



Beekeepers Association of the ACT

**Newsletter of the Beekeepers Association of the
Australian Capital Territory Incorporated**

Meetings of our Association are conducted on the third Thursday of every month (except December) at the Yarralumla Primary School Hall, 24 Loftus Street, YARRALUMLA, ACT 2600

Contact: President – Cormac Farrell (0422) 441 358

Email: enquiries@actbeekeepers.asn.au

www.actbeekeepers.asn.au

<https://www.facebook.com/BeekeepersAssociationoftheACT>

August 2016

Next Meeting

President's Report

Biosecurity update- concrete honey

SIG-native bees

Hive management updates

Training update

Working bee report

Book review

Make a Swarm Trap

Retirement-Des Cannon

Food box initiative

Links to our websites

Classifieds

**Monthly meeting: 18 August 2016, Yarralumla Primary
School at 7:30pm**

AGENDA

1930 Introduction & Welcome: President (Cormac Farrell)

1935 Beeginners Corner

1955 Getting ready for Spring: Dick Johnston will talk about preparing for Spring, with tips for those with bees and those wanting to start beekeeping this season.

He will also cover his experience with a flow hive.

2030 Networking (light supper)

2100 Meeting close

Steve O'Hearn Secretary (0408) 657 871



President's Report

Dear Members,

Spring is definitely here a little earlier than usual, and my hives have definitely burst into action over the last few weeks. Is there a better time to be a beekeeper? The blossoms are all out in force, the hives are in full production and swarms are just around the corner. It is a great time to split your strong colonies to make new ones, or even try catching your own swarm.

We have a great roster of experienced swarm collectors in the Association, and it is gratifying to see that the 'Save the Bees' message is getting through to the public. More than ever people are calling our swarm collectors rather than killing a colony.

Speaking of expansions, we had a successful working bee to create a new hive pad at our Jerrabomberra Wetlands Site last month. I wasn't able to make it on the day as I was in Japan at a Judo training seminar, but I heard great feedback on the day. Congratulations to the hive management group for

organising such a successful day, and sincere thanks to the members who participated. This site continues to grow in capacity, and both City Farm and the Association have big plans to turn this into a premier urban agriculture demonstration and training site.

With the good comes the bad – I had my first experience dealing with a suspected AFB outbreak in my father's hive, and used the gamma irradiation service to disinfect his hive so that it was not lost. It put a silver lining on the experience when the system worked really well, and I got sterilised boxes back ready to be filled this swarm season.

Our engagement with biosecurity continues to deepen, with the signing of a contract with Plant Health Australia to manage sentinel hives around Canberra Airport. We will be looking to form teams of members to spread the load of managing these, and it is a great opportunity to learn the advanced monitoring and detection approaches for exotic pests. Check out the call for members to get involved in Frank's article below.

Hopefully a skill that you will never need, but it could lead to opportunities like volunteering to contain outbreaks and incursions (like the one in Townsville right now). We have the daughter of one of our stalwart members, Dick Johnston, working on this right now – and he has of course been proudly bragging about this!

Looking forward to seeing you all at the meeting!

Regards,

Cormac Farrell, President

Biosecurity update - 'concrete honey'

by Juli Poole

At our July meeting, **Hayley Pragert**, our Bee Biosecurity Officer, introduced us to a new pest to the ACT, the giant willow aphid, *Tuberolachnus salignus* (Hemiptera: Aphididae). A European/Asian aphid species, the giant willow aphid (GWA) was detected in New Zealand and Tasmania in 2013. Since then, it has been found in the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales. It was detected in Victoria for the first time in 2014, in Wodonga and Melbourne. GWA is a relatively large aphid (up to 6 mm in body length) with a distinctive pattern of spots and a prominent "shark-fin" like tubercle on its abdomen. The large amounts of honeydew it produces are attractive to European wasps and are also likely to stress the willow and poplar trees it feeds on, especially during dry periods.

A new concern has arisen with the spread of the giant willow aphid. Reports from New Zealand have linked this aphid to a phenomenon dubbed 'concrete honey'.





New Zealand beekeepers have found when bees feed on large amounts of GWA honeydew, the honey they make can be hard and crystallized, making it difficult or even impossible to extract. Honey yields are reduced.

The attraction of large numbers of European wasps to the aphid honeydew can also increase wasp attacks on beehives. Beekeepers are urged to monitor nearby willows and poplars for this aphid to reduce the likelihood of 'concrete honey' and reduced yields.

Information and pictures from [Agriculture Victoria](#) and the [Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Tasmania](#)

See the additional information from Hayley on the **Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice (the Code)** with this newsletter.

