



AUGUST 2011

Taranaki Beekeeping Club



WHAT'S ON IN TARANAKI

Greetings Fellow Beekeepers.

Your new beekeeping season is about to start with the queen beginning to lay as the weather warms up. Currently it is warm in the sun and the Spring buds are swelling.

Coming through the Waikato last weekend, I was surprised to see a lot of Daffodils and Snowdrops in full bloom and the central city gardens are beginning to get some colour too with beds of polyanthus in full bloom. There is a lot of pollen being taken into the hives on bright warm sunny days at the moment so let's hope the weather continues to be reasonable and not suddenly return to Winter for two or three weeks.

As the bee numbers increase, so will the numbers of eggs laid by the queen each day, as there will be more bees to keep a larger brood nest warm. This pace will quicken when the Willows begin to flower and produce their nectar and pollen. The queen will be stimulated to lay when this happens as there will be a great excitement in the hive as the supplies arrive and the fresh nectar can be fed to the young bees rather than having to go to the stores for last season's honey. This is when you have to watch the quantity of stores in the hive. A good policy is to have a quantity of dry white sugar in a feeder in the hive as insurance against them running out of honey. If they don't require it, they won't use it and will deteriorate only slowly if it is kept dry. If you have less than four frames of capped honey on the hive currently or any time in the future, I would advise that you give a couple of feeds of syrup to that hive as quickly as possible to maintain egg production and hive viability. With a lot of mouths to feed stores can run very low very quickly.

If you haven't looked at your bees since wintering down, wait for a still warm day and then inspect them. Whilst you are about it, scrape

the bottom boards to clear all the detritus and see if the outside combs are good

enough to go through another season as they will probably be nearly empty and may be filled with old pollen.

Replace any comb removed with last year's honey comb from storage to maintain frame numbers in the super and maintain stable hive temperatures.

We may see some early swarms next month so 'be prepared'. Either guard against it happening or have your gear ready to go so you can collect it. If you don't want to increase your hive numbers, you can also return it to the hive but you will have to remove the queen first if you do.

We will be discussing all these procedures at the next meeting in the Plunket Rooms on Mon. 15th at 6.30 pm. and remember it is the beginning of the season, so what you do now will assist the colony to get off to a good start and hopefully be in good order when the Summer arrives.

Adrian.

Next club meeting

15th August 2011

In the PLUNKET ROOMS

6.30pm

Next to New World Supermarket

Third Monday of every month



The honey bee is probably one of the best-known of all insects in the world; it performs a vital role in the pollination of flowering plants, including our crop species. There are three 'castes' within a bee hive, a 'queen' (the reproductive female), the 'drones' (reproductive males) and 'workers' (non-reproductive females). All three castes are broadly similar in appearance; the body is covered in short hairs, and is divided into a head, a thorax and an abdomen, the head features two large eyes and a pair of antennae. The thorax bears two pairs of wings above, and three pairs of legs below and there is a slender 'waist' between the thorax and abdomen. The queen has a much longer and slender abdomen than the workers, and the drones can be identified by their broader abdomens and much larger eyes.

The honey bee is a social insect and they live in colonies called hives. There can be upwards of 20,000 bees in a wild hive and because domesticated hives are managed they can have considerably more.

There is generally only one queen to a hive and her sole function is to lay eggs. She can lay up to 1500 eggs per day and can live from two to eight years. She generally will fly just once to mate with the drones. The drones die as soon as mating has taken place. She does have a stinger which is not barbed like the worker bee, so she can use it many times.

The drones have no stinger and their sole function in the hive is to mate with the queen. They live about eight weeks and at the end of the season are forced to leave the hive and die of starvation.

The worker bees take care of all the tasks that are necessary to keep the hive working efficiently. They make up the largest proportion of the hives population and are all sterile females. When first hatched they take care of the housekeeping duties, feeding the brood, feeding the queen, cleaning and air conditioning to maintain the optimum temperature in the hive, building comb and defending the hive against intruders. Older bees leave the hive and forage for nectar, pollen, water and plant resins used in the construction of the hive. Generally, a worker bee will live for about six weeks through



spring and the height of summer but if hatched late in the season will live through the winter. Worker bees are well designed for what they do. They have a structure called a pollen sack for transporting pollen back to the hive and they have an extra stomach for storing and transporting nectar. They also

have four specialised glands which excrete wax, which is used in building the hive. They have a straight barbed stinger which is used in defending the hive and can only be used once as the venom sac is pulled out of the bees abdomen and the bee dies.

The worker bee may forage up to 12Km from the hive to collect nectar and pollen. They communicate to others exactly where the food source is by performing a coded dance called a waggle dance, which tells other worker bees what direction the food source is in and how far away it is from the hive.



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