BEELINES

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEEKEEPERS CLUB INC

OCTOBER 2017

Beginner's course hands on inspection and first official use of the club apiary.

Photos: Stuart Stone.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CLUB APIARY GALA OPENING

15 Oct 2017, 12:00 PM

Community Garden, St Johns Anglican Church,

1 Burgundy St, Heidelberg.

Food / drinks provided (gold coin donation).

NB: Due to numbers attending please park across the creek in Heidelberg Park (it's only 50m further NE along Burgundy St).

CLUB MONTHLY MEETING

Bee Flora presented by Vin Anderson

19 Oct 2017, 7:00 PM

Doncaster Secondary College, 123 Church Rd, Doncaster (Melway 33 G12).

JUNIOR BEEKEEPERS CLUB MEETING

Hive opening and re-queening

21 Oct 2017, 10:00 AM

33 Saxon St, Brunswick.

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2017-2018 COMMITTEE

President	Mat Lumalasi	president@beekeepers.org.au
Vice President	Helmut Huber	vicepresident@beekeepers.org.au
Secretary	Amanda Lamont	secretary@beekeepers.org.au
Treasurer	Stuart Stone	treasurer@beekeepers.org.au
Training Facilitator	Andrew Wootton	training@beekeepers.org.au
General Committee	John Treloar	committee@beekeepers.org.au
General Committee	Lyndon Joss	committee@beekeepers.org.au
General Committee	Dan Milic	committee@beekeepers.org.au
General Committee	Alan Walton	committee@beekeepers.org.au

MANUKA: OURS, THEIRS OR BOTH!

Don Muir

Those members who went on the Tasmanian field trip a couple of years ago will certainly remember our gracious and obliging hosts Lindsay and Yeonsoon Bourke.

Lindsay who is currently serving as the Chairman of AHBIC (Australian Honey Bee Industry Council) is heading the fight and is a driving force behind the formation of the Australian Manuka Honey Association with the aim to protect the word “manuka”.

For many years New Zealand has run a spectacularly successful campaign promoting manuka as a solely iconic New Zealand brand. Early 2017 New Zealand manuka producers commenced action via their countries Geographic Indicators Act to ensure honey labelled as “manuka” and sold globally could only come from New Zealand. The New Zealand industry is attempting to get the rights to the term “manuka honey” and then control who can use it, similar to the French and their control of the word Champagne. New Zealand in every way is attempting to monopolise the almost billion dollar industry.

It is of utmost importance that Australia and Australian beekeepers do all they can to protect our manuka interest. Australia and New Zealand are the only two countries in the world where manuka is produced. Manuka is produced from nectar derived from the leptospermum scoparium trees, commonly known as manuka or tea-tree, which is native throughout the east coast of Australia. Recent research has shown Australia is home and native to approximately 80 species of tea tree while New Zealand has one.

Although New Zealand has done a spectacularly good job at promoting manuka, this does not give them the sole right to the market, and as in many things agricultural New Zealand has put us to shame with their astute business, marketing skills and cohesive policies. It is now that we must as an industry work together and protect our native resources and capitalise on this great asset, and receive our share of the rewards manuka can give the industry.

It is time our honey producers and supplier packers, worked together for the benefit of the whole industry and take the fight to New Zealand for our right to sell this high value honey from our native plant resources under our own name.

While mentioning Lindsay’s name at the start of the above article, I congratulate Lindsay and Yeonsoon on winning the best honey at the 2017 Royal Agricultural show and also winning the Champion Australian Product/Produce Trophy with their Leatherwood honey.

Image RAS Vic

Lindsay and Yeonsoon have now taken their Leatherwood honey to Apimondia 2017 Turkey for the world honey competition. An award he won in 2015 in Korea. Good luck Lindsay!

I also understand Lindsay is looking for a good cabinet maker to enlarge his already impressive trophy cabinet.

FLOW HIVE PREPARATION

John Treloar

Most people are aware that bees are reluctant to draw out Flow frames. My hands-on experience started last season when the Flow super was added to a strong, two brood box Langstroth hive on 24 September 2016.

A little beeswax had been rubbed over the Flow frames 'grating' flakes of wax onto the frames to encourage bees up into the super and start drawing wax. A top hive entrance had also been set up; the idea being that some bees would traffic through the super.

I did NOT put the queen excluder on. In my experience, bees rarely, if ever, draw out even wax foundation above an excluder. They usually treat it as a ceiling and very few bees traverse it. As a result, the brood boxes under the super can become congested and the hive swarm. If you wish to use an excluder, add one later when the frames have been drawn.