Contact Hayley should you require any further information on pests and diseases:

Hayley Pragert

Bee Biosecurity Officer

Department of Primary Industries

T: 02 6391 3652 | M: 0438 677 195 | E: hayley.pragert@dpi.nsw.gov.au

[Latest varroa outbreak update](#) from the **Australian Honey Bee Council**

Special interest group on native bees

If you would like to participate in this group or make a suggestion, contact me at peterabbott@iinet.net.au or on 0421 227 315.

Peter Abbott

Native Bee SIG Coordinator

Hive Management updates

National Bee Pest Surveillance Program

Last season your Association commenced the 'hands-on' ACT component of the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (NBPS) in the ACT, as part of a formal agreement with the Federal Government (Plant Health Australia) and the ACT Government. Six of our Association hives, located at CIT Bruce and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, are now designated as the ACT program sentinel hives. Under the agreement, we are required to regularly check these six sentinel hives for varroa and other exotic mites using sugar shaking, as well as conduct exotic pest awareness and training (including at our Feb 2016 Field

Day). These undertakings have enabled us to play a part in this important program, and establish good working relationships between our Association and Plant Health Australia and the ACT Government.

The 'hands-on' component of the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (NBPSP) is based around surveillance activities each 6-8 week period.

Plant Health Australia have asked that the six sentinel hives in the ACT be focused around the Canberra Airport, due to the commencement of direct international flights. They have also asked that we expand the ACT NBPSP activities to include a wider range of surveillance methods, including drone brood scrape checks (for varroa), sticky mats, floral sweep netting (in plain speak: three hour periods of butterfly net waving around bee friendly flowers in hotspots near the airport to see if any exotic bees, wasps, hornets, flies, etc have arrived) and catch-boxes (empty nuc sized boxes set up just as you would for your 'bait-hives' at home). As you will be aware, there have been a number of Asian honeybee (AHB) incursions, some with varroa, at various international ports along the coast. The Asian honeybee swarms range in size between closed fist (even this size is enough to establish a viable hive) and basketball size, which makes them much harder to find than the European honeybee swarms we are accustomed to.

How can you help? We are still finalising the precise details and locations, but are looking for volunteers to form six teams to each take care of a sentinel hive and catch box (and probably perform one floral net activity each year). Training will be provided by Hayley Pragert and other bee experts (Des Cannon has already agreed and we will seek others) during the year.

You do not need any specific bee skills (beginners welcome), just a willingness to help out for most of the surveillance checks every 6-8 weeks (about 1/2 a day) as well as looking after your allocated sentinel hive for the year. This is a great opportunity to improve your bee pest and disease management skills at no cost, at the same time as making a direct contribution to the National efforts to keep the many exotic bee pests out of the ACT.

To sign up, simply contact either the ACT NBPSP co-ordinators: Jeff Matsen or Frank Derwent or one of the six National Bee Pest Surveillance Program team leaders below:

- * Sentinel Team 1: Cormac Farrell jagungal1@gmail.com
- * Sentinel Team 2: John Grubb the.grubbs@gmail.com
- * Sentinel Team 3: Dick Johnson bindaree@netspeed.com.au
- * Sentinel Team 4: Alan Wade alanlynnnewade@me.com
and Steve O'Hearn gooster777@gmail.com
- * Sentinel Team 5: Frank Derwent forderwent@home.netspeed.com.au
- * Sentinel Team 6: Jeff Matsen snow.gum@hotmail.com

Nuking a hive - Disinfecting hives with gamma irradiation

Last month I had to do something that I have been dreading ever since I started beekeeping - dealing with a suspected outbreak of American Foulbrood (AFB). It is the worst disease currently affecting our hives in Australia, and is always fatal to the colony. It is a bacterial disease that attacks the brood, eventually killing the colony. The spores of the bacterium, *Paenibacillus larvae* infect the honey and other bees robbing the dying colony spread the disease. NSW Dept of Primary Industries has a great [fact sheet](#) on the disease.

My father's hive down the coast started to show a general lack of vigour and had some areas of discoloured, sunken brood. While we weren't able to absolutely confirm that it was AFB, the hive was clearly failing, so the decision was made to kill the hive and seal it until it could either be burnt or prepared for irradiation. In areas where burning is the only option, petrol is normally used to kill the colony, but we went with pyrethrum-based insecticide, as this breaks down quickly and we wanted to re-use the hive after decontamination. The hive was tightly sealed to prevent robbing while we prepared for wrapping up the boxes.

Barrier systems

You are going to be handling material contaminated with bacterial spores. While these can't hurt you, you really, really don't want to spread this to your other hives. Buy disposable gloves, and consider a barrier suit used for painting and don't forget to cover your boots - you don't want to walk spores around your bee yard.

