

# BEELINES

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEEKEEPERS CLUB INC

March 2018



*Club Intermediate Workshop, 10th March*

## Upcoming Events

### Club Monthly Meeting

#### **Mead Making**

15th March 2018, 7:00 PM

Doncaster Secondary College,

123 Church Rd, Doncaster 3108

### Club Apiary Hive Inspection

A routine hive inspection will be held at the club apiary for any new or interested members. Bee suits and gloves will be available to borrow.

Saturday March 24th 2018, 11:00 AM

St John's Anglican Church,

1 Burgundy St, Heidelberg 3084

Please register on club website so we know expected numbers.

### Annual Honey Competition

This will be held at the May 17th meeting. Jars available at the March meeting; *Honey and mead entries to be submitted in April.* Please see page 5 for entry details.

### Banyule Arty Farty Festival

Sunday 18th March, 10 AM until lunchtime at St John's Community Garden. The club will be presenting an information stand with the observation hive and need volunteers to assist in talking to the public. Please contact Mat Lumalasi if you can help.

## Committee Contacts

President

Vice President

Secretary

Treasurer

Training Facilitator

General Committee

General Committee

General Committee

General Committee

Mat Lumalasi

Helmut Huber

Amanda Lamont

Stuart Stone

Andrew Wootton

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## Hive Cleaning and Sterilisation

*Don Muir*

European honey bees are subject to infection and infestation by a range of diseases and pests. These include insects, mites, fungi, viruses, and bacteria, such as the microbes that cause American or European foulbrood (AFB and EFB). Honey bees are social insects and are always at high risk, so it is essential that beekeepers not only recognise the signs of such pests and diseases, but also know how to reduce their impact in colonies.

### A key factor in preventing the spread of infection is good apiary hygiene

So when should you clean and sterilise your beekeeping equipment?

- ◆ At the end of the season or before reuse.
- ◆ When your colonies have experienced an infection or infestation of pests.
- ◆ Before using or reusing old stored spare or second hand items you have purchased.
- ◆ Any items which may have been associated with AFB infection must be gamma irradiated.
- ◆ Even apparently healthy colonies can harbour organisms that cause disease. The spore forming bacterium responsible for causing AFB can exist in a colony's combs, supers, equipment and the ground around your hive and remain capable of developing disease for up to 70 years. It is therefore important to maintain good standards of hygiene at all times, even when pests and pathogens are not obviously present in an apiary.
- ◆ Replace old brood combs with foundation or new drawn comb on a regular basis and burn or render old comb.
- ◆ Always clean hive tools between inspections. A wipe to remove excess honey, wax and propolis is all that is required.
- ◆ Ensure you give your hand equipment, smoker, hive tools, bee brushes etc., a good clean between working different apiaries.

### Sterilisation with disinfectants, at the end of or start before a season

Brood boxes, supers and other beekeeping equipment can be effectively sterilised using disinfectants containing hypochlorite. Sodium hypochlorite is present at a concentration of about 3% in household bleach. Some research has shown that immersion for twenty minutes in a solution of 0.5% sodium hypochlorite kills AFB spores and other bacteria. In this case you therefore need to make a solution of one part household bleach to five parts water. It is essential that the spores are in contact with the solution, so any items immersed must be thoroughly cleaned. NOTE: this is not enough nor is it an approved treatment if you have had AFB in that equipment; if AFB has occurred YOU MUST destroy or irradiate.

### Sterilisation using washing Soda crystals

Hive tools can be cleaned using a solution of washing soda crystals (Sodium Carbonate). This can be made up using 1 kg of washing soda to 5 litres of warm water with a dash of washing up liquid to help clean off propolis. Immerse the equipment in the solution, while using a wired brush or steel wool pad to scrub off residues until the tools are clean. Smokers can be cleaned externally with the same mixture using steel wool pads and the tar build-up on the inside of the lid can be scraped off. Alternatively the tar can be burnt off by applying methylated spirits and lighting.

### Frame cleaning

Lay some newspaper down on the surface where you will be working. Break off the old dirty comb and scrape all the frames as thoroughly as possible so that any excess propolis or wax falls onto newspaper underneath. This material can then be burnt once you have finished. Ensure you remove all comb and wax from the frame grooves. Prepare a mixture of soda solution (1:5) in a bucket or tub large enough to hold frames and withstand direct heat, bring the water to the boil (I sit my

metal tub on the BBQ). Then submerge your frames in the boiling soda solution for a minute or until the frame is clean of any remaining wax and propolis. Remove the frames from the soda solution and then leave them to dry. Be careful and wear good protective gloves.

