shortly be available to beekeepers.

President advised Certificates of Inspection will be mailed by MAF shortly. Beekeepers who do not complete hive inspections as legally required next year will be invoiced by NBA for the inspection cost.

Andrew Beach advised that further to the July meeting he now had oxalic acid crystals available for sale and recommended two grams (half a teaspoon) should be used in each burner per hive. Large tea candles (not the more common small candles) should be used to ensure burner temperature reaches 150 degrees. Supers can be left on the hive during treatment. Usually done as Spring or Autumn treatment.

Tutu Poisoning: President advised a new declaration would be required for completion by all beekeepers selling honey. This change was due to several reported instances over recent years of tutu plant poisoning. (The common passionvine hopper sucks on tutu sap, leaving a sweet but toxic honeydew residue which is then collected by bees when their normal nectar sources run out).

Conference Report: President advised 177 beekeepers attended the recent conference in Nelson (30 from the South Island). Topics presented included: World Honey Market, Anti-Oxidant Honeys, Australian Quality Control, Toxic Honeys, Varroa Resistance, Russian Bee, Varroa UK – Special Floors, Varroa and its control/treatment, Exotic Diseases, Tracheal Mite & EFB, Hive Beetle, Exotic Pests & reporting suspects, PMS Review, New AFB test, Controlling AFB, Training Courses.

Hive Levies: Current proposal is for a basic \$20 PMS levy per beekeeper plus \$8 per hive.

NBA Membership: Following discussion at previous meetings concerning benefits of NBA membership, President outlined the current situation and members agreed the Club should complete membership requirements and join the North Island based Assoc.

Varroa Treatment and Control: Varroa research funding had now been fully utilised and the Government had recently rejected further funding requests. President advised it would take six months to a year for additional funding to be organised. A number of regional beekeeper associations had voluntarily donated funds to enable research to continue and it was suggested that as well as the club donate, members might consider individually donating \$15 - \$30 (cost of 1 – 2 queens).

It was proposed the Wellington Association donate \$500 to NBA from Club funds on condition funds were to be directed to Hort Research for their use on varroa research only. (Moved: Amor Walter, Seconded: James Scott – CARRIED)

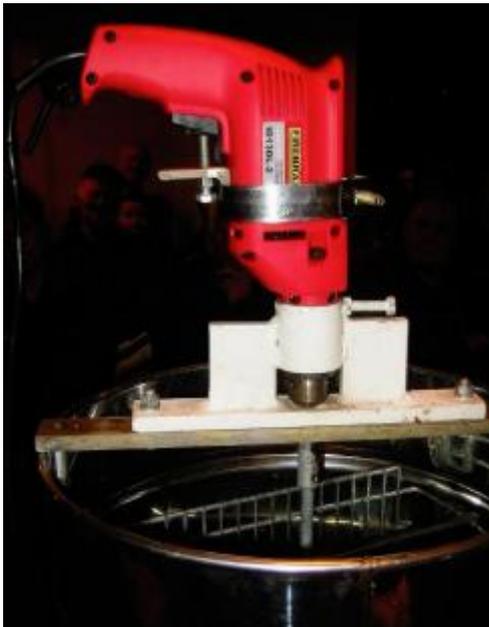
Alternative Varroa Treatment: President advised that two new non-chemical alternatives using food grade mineral oil were likely to become legally available to NZ beekeepers later in the year following Govt registration and approval:

- **Pure cotton wicking** soaked in FGMO (Mobil 307) and honey – laid across the top bars of the top box of each hive every 15 days. Wicking could be reused following resoaking after each treatment.
- **FGMO Fogger** powered by propane gas – produces fog particles less than 15 microns in diameter which suffocates the varroa (but not the bees) and a four second blast in each hive entrance was sufficient. Appliance is unlikely to be cost justified by hobbyists.

An Irish video demonstrating both techniques was shown to members which provoked considerable interest and discussion.

Seasonal Management: Ivan Pedersen suggested an early spring flow was underway and beekeepers should add another super to their hives now. Ivan commented also on the diminishing numbers of beekeepers nationwide and this together with the loss of feral colonies would put more pressure on existing beekeepers to ensure pollination demands are met. President added that the Telford full time beekeeping courses are likely to be discontinued next year due to insufficient demand although the correspondence courses continue to be popular.