Within two weeks there were quite a few bees in the super but by the end of October little progress had been made. It had been a wet winter and spring and there was only a small nectar flow on.

Mid-November saw the start of the main nectar flow. In early December, I found some crazy comb in box 2 with the bees looking for more storage space but making minimal progress in the super, even though bees numbers in the super were increasing. Flow frames are drawn last!

By January 15th Flow frames 2 to 5 had been filled with capped honey. Even though I had decided not to put the excluder on, no brood was ever laid in the super frames.

Over the next month or two I extracted 18 kg from the Flow hive. Cling wrap around the top of a tub kept curious bees away. It took about 30 minutes to completely drain a frame.

The Flow super was removed for winter and the frames rinsed out before storing.

This year the Flow super was added in early September. The bees readily moved into it and are working furiously. And the queen excluder? Yes, that's still in the shed.

CYCLONE DEBBIE.

While we have heard much of the overall damage caused by the recent cyclones in North Queensland we have not heard much about how it affected local beekeepers. According to the AHBIC August newsletter one beekeeper lost 250 hives along with the cyclone stripping all the flora, so his problem is loss of hives and lack of food resources for his remaining colonies. We imagine this story would be repeated many times.

The loss of flora is a problem that is going to take up to 12 months to fully recover from.

I would pose the question "is there any way a club of our size in Melbourne can assist these industry colleagues, could we make a donation of pollen replacement, bulk sugar or similar. Worth thinking about!

I will put this back to the committee for consideration.

B-QUAL

It is becoming increasingly obvious that governing authorities and consumers are both demanding higher quality standards from our industry. Producers who are selling their product now need to develop production and packaging food safety programs.

Is B-Qual only for commercial beekeepers?.... No

If you are semi commercial or a hobbyist and selling your honey at market stalls, fetes, or direct to shops, stores or public you should have a food safety program regardless of how many hives you control.

B-QUAL Australia Pty Limited has been established by the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) as an independently developed and audited food safety program. B-QUAL aims to ensure that 90% of honey produced in Australia is quality assured for both the domestic and export markets. The adoption of these standards will enable continued market access both in Australia and overseas.

B-QUAL aims to address the current industry biosecurity codes of practice including an auditable biosecurity plan. It is also proposed that the adoption of a national quality standard will form the basis of an ongoing program, to ensure industry best practice and ongoing industry training.

Product standards include all facets of production and services of the industry including honey, queen bees, pollination and honey packing. The resulting system will provide a self-policing means of ensuring standards are kept at industry best practice and meet the domestic and international market demands.

Why Become Certified?

Your Enterprise can then demonstrate that it is operating in accordance with the industry requirements and expectations of consumers, markets and regulatory authorities, in relation to the key issues of food safety and industry best practice.

B-QUAL Certification also enables an enterprise to market its product under the prestigious and industry owned B-QUAL logo to show your clients that you meet the B-QUAL industry standards.

Requirements for Certification

Participate in the B-QUAL education program;

Develop a QA (quality assurance) manual which includes operating procedures that demonstrate how the enterprise meets the requirements of the industry standards;

Maintain records that these procedures have been adhered to for all honey that is prepared by the enterprise; and,

Undergo a third-party audit of these procedures, records and facilities at the enterprise.

For further information you can go to the B-Qual website http://www.bqual.com.au or contact Don Muir editor@beekeepers.org.au or mobile 0404 38 1942 and I will be happy to supply further information.

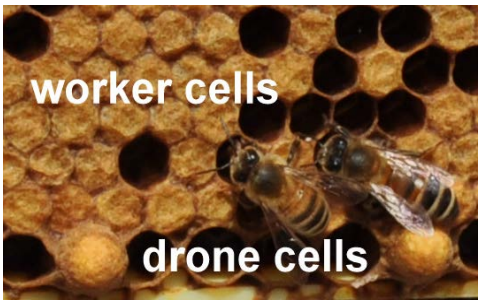
RECOGNIZE THE TYPES OF BROOD CELLS.

Supersedure

Supersedure

Swarm

Drone Cells



Eggs and larvae.

Supersedure Cells: Bees sense when they need to replace their queen because she is sick or old. They make a new queen by feeding a young larva with royal jelly, and build a supersedure cell around her. Supersedure cells are found hanging vertically in the middle of the frame. As top image shows. These are sometimes mistaken as swarm cells by inexperienced beekeepers. Rarely, if ever a colony will swarm from a supersedure cell, as the colony has decided just to replace the old queen.

Swarm cells hang vertically off the bottom of the frame and are of similar shape as per top right hand image. Swarm cells are made when the colony has decided to swarm and prepares for the old queen and about half the colony to depart.

