



DECEMBER 2011

Taranaki Beekeeping Club



WHAT'S ON IN TARANAKI

Seasons Greetings Fellow Beekeepers..

This year seems to have sped past but the Spring seems to be hanging on longer than usual with the cool nights and the periods of frequent rain. Earlier dry sunny periods allowed the bees to stock up on supplies and most beekeepers should have a box of honey on their hives. Commercial beekeepers are thinking of, or already have, started their seasons extractions. The real problem this season has been to try and prevent the hive from swarming! The weather has been in Spring mode for longer than usual and the occasional bright sunny day has provided assurance for the swarms that there will be enough food available when they leave home to start up another colony elsewhere. Those Beekeepers who have neglected to inspect their hives and remove the queen cells will now have small colonies with a small work force to collect the nectar that will arrive after Christmas.



This Summer is of the El Nina pattern apparently, we have been told, which means lots of sunshine and slightly drier than usual. This adds up to a good honey season, so those with large foraging colonies will reap the rewards of their diligence earlier on.

When the Sun shines brightly, we will have a good nectar flow as there is plenty of moisture in the soil and plants will be growing and flowering well. If you are going away for Christmas then you should put on your empty super of honey comb to be filled up – they can do this in a fortnight if conditions are right!

If they run out of space to put their stores, then they may swarm or sulk. Bees that run out of storage space are very difficult to persuade that summer has not ended, even if you give them more space, and stop collecting as they have sampled a spell of laziness and like it.

If you are short of supers you can take out any frames that have been capped, extract them and replace them back in the hive – but do this in the evening to prevent robbing. Frame contents that are less than one quarter capped will ferment and will not keep.

The Club hives are in good order and we will have a Field Day in January instead of the monthly meeting to see how well behaved they have been over the Christmas Holiday. This will be in place of the usual third Monday meeting in town. Let us pencil in Sun. 22nd of Jan. '12 at 180 Egmont Road at 2 pm.

I hope you all have a very enjoyable Christmas Holiday and that the New Year will be better than this year.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL.

Adrian.

Next club meeting
TO BE ADVISED
In the PLUNKET ROOMS
6.30pm
 Next to New World Supermarket
Third Monday of every month

Honey lovers scoffing the New Zealand delicacy could be getting an over-sweet deal. Crown Research Institutes GNS scientist Karyne Rogers says some Kiwi honey is failing an export test to detect sugar levels in honey, and that product could end up on supermarket shelves.

But Rogers said there was no suggestion honey producers were adding sugar. Some people were failing the test unnecessarily, and she was now working on changing it to rule out legitimate honey being rejected for export.

"We know there was a large shipment turned away recently. That was through no fault of the company, there was no adulteration, it just failed a test that we are working to change internationally."

With the manuka honey industry worth \$120 million alone, she said it was important New Zealand got it right, and some of the failed product could be the result of poor beekeeping. "We don't know if people are removing sugar or feeding it."

She said although it was rare, in some cases beekeepers were overfeeding their bees with sugar and water during low-pollen months.

"Some beekeepers put a large amount of material out and just leave it because the hives might be in a remote place."

She said the best solution was to feed bees honey. "That's all they need, it's why they are making honey, it's their food storage. Traditional beekeepers don't remove all the honey on the frames, they leave some."

NZ Beekeepers Association president Barry Foster said it was rare, but he did know of exporters failing the sugar test. If beekeepers continued to feed their bees close to the honey flow, sugar could get into the end product, he said.

Sunday Star Times

Hotter days needed to prompt busy bees

Posted December 15, 2011 09:32:24

Photo: [Busy bees will need hotter days \(ABC TV News\)](#)

Map: [SA](#)

Bee keepers are struggling with their honey production because of a mild start to summer in South Australia.

Production was strong during spring but honey flows have dropped significantly in recent weeks.

Ian Roberts from the Apiarists Association says a consistent run of 30-degree days is best.

"When there's no honey flow the bees tend to want to rob each other, pinch it out of the hives you've got open, so virtually you have to stop working them and wait until there's a bit more of a honey flow," he said.

"Looking at the weather pattern it's not looking all that hopeful."

Scientists have discovered that, just like humans, honeybees often find the best way to resolve indecision in a colleague is to administer a swift clout round the back of the head.

While such practices are now largely frowned upon in most human organisations - though any potential *TechEye* interns have to learn how to make good tea somehow - for bees it is a vital tool in problem solving with long periods of procrastination.

According to researchers from Sheffield University, such a physical approach to curtailing indecision is remarkably similar to how neurons in human brains stamp out umming and ahing.

When bees are looking for a new hive, they organise themselves into systems very much like that of neuron structures in human brains.

A number of scouts are sent out to eye up potential property. Those which find a place with potential do a cool 'waggle dance' to attract attention, presumably in the manner of a gleeful estate agent when the customer's left the room.

This dance is essentially a sign to other scouts that they have found a lovely hole in a tree somewhere. However, there's often a likelihood that others too have found similarly suitable properties. This leaves the bees with a decision: either decide on a move quickly or risk the whole hive's safety.

Faced with such an important decision with equally viable options displayed by the troupe of waggle dancers, a choice has to be made.

This is where it all gets a bit like the working of the human brain. Just like brain signals inhibiting certain neurons to narrow down the decision making process - and avoid the brain owner standing around like a late-night Burger King customer perusing the meal deals - the bees are given crude 'stop signals'.

Said stop signals involve decision making bees seeking out dancing scouts and reducing the options by bashing them in the head and making "shrill beeping sounds".

The scientists reckon that bees 'stop signals' could tell us something useful about the functioning of our brains, as the similarities are so striking in terms of functionality.

"This remarkable behaviour emerges naturally from the very simple interactions observed between the individual bees in the colony," the boffins said.

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Club contacts

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NEED A NEW QUEEN?

I have queens and queen cells for sale
Queens \$30 Cells \$4 each can be picked up
from Adrian's place or Saturday market. Must
be ordered 3 days in advance

Stephen & Fiona

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