Amor Walter demonstrated how his reading glasses no longer fell off his nose inside his veil when inspecting frames as he had recently purchased a neck cord which incorporated a clutch knot – cost approx \$9 from his local optician.

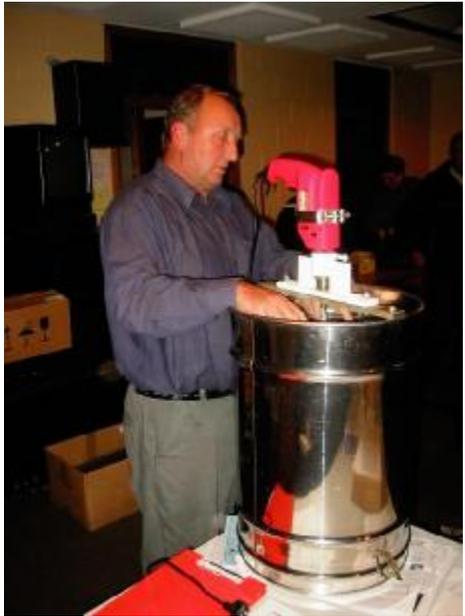


Gadgets & Gizmos:

Wayne Wild demonstrated his manual two frame extractor which he had automated using a \$35 variable speed drill mounted using various fabricated metal parts on the top of the extractor. The set up handled over 250kg of honey last season and Wayne encountered no problems.

One of the advantages in mounting the drill on the extractor, as shown, is that extracting has now become a one-man job, instead of two. Previously one person would be de-capping while the other would be working the extractor. Using the drill replaces one (wo)man, in this case, Wayne's Better Half.

Meeting closed at 9:30 pm.



RAMBLINGS FROM THE HIVE:

Frank Lindsay advises that hives are strong but varroa counts are too and he is having to treat now. He is going to use a 21 day treatment with Bayvarol, which means he won't have to worry about the little bit of honey coming in. The hive in question is next to a Eucalypt, has 4 frames honey in a full super, 12 frames of brood and about 1000 mites. Because we have had such a mild winter, mites have bred up quickly. If not treated it will be dead by February. It is also next to a feral hive so he isn't sure how much is due to reinvasion.

If beekeepers are looking at natural mite drop, it can mean anything from 150 to 500 mites in a hive in 24 hours. Anything more than 1 or 2 mites dropping, you should be treating NOW. For those on the outskirts of the varroa area, you can still use the capping fork to scoop out 12 day old drone brood and look. But generally, most of the Hutt Valley will be infected by Christmas, even if at low levels not easily detected. If you can't detect them, it's not a worry.

Incidentally, it might pay to experiment first if you are using the oxalic fumigation with candle method. Amor Walters advises that he used a frost plug (welsh plug to some of us) and it wouldn't fumigate, ie get hot enough. So possibly Andrew Beech's idea of using a tin lid over the candle is a better method.

Hives are doing well but one in every apiary is running short of food. Some because they have bred up rather well and have chewed through food, while others have older queens who aren't breeding up so quickly. Also, look under the lid of the beehive and check that you have the equivalent of at least 3 full depth frames of stores. Hefting is another method of checking, but not reliable because the weight could be due to pollen.

Most hives should have brood in about 3 frames, minimum. That's not 3 frames, but in 3 frames – you could have 3 half frames, but generally in city areas there may be more.

Any hives showing massive amounts of drone production, mark for early swarming. In other words, you may have to split. Preparing for splitting, ie swarm prevention by splitting hives, will be covered in October.

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AFTERNOON FIELD DAY – October on the Hayward's Road opposite Brittens. Details at the September Meeting and in the October newsletter.

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BUZZZZZZ

Time to check now for adequate stores – at least a couple of full frames of honey. If one hive is doing well, take a frame from here for a hive which hasn't got much. Bees will mostly be in the top box of 2-box hives, unless they are a strong family. Put the bottom box on top and sort out bad frames. Arm yourself with some new frames when you begin this inspection. You might detect mice nests and all sorts in the process so it's a good idea to have a look. If bees are in the top box mice may well be nesting in the bottom and only come out at night when they are safe. I have seen mice nests with young happily co-habiting a hive until the population of bees expands down into the bottom box and pushes the mice out.

If you have spare boxes, don't store them on top of the hive under the hive lid. This creates a "chimney" effect where the draught will draw the bees up under the hive lid where it is warmest, thus setting back their spring development.