## Gamma Irradiation

Wooden hive components, such as stored supers and empty combs, that you suspect have been in contact with AFB can be sterilised by gamma rays. This will kill organisms without damaging the equipment. Alternatively they can be destroyed by burning. It is also a good idea to irradiate second hand equipment you have purchased without proof of any treatment. Sterilisation in Victoria is carried out at Steritech Dandenong South Ph. 8726 5566.

## Queen excluders

Queen excluders need to be cleaned and sterilised in different ways, depending on the type used. Begin by removing debris by scraping with a suitable tool. It is easier to remove propolis when it is cold so it is a good winter job, as propolis will be brittle under these conditions. A wire brush is very useful to remove bits of wax and propolis. Wire excluders can then be scorched using a blow torch.

It is possible to scrub these clean with a solution of washing soda. This needs to be fairly concentrated (1 kilogram of soda to 5 litres of water). A dash of washing up liquid in the mix also helps.

## EFB and AFB are notifiable diseases

Both EFB and AFB are notifiable diseases in Victoria. This means that if you suspect or a honey test has shown that your colonies are affected by either of these diseases you must report this to the Bee Biosecurity Officer, Jessica Hartland or an Apiary officer (Joe Riordan or Daniel Martin) for further advice and instruction. If a visual inspection gives you the suggestion of disease, even before diagnosis is confirmed, close the hive and reduce the size of the entrance to about a

quarter of the normal size and take any other steps necessary to prevent the hive being robbed by other colonies in the immediate area. Disinfect gloves and other beekeeping equipment with a strong solution of washing soda or bleach before examining other colonies. If AFB is subsequently confirmed the apiary officer will give you further instructions as to the course of action to be taken.

## Bio Security Matters

I remind all members of the need to read and adhere to the nationally endorsed Biosecurity Code of Practice, including:

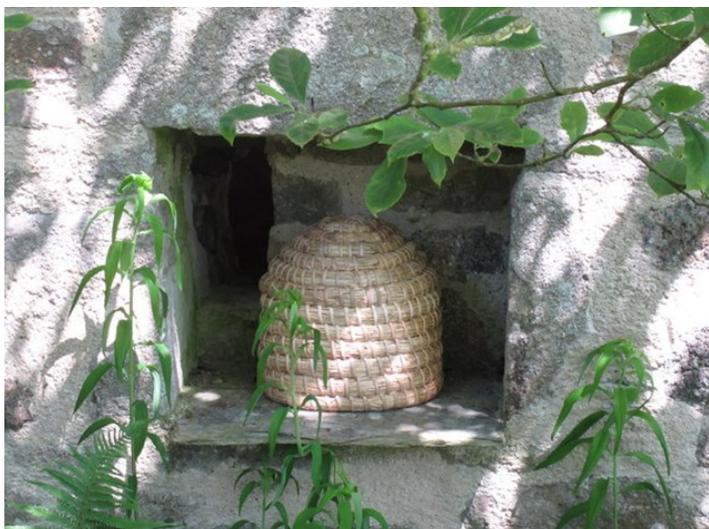
- ◆ The requirement to register your number of hives. It is also a requirement you provide an accurate count of the number of hives you have, and notify of any purchase or sale of hives.
- ◆ You must report the detection or suspicion of any notifiable disease to the apiary officers by the quickest practicable means.
- ◆ The beekeeper must have knowledge of the pests and diseases that are notifiable diseases in the state or territory where the hives are located.
- ◆ You must inspect your brood box specifically for signs of disease, at a minimum of twice a year at least 4 months apart, but more frequently if required.
- ◆ At least twice a year again at 4 months apart conduct a sugar shake, alcohol wash or drone uncapping test for presence of arthropod pests.
- ◆ Manage your hives to maintain strength, a large colony has a better defense than a weak hive.
- ◆ You must also maintain your hives strength to prevent robbing. (Robbing is a major cause of disease spread).
- ◆ You must keep accurate records of hive inspections and they must be made available for inspection by an Apiary officer if requested.
- ◆ You must keep all equipment in good condition. No gaps or rot holes that can encourage robbing.

The club has hard copies of the Biosecurity code of practice. If you have not got a copy ask at the door to receive one for free. Please read and adhere to all sections. It is an important document and it is incumbent on all beekeepers to do the right thing in the fight against pests and disease.