Disposing of comb and unwanted hive parts

I arrived down the coast to find that the hive was still tightly sealed, and we started by digging a burn pit next to it, which was lined with heat beads and sticks to generate hot coals. It is really important that the pit is deep enough to contain all the coals and ashes, with room to place at least 30cm of soil over the top. You also need to follow any restrictions on fires. You want a complete kill of all spores, and glowing coals are the best way to achieve this. The base of the hive, dead bees and the combs were then fed into the fire to destroy them.



Preparation for irradiation

The boxes and the hive top were double bagged inside heavy duty garbage bags and taped at the corners with duct tape, before being transported up to Canberra for irradiation. The disposable gloves were then double bagged and sent to landfill.

The Association has a dedicated service for this, and it was remarkably cheap and easy. You call to place the order, fill out and sign the form and leave it (and the fee) for pickup. You need to be sure that there will be no leakage or runoff from the boxes, as this attracts a clean-up fee.



The only thing that I would do differently in the future would be to try harder getting a sample to test. Even though I am sure that we made the right decision, it is still frustrating that we weren't able to confirm if it actually was AFB. Despite this, the actual process of irradiation was pretty straightforward, and was definitely a lot cheaper than completely replacing the hive.

AFB is an awful disease, and it was one of the worst feeling that I have ever had when I realised that we had to kill the colony, but it is the only way to save others. Having access to a fast, efficient and relatively cheap service to disinfect the hive boxes made it a lot easier to take. I have the hive boxes back now, ready to be pressed into service catching swarms this spring. If anything, I am even more determined to help get on top of this now, and to kick AFB out of the Canberra region for good.

Cormac Farrell
President

Special interest groups: Top bar and Warre beekeeping

The Hive Management team are seeking nominations for the formation of special interest groups (SIGs) for top bar and Warre beekeeping. If there is enough interest, the top bar SIG would be given one or more top bar hives at Jerrabomberra Wetlands to look after for the year, with the same applying for a Warre SIG. These hives would need to be managed in accordance with ACT and National beekeeping laws and codes of practice, as well as the Association's own hive management requirements.

For more details contact Hive Manager, [Jeff Matsen](#), or Assistant Hive Manager, [Frank Derwent](#).

Become a BAACTI hive buddy

Simply e-mail [Jeff Matsen](#) or [Frank Derwent](#) and ask to be placed on the e-mail distribution list for hive management activities. There's no specific time commitment, just come when you can and help out. No need to have any beekeeping experience. If there is enough interest, we may even be able to allocate a beehive for the year to a small group to look after under guidance - a great way to get hands on beekeeping experience if you do not have a hive at home.

Good beekeeping!

Jeff Matsen
Hive Manager
snow.gum@hotmail.com



Training Update

Jerrabomberra Wetlands (JW) Courses.

A second 'Introduction to Beekeeping' course was conducted at JW on Saturday 24 July; 15 students attended. My thanks to **Cordellia Dalton** for assisting with the conduct of the course. A third 'Introduction to Beekeeping' course was also held on 14 August with the course fully subscribed.

On the basis of the interest shown, I plan to conduct another 'Introduction to Beekeeping' course on **Saturday 10 September**. Registration details will shortly be promulgated to all members.

For Training Tutors

I am currently compiling a roster for this season's three CIT Backyard Beekeeping courses. Each course will be held over two consecutive Saturdays from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm. I am currently liaising with CIT Solutions management and our Committee with the proposal to conduct the second and third courses at JW Training Centre. My thanks to those tutors who responded to be involved in this beekeeping season.

John Grubb
Association Training Manager
Email: the.grubbs@gmail.com

Working bee report - Sat 23 July - Jerrabomberra Wetlands

As planned we held a Working Bee at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Apiary (JWA) on Saturday 23 Jul 16. The weather was against us and it was bitterly cold but we were able to get the job done. I would like to acknowledge the help of Simon Cooke, Deborah Reynolds, Helen Moffett, Cordelia Dalton, Alan Wade, Frank Derwent and Jeff Matsen. Paul Phillips kindly baked up a pile of food which was washed down with some of Alan's top shelf Ginger Beer. We accomplished the primary task of building the bases for the Sheepyard Apiary and cleaning out the old shed. There is still more work to be done to make the shed pest and weather proof.



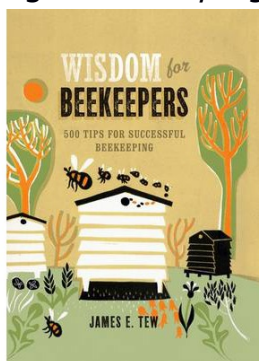
We've since laid plastic weed matting and have had 5 cubic metres of gravel emptied into the pads. They should be ready to take hives in the next couple of days and the Sheepyard Apiary will be ready to enhance the Annual Field Day by having up to four staging areas for presentations. Thank you all....it was a great outcome.