Ivan Pederson

FOOD GRADE MINERAL OIL (FMGO) as shown in a video at the August Club Meeting, as a method of fighting Varroa:

The most important thing to note is that "Food Grade Mineral Oil (FMGO) **has not been approved** by MAF for use in NZ bee hives".

However, this treatment does look like a very promising alternative, and hobby beekeepers can hopefully look forward to using it in their hives. Registration, although some way off, doesn't look difficult because FMGO is already recognised as safe to use in the food industry. But for this to happen, residue testing has to be undertaken, probably under New Zealand conditions. Unfortunately no research funds are available at present and it's not on the research list yet.

The recipe given in the video was:

500ml s FGMO 0.86 density
225 grams beeswax
300 grams honey
60 x 500mm long 8mm diameter natural cotton cords

Heat the food grade mineral oil in a metal container (electric frypan does a good job, but don't let the Chief Cook see what you're doing), add the beeswax and stir to dissolve and prevent from burning.

Remove container from heat source

Add honey and cords to soak up the emulsion and then allow the emulsified cords to cool.

The August Club night video showed an Irish beekeeper who had used FGMO for preventing varroa infestation for some years, without using any other method or chemicals. The video was very informative but it is understood to be slightly out of date as some of the protocols for its use have been changed. I think one would be to restrict the ropes to the brood chamber only (below the excluder if you use one).

More information on this treatment is being announced at Apimondia and an article will be in the September ABJ -.maybe FRST will reconsider.

BEE LEVY

The following memo, dated 19 August 2003, has been received by Jane Lorimer, President of the National Beekeepers Assn from the Office of Hon. Jim Sutton:

"I am writing regarding your application for levy order on beekeepers and apiaries under the Biosecurity Act 1993 to fund the American foulbrood National Pest Management Strategy.

On the information and evidence that you and your organisation have presented, I have decided to recommend to my Cabinet colleagues that a two part levy on a) each beekeeper and b) each apiary, with a maximum of one apiary levy charged for beekeepers who own less than eleven hives on less than four apiaries proceed.

I have requested Parliamentary Counsel to prepare a draft Order in Council and I have also asked my officials to keep in touch with you during the drafting of the Order in Council."

Please ensure that this information is distributed as widely as possible to all beekeepers.

SEPTEMBER's speaker is Fred Beyeler, back from Switzerland where he spent a few weeks doing beekeeping, in particular with Formic and Oxalic acids – Apistan is not permitted. Members will no doubt be interested to hear how other beekeepers handle problems which we are about to face.

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OXALIC ACID (crystalline powder)

This is available for purchase by Club members, packaged into 500g plastic containers, for \$4. Treatment requires ½ teaspoon (2grams) Ring Andrew Beech, 04 904 1634 to arrange purchase.

PROPOSED MOVEMENT CONTROL LINE AROUND THE WAIRARAPA.

Notes from a Meeting held 19 August with Paul Bolger and Derek Belton, MAF Biosecurity, to discuss Varroa options for the lower North Island:

1) Any movements of beehive gear, honey drums, wax, propolis, etc, across the line into the Wairarapa will require a permit. Le Supers and bee gear will have to be bee free for thirty days or will required to be fumigated before being moved. Other products will have to be bee free or transported in covered vehicles.

2) Fumigation could be a problem for some, as the Hazardous Substances & new Organisms (HSNO) Act now requires a person using Methyl Bromide to be a certified applicator (the training scheme for this is still in the planning stage) or you will require a pest destruction operator to do this for you. Unfortunately there are very few of them registered to use this product as it is being phased out. Extra gear required will be respirator, plastic covers, tarpaulins, scales etc. This gas is very dangerous & should not be treated lightly. It can cause damage to skin if it collects in gumboots hence these should not be worn during fumigation. Death generally results in 24 hours after an overdose.

The line runs just north of Pahiatua then down to the Waipaua Stream between Owahanga and Mataikora and down the ranges to the coast terminating at the Mukamukaiti Valley by Windy Point on Rimutaka State Forest.

There were several points set during this Meeting although unfortunately space does not permit their inclusion. However, if you are one of the beekeepers affected by the proposed Movement Control Line contact Paul Bolger and register an interest. The Wairarapa Action Group will contact those beekeepers known to be affected.

Frank Lindsay