FLOW HIVE PREPARATION FOR SPRING

Yvette Doumis

Alex & I have enjoyed wonderful success with this our first hive since attaining them in November last year.

I thankfully attended the "Winter Workshop - Improving Your Beekeeping" in July, to further equip myself with all the knowledge and confidence to attend to our strong two-brood box hive this spring in the hope that we could expand and maintain this thriving colony. We enjoyed our first "harvest" earlier this year and certainly want more of where that came from!

Naturally I continue to read up on the signs to watch out for and the steps required to be undertaken early spring, before I knew it I noticed a small number of bees scouting around and checking out a recently fallen dead tree trunk.

With Alex now interstate for work, 4 weeks out of 5, I've lost my bee buddy, so last week I enlisted Jim my husband to assist me at night to further inspect the limb and possibly relocate the swarm if indeed they had swarmed!

This wasn't the case however so the very next day in near perfect conditions I mustered up the courage to open, split and clean the hive! All went well while I quietly and methodically worked my way through each box ensuring an even distribution of very young larvae over 2 boxes. I spotted queen and drone cells and was thankful for the all-important classes. Changing the boxes was also timely as they did need a good clean.

We have prepared our foundation frames for both hives in readiness for adding a new super to each hive and while there is still time before the flow hive supers are needed, we have coated all 12 flow frames with beeswax and have them securely stored until they will be required.

Last year the bees had no trouble in moving up into the wax coated flow frames.

Nothing for it now but to keep the hive location clean, keep on inspecting & look forward to that flow of honey!

AMERICAN FOULBROOD DISEASE

AFB is caused by a spore-forming bacterium, Paenibacillus larvae, which only affects bee brood up to 3 days old; adult bees are safe from infection. At the initial stage of colony infection, only a few dead older larvae or pupae will be observed. Subsequently, if remedial action is not taken, the disease will spread within the colony and can quickly spread to other colonies in the apiary as a result of robbing, drifting workers, or contamination caused by the beekeeper's hive manipulations.

Symptoms at the initial stage of AFB infection, are isolated capped cells from which brood has not emerged can be seen on the comb. The caps of these dead brood cells are usually darker than the caps of healthy cells, sunken, and often punctured.

I remind all members that the National Bio Security Code of Practice now requires that all beekeepers submit a test sample of honey for the Laboratory AFB test. Kits are obtainable from the club or direct from Gribbles Pathology Ph.1300 307 190 The test cost of $ 34.50 plus GST is fully refundable by the club. AFB is currently the most costly and deadly disease facing the Australian honey industry today; help keep it under control by taking the test.

WHAT IS THE HONEY LEVY - SHOULD I BE PAYING IT?

The only exemption from payment of the honey levy applies when the producer sells less than 1500kg of honey per calendar year. Any producer selling over 1500kg annually of honey must pay the honey levy, (this generally would be anyone with 50 or more hives), unless he/she is selling to a packer in which case the packer distributor would pay.

These levies fund:

Research and Development (R&D)

Honey bee R&D targets pest and disease research, productivity, profitability, the role of flora in honey bee management, extension, communication and capacity building.

Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA)

Provides resources for EADRA and is also used to meet industry's contribution to the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program.

National Residue Survey (NRS)

Manages the risk of chemical residues and environmental contaminants in Australian food products including honey.

If you think you will pay less than $4,000 in a year as a levy then you should apply to do an annual return and not do quarterly returns. This way there is only one charge for an annual return and you will not pay for four (4) quarterly returns thus reducing collection costs and making more money available for the purposes the levy of 4.6c per Kg is intended for.

Further details on the honey levy can be found at http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies/rates/honey.

So help your industry if your sales exceed 1,500kg per annum please pay your share of the levy.

JUNIORS MEETING.

The October meeting will be held at Saxon St Brunswick on 21st October 2017, 10.00am.

This will be the first opportunity we will have to fully inspect and work through the hives since winter and if the new queens arrive we will re-queen at the same time.