Steve O'Hearn
Association Secretary

Book review

Wisdom for Beekeepers: 500 tips for successful beekeeping

by James E. Tew For anyone keeping bees, the author's first sentiments ring true '*Keeping bees is a mixture of craftsmanship, artistry and luck*'



Written by a life-long beekeeper for Australian beekeepers both novice and experienced, the tips in this practical hardback are easy to read and simple to understand. Tew does not push a specific agenda. Early on you are reminded that there is no standard procedure for beekeeping (tip#3) and you need to choose a level that's right for you (tip#5). The tips cover everything you need to know from equipment, pollination, bee biology and behaviour, ailments and the beekeeping year, to uses of honey and honeybee byproducts. There's a helpful index.

It's rather like having a friendly mentor you can call on for a chat. A wonderful present for the beekeeper in your life! Hardcover published by [Five Mile Press](http://www.fivemilepress.com.au) 2013 ISBN: 9781743466032

Make A Swarm Trap: 'fix and make' returns this month with our last workshop for the season

by Dermot Asis Sha'non

In this workshop you will construct your very own swarm trap – a DIY safe house for honey bees. Afterwards, you can take it home and install it with the hope of providing shelter to a local bee colony. Join in on this pre-fab trap design workshop to also learn about swarming, swarm traps, and the best time and locations to install them. In collaboration with Hotel Hotel's resident beekeeper you will learn what to do if you attract a colony and how to protect their complex architecture including wax and comb.

By setting up swarm traps in our cities, suburbs and the bush, we can prevent the destruction of bee colonies. Long live the bee!

We invite you to experience this fascinating workshop from 9am to 12pm on Saturday 27 August. It will be run by a collective including Nic Dowse of beekeeping kitchen/studio Honeyfingers, Canberra beekeepers Dermot and Sarah Asis Sha'non and Rachel Elliot-Jones from interdisciplinary design practice Many Many.

This workshop has already caused quite a buzz, with only 20 places available and tickets already flying. Don't miss out.

What: **Make a Swarm Trap workshop**

Where: **Fix and Make Shed, Hotel Hotel**

When: **Sat 27 August, 9am - 12pm**

Cost: **\$90 / \$60 concession**

Tickets: <http://www.hotel-hotel.com.au/fixandmake/events/make-a-swarm-trap-2/>



Notice to ACT Beekeepers: Retirement from Queen Breeding - Des Cannon

It is with regret that some issues with eyesight in one eye have forced me to retire from queen breeding. I will no longer be able to supply any queens to local beekeepers. This also applies to the small number of beekeepers who pre-ordered a few queens for the coming season – my apologies to those people. I will be keeping five hives, but all my other hives and nucleus hives are committed to buyers already.

I am still available in the future to discuss any problems that any beekeepers experience, and will still be putting *The Australasian Beekeeper* together, so I will still be involved in beekeeping. After 38 years, I am not about to get rid of all my hives!!

Please feel free to contact me on 6236 3294, or 0411 271 161, at any time. Many thanks to all for your support over the years,

Des Cannon

The Canberra City Farm Food Box Initiative:

An opportunity to be in touch with the people who produce your food, teach you about where and how your food is grown, and show you what it takes to feed a community.

Please join Canberra City Farm on 21 August 2016 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm for their Food Box Initiative Pilot, as described at the Beekeepers Association of the ACT July meeting. Click the link below for more details.

<http://www.urbanagriculture.org.au/food-box-initiative/>

Micah Wood

Canberra City Farm

Food Box Initiative Coordinator

canberracityfarm@gmail.com



Our website: www.actbeekeepers.asn.au

It's all there in one handy location: information, news, forums and links. Register to take part in the forum discussions, ask a question or provide advice.

Have you taken a look?

More photos and information from our [forum](#) at the [website](#) or [Facebook](#)



Classifieds

Seeking guest speaker

Canberra Girls Grammar School Early Learning Centre are seeking someone to act as a guest speaker for their students later this term. The students have shown a keen interest in learning where honey comes from and how it is made. They are looking for someone who might be able to share their beekeeping knowledge, and perhaps bring in some items for the children to see. The children involved are 4 years old.

Please contact Kate Columbine, Canberra Girls Grammar School Early Learning Centre on 6202 6458 or email Kathryn.columbine@cggs.act.edu.au

Club caps

Members are entitled to **one FREE** club cap per subscription. Any member who hasn't received a club cap, and would like one, can pick one up at the Treasurer's table after the monthly meeting. **Additional caps are \$10 each.**



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