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From the President

A warm welcome to members who were elected into executive positions at the recent AGM.

Over the past 12 months, many members have brought great ideas to the monthly meetings in dealing with beekeeping problems. This has undoubtedly been of benefit to other members, both new and experienced. Please continue to share your ideas.

We are having some trouble sourcing venues for the monthly meetings. It would be appreciated if more members could offer to hold a meeting at their residence, to take the load off other members who seem to be hosting the meetings quite regularly. Please give this some consideration.

Happy beekeeping and see you all at the next meeting.

Tony.

Last Meeting

The last meeting was held at the home of Shirley Ashman and Merv McDonald, Wardell Road, Dalwood.

The weather was fine and a number of hives were inspected before lunch.

Hives were inspected for signs of AFB infection. Merv demonstrated the process of testing using an 'AFB Diagnostic Test Kit'.



Hive Inspections by Club Members



AFB Diagnostic Test Kit Demonstration

After lunch, a club meeting was held, followed by the AGM. Those who were elected to club positions are listed below:

- President – Tony Lamont;
- Secretary – Shirley Ashman;
- Treasurer – Peter Dickson-Smith;
- Editor – David Fairhall.

Congratulations to those who were elected/re-elected.

Many thanks to Brian Window for his efforts and many hours spent compiling the newsletter over recent years, for a second stint! Although stepping back from the newsletter editor role, Brian will continue to run the library and bring a paper copy of 'The Amateur Beekeeper' along to monthly meetings.

The new shade structures were put to good use. Now if we could only stop the sun from moving throughout the day!

Thank you to all the members who brought along honey products to be judged for the club entries in the Colonel Pulling Competition.

New Equipment

Stephen and Janet Fowler carry most common beekeeping equipment, including a range of extractors, both manual and electric. They also carry a range of jars and pots for honey sales.

Please contact Stephen or Janet for further details (see the Equipment Officer contact details above).

Please be aware that wax prices are going up (see advertised prices in the April 2016 issue of the ABK). Foundation prices are expected to increase as well.

Hives and Nuclei

Some members are looking for hives and nuclei. Please contact Stephen Fowler if you wish to supply colonies.

Steritech Trip

The latest load of irradiated equipment arrived back from Steritech on March 30, 2016.

Please contact Brian Window or Stephen Fowler regarding irradiation of club members' AFB infected equipment at Steritech.

Learn Beekeeping Course

Please continue to pass around the beekeeping course brochure to anyone who may be interested in participating. Course positions are filling fast. A second course may be run if there is sufficient interest.

The first course is due to start on June 18, 2016.

In Flower

The most important tree for honey and excellent pollen that is in flower currently, is the common paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*). It flowers three or more times in Autumn, separated by about three weeks. Lismore has just seen the end of the second flowering for this year.



Melaleuca Quinquenervia

Another tree that flowers about now is the swamp mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*), not to be confused with the relative of the brush box, which is a good honey tree flowering in Summer. There is the occasional swamp mahogany in the street plantings in Lismore, and some are flowering now. The honey is dark and it does not provide a heavy crop.

Hive Management

Continue to check for pests and diseases, especially AFB. If signs of AFB are suspected, one of the more experienced beekeepers in the club can be called upon for assistance. Be careful not to spread AFB to other hives.

Now is the time to extract the last of the honey crop and check for honey stores in preparation for winter. The mild local climate means that the colonies do not need a lot of honey to survive winter. Plenty of honey in the brood box (on the sides and around the edges) is probably all that is required. Honey may also be left in the supers. This provides the bees with extra winter stores but may candy and be difficult to extract in Spring.

It is also the time to ensure that hives are in a warm and sunny position. If they are not, move them in readiness for winter.

The repair of existing equipment or construction of new gear should start now, in preparation for Spring.

Swarm Recovery

Tony and Geoff have been busy recovering a swarm colony from the Italo Club, Lismore. The colony was well established in a wall cavity. The job was made somewhat more challenging than usual, with the nest entrance high up on the second story.

Three 5 frame nucs of bees have been recovered from this nest already, with a fourth nuc now in place. The first two nucs recovered had to be placed into 10 frame boxes due to the number of bees present.

Tony recovers the bees by placing a mesh funnel over the nest entrance, which prevents re-entry of the flight bees. The trapped out bees are then attracted to a nuc or hive box which is located nearby, into which a frame or two of brood has been added. A caged queen is added to the nuc after a few days. Eventually, the swarm colony abandons the nest as the stores of honey and pollen decline.

Tony has recovered around eight swarm colonies this season by this method. Recoveries have taken place from buildings and trees at Richmond Hill, Wyrallah, Lismore, Rock Valley and Casino.



Swarm Recovery – Richmond Hill



Tony Hard at Work at the Italo Club, Supported by Geoff

Native Stingless Bees – Nest Defence

In the manipulation of our hives, we have all had the painful experience of honey bees defending their nests. Australian native stingless bees are, as their name indicates, without a sting. This begs the question, how do stingless bees defend their nests? The answer is a combination of defensive nest structures, biting with their mandibles and the use of sticky resins.

The nest entrance is kept small and the construction of an entrance tube forces intruders to pass by guard bees in an attempted nest entry. Guard bees bite soft-bodied intruders and apply resin to those with hard bodies. In fact, the application of sticky resin is effective in the immobilisation of the small hive beetle. The beetle is then either chewed apart and removed from the hive, or stuck to the nest wall where it becomes a permanent feature of the nest structure.

Although stingless bees have limited ability to defend themselves against larger predators, including humans, they certainly deserve credit for trying. When a hive of stingless bees is opened, the biting of soft body parts causes discomfort or minor pain. One option is to cover up and use a veil. However, the smaller body size of stingless bees in comparison to honey bees means that access may still be gained through some veils (I speak from experience! – Ed.).

Smoke is ineffective in calming the defensive behaviour of stingless bees. They will not abscond from their nest site in response to fire. Therefore, they have not evolved the behaviour of preparation for nest abandonment in the presence of smoke.

Upcoming Events

1 May, 2016 – Monthly meeting, Possum Creek.

15 May, 2016 – Colonel Pulling competition, Mittagong.

June 18, 2016 – Learn beekeeping course, Northern Rivers.

Newsletter Submissions

Thank you to all members who made contributions to the newsletter.

Newsletter submissions can be emailed to Newsletter_NRABA@bigpond.com by the 10th of each month. Photos are greatly appreciated.

Next Meeting

The April meeting will be held at the home of Jennifer and Mark Joiner, 243 Possum Creek Road, Possum Creek. The meeting has been pushed back until Sunday 1 May, 2016, due to the ANZAC Day long weekend.

The day will start with morning tea at 10 am followed by the beekeeping activity for the day at 11 am. Lunch will follow at around midday, which is great value at \$5 per head. A monthly meeting will commence after lunch.

The planned beekeeping activity is hive inspections for winter stores and brood health.

Please remember to bring along either a morning tea item or a salad to share. Raffle items are always appreciated. Don't forget to bring along your own chairs.

From Lismore, follow Bangalow Road to Bangalow. At the first roundabout in Bangalow, head towards the Pacific Highway (North). Merge onto the Hinterland Way (the old Pacific Highway), then after approximately 600 m, turn left into Possum Creek Road. The Joiner's residence is approximately 2 km on the left.

From Ballina, follow the Pacific Motorway north. Take the Bangalow exit. At the roundabout, continue north on the Hinterland Way (i.e. there is no need to go into Bangalow). Possum Creek Road is approximately 1.8 km on the left. The Joiner's residence is approximately 2 km along Possum Creek Road on the left.

Bee meeting signage will be in place.