## Skeps

*Andrew Wootton*

Prior to the invention of the removable frame hive, most European beekeepers kept their bees in skeps. Beekeeping was commonplace, as most mediaeval households maintained bees for both honey and wax. Skeps were made from cheap and readily available local materials. Straw or sometimes wicker was coiled and bound with strips of briar. Typically the skeps were waterproofed with dung or covered with a straw hackle. Alternatively they were kept in sheltered alcoves known as bee boles, some of which can be seen to this day.



*Bee bole and skep at Godolphin House cc-by-sa/2.0 - © David Hawgood*

In their heyday beekeepers would drive the bees from the combs, often using Sulphur and destroying the colony in the process. Consequently, the bees were encouraged to swarm to maintain numbers. "Skeppists" were expert swarm trappers, using nets on the hive entrances in peak season.

Nowadays it would not be legal to keep bees in a skep as the combs cannot be removed for disease inspection. However, skeps can still find a use in the modern apiary, apart from the obvious decorative and historical interest. They make ideal containers for collecting swarms, being lightweight, breathable



and giving purchase for the bees to cluster inside. My own interest stems from just this childhood memory of collecting swarms in the UK with my father.

Jodie Goldring is an artist and basket maker from the Ballarat area and had a commission to make a skep. Together we spent a halcyon day, learning to make skeps, in her case with stunning results (mine remains a work in progress, but is a flat topped version suitable for swarm capture).

Jodie is offering to run a skep making workshop in Melbourne in July. If you would like to participate, email me

([andrew.wootton@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.wootton@gmail.com)) so I can gauge



*Jodie's finished skep*

interest. We need between 8 and 10 people to make it viable. Cost would be approximately \$100 for the day (materials provided) and you would take home your probably  $\frac{3}{4}$  finished skep to complete in your own time.

## Trevor Weatherhead AM

Many of us will remember Trevor Weatherhead who came to our club in August 2016 and updated us on the *Apis cerana* incursion in Townsville and Cairns, North Queensland.

Trevor, who is Executive Director of AHBIC, was recently appointed a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM).

I am sure all will join with me in congratulating Trevor on this award given in recognition of the great effort he has given to the apiculture industry.

Trevor has been involved in biosecurity issues affecting our industry since the 1980's. He has also been involved with AHBIC, and its predecessor the Federal Council of Australian Apiarist's Association (FCAAA) for many years and also served as President of the Queensland Beekeepers Association.

I am sure all The Beekeepers Club Inc' will join with me in congratulating Trevor on this very well deserved award.

## Victorian Beekeeping Clubs Conference 2018

The inaugural Victorian Beekeeping Clubs conference will be held at the Mercure Ballarat Hotel and Convention Centre, June 2, 2018.

The aim of the Conference is to connect with hobbyist, recreational, sideline and commercial beekeepers from across Victoria. Conference delegates will hear from informative and inspiring presenters including researchers, educators, entrepreneurs, biosecurity specialists, innovators and authors.

Information and registrations available at:  
[www.vicbeeclubs.com.au](http://www.vicbeeclubs.com.au)

Cost: \$90

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/213230205909968/about/>

## Annual Honey Competition

Results announced at the May 17th meeting

Categories:

- ◆ Light Honey
- ◆ Medium Honey
- ◆ Dark Honey
- ◆ Creamed Honey
- ◆ Comb Honey
- ◆ Wax Candles / Sculptures
- ◆ Mead / liqueurs
- ◆ Honey cakes, biscuits, slices
- ◆ Photos

### **Honey and mead entries to be lodged at the April 19th meeting.**

- ◆ Ensure you use the correct honey jars.
- ◆ Jars are available from the front desk at the March meeting.
- ◆ Marks are deducted for odd size jars.
- ◆ Comb honey can be in any container with lid.
- ◆ Capped honey frames should be in a suitable stand or container.

Photos (digital submission) to be emailed to [photo@beekeepers.org.au](mailto:photo@beekeepers.org.au) by April 30, 2018.

Entries for photo print competition (15x10cm) at the event itself (May meeting).

Entries for honey cakes, biscuits, slices to be brought to the event itself (May meeting).

All baked items require a minimum of 3 pieces per plate. Preferably use a paper plate. Honey from any source can be used.

### *Terms and conditions of entry*

- ◆ Late entries will not be accepted for judging.
- ◆ By submitting photos, entrants agree that these may be used in the club newsletter or other material published by the club.
- ◆ Photos may also be taken of other exhibits and used in club material.
- ◆ Entries will be stored by the club in a safe and secured area and returned at the May meeting.

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