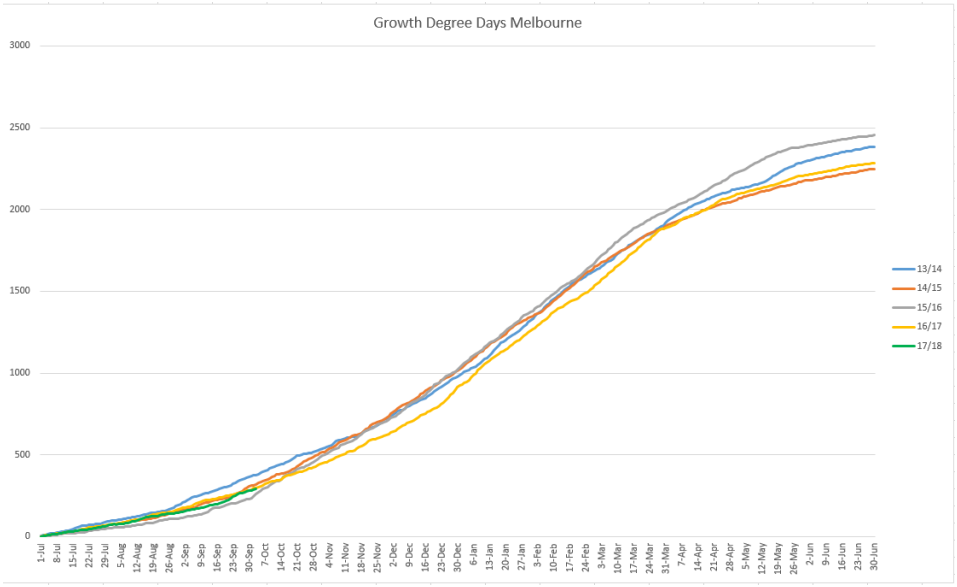
I ask if any member with Flow hive experience is prepared to come to our November 18th meeting and set up the Flow hive and explain the methods employed to encourage bees into the flow frames.

SEASON UPDATE

John Treloar

The nectar flow depends on how quickly plants bloom and that depends, in part, on temperature. Growth Degree Days (GDD) is one way of measuring heat accumulation and provides a good guide to predicting how the season is progressing, as explained in Andrew's article "Four seasons in a day: Melbourne's weather and its impact on bees" in Beelines December 2016.

So how's this season shaping up?

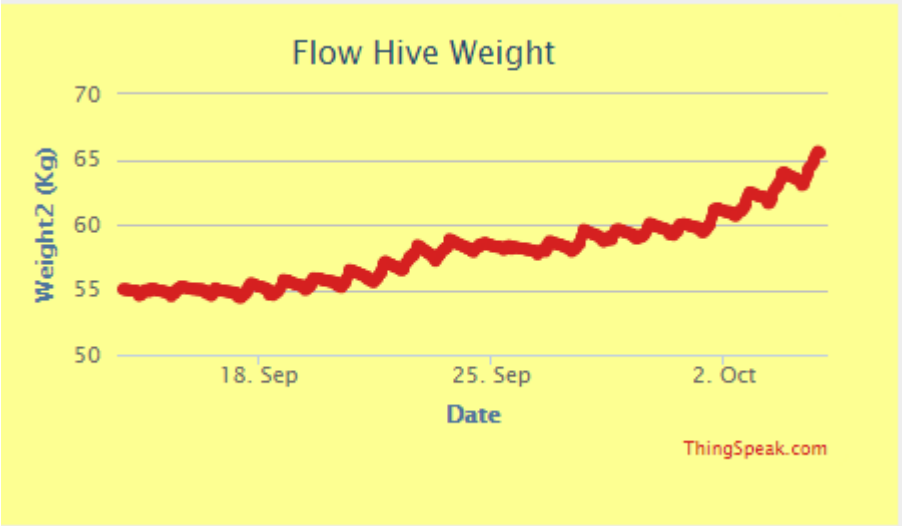


The graph shows that progress so far is average to what's happened in the last 4 years but it's early days. Note how last year's GDD dropped off markedly from mid-October and the effect on hive build up was noticed by many beekeepers.

Melbourne's inner south-east has experienced a good nectar flow since mid-September as evident by hive weights and the great odours in the apiary. My Flow hive has put on 10 kg in the last couple of weeks.

With good hive build-up and weather, it also seems to be a strong swarming season. I've heard of, and been involved with, several swarms already so there's good opportunities for those looking to establish hives.

For those with hives, have you been checking for congestion in the brood box and not just adding supers? Have you found queen cells and know what to do? Make sure you have enough spare equipment and have a great beekeeping season!



CLUB APIARY:

The club apiary had its first event over the weekends of September 30th and October 7th when we hosted the practical hands on hive opening for participants of the September beginner's course.

The venue proved a 100% success, and I can report that the colonies have progressed extremely well since their relocation to the site.

The site proved more than adequate for its purpose, room for all participants to be fully engaged in the opening and participate.

The instructors for the course and practical were John Treloar, Stuart Stone, Amanda Lamont, Andrew Wootton, Mat Lumalasi and Don Muir.

Thanks to Stuart Stone for the photos.

DISCLAIMER