



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

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

September 2017

Monthly meeting: 21 September 2017, Yarralumla Primary School at 7:30pm

AGENDA

- 1930 Introduction & Welcome: President (Cormac Farrell)
1935 Beeginners Corner
1955 Presentation – *Spring Primer* by our Vice-President Dermot Asls Sha'non
- 2030 Networking (light supper)
2100 Meeting close

Phil Andrews Secretary (0408 539 579)

President's Report

Dear Members,

Spring is finally here! Flowers are out, our hives have woken up and most of us are looking for the right weather to open hives and inspect. After a tough summer and autumn, there are a few hives here and there that didn't make it due to starvation, but nothing like the loss rate we hear about overseas. Having healthy bees is one of the great perks of living in Australia, and we should be both grateful and vigilant.

Knowing what to look for during inspections was one of the most daunting things about beekeeping as a beginner, but it is also one of the most important. I am really pleased to see the hard work from our training team pay off in the form of the first set of beginner and natural beekeeping courses run wholly by the Association. We had previously partnered with Canberra Institute of Technology, but this did increase the costs to students. It also limited the range of courses to some extent. Running the courses ourselves helps push the costs down, and also allows us to run specialty courses covering advanced beekeeping techniques.

Of course, we are not all beginners in the Association, we have a significant cohort of intermediate beekeepers like myself – we have slowly grown to own more hives than our partners are comfortable with, we are known as 'the weird bee guy/girl' amongst our friends, and are confident in managing our colonies in a competent fashion. We know what works for us most of the time, and when to ask for help about something unusual. The field mornings that the hive management team will start running through spring and summer are geared towards both beginning and intermediate beekeepers. We are lucky to

have some true experts in the club who can answer questions and run practical demonstrations, and these will also be a lot of fun.

You should have also received an email with the details for the members survey that is happening this month. Just in case you didn't, the info and links are below.

The survey is not intended to replace the face-to-face contact that the committee has with members, this will always be the best way for us to connect. However, there is a lot of value in a formal snapshot of views, and it gives us a chance to ask directly what people want out of the Association, and will feed into an upcoming committee planning session. The results will also guide our approaches to the development of training courses, and our joint efforts with the ACT Government to identify and control bee diseases.

Finally, this month's meeting will feature a detailed 'spring primer' by our Vice President Dermot. These are always great sessions, and I find that I learn some new trick every time we do it – I hope to see you there.

Regards,

Cormac Farrell, President

Member's Survey

Welcome to the 2017 members survey for the Beekeepers Association of the ACT. We run these from time to time to gauge the views of our membership. With a significant growth in our members, we wanted to actively seek your views so that we can keep the club relevant and useful.

Our overriding mission is to foster good beekeeping practice in the ACT and region, so we have some important questions on training needs. We also work closely with the ACT and Federal governments on biosecurity and disease control, so we have included some questions on this.

This year there is an added reason to take part – the folks at Australian Honeybee have donated one of their beautiful polystyrene hives as a prize (www.australianhoneybee.com.au/polystyrene-bee-hives). These are a fantastic design that bees love – I use them myself.

If you would like to go in the draw please enter your name and contacts at the final question. The winning entry will be drawn at our October Hive Buddies session at Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

Link to the survey is here: [FILL OUT FORM](#)

Bee Buzz Box September Bumper Edition

Getting the Buzz

Well, spring has started with a winter blast, one not conducive to that vital colony checking program and certainly not one to get that early bee buzz. While the dry winter is not propitious for good early ground flora or for a major summer honey flow, these things are hard to read, the bees may be flourishing and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Apiary may turn up trumps.

Any competent beekeeper starts the beekeeping season with a thorough apiary check. That means close inspection for everything that matters: the state of hive materials, especially crook frames and bottom board integrity as well as the detritus the floor that may accumulate over winter, the status of the bees – bee brood pattern, the amount of brood and bees – and, importantly, the queen. How well is she laying, what is the temperament of her offspring, is the queen present the same one you put in last spring (only a previously marked queen will tell) and indeed how old is she?

Bees are extremely vulnerable in early spring. A frame of emerging brood will consume not only a frame of honey and also a lot of pollen but will fully cover three frames. A rapidly expanding spring colony is a colony under stress, prone to brood chilling and to expression of stress diseases including European Brood Disease, *Nosema*, Chalkbrood and Sac Brood virus. If bees are well provisioned but dwindling when other colonies are thriving, take special note. Disease, especially *Nosema*, the silent killer, or your old queen may simply not be up to it. Whatever, an expanding colony pulling in ample pollen but minimal nectar can suddenly run out of stores and starve, so feeding may be necessary.

And of course if healthy bees strike a good early light honey flow, the exact opposite condition will be encountered. Sudden colony expansion may mean that, instead of starvation, the colony may be packed full of bees, brood and nectar and pollen stores. Toss in an old queen and you have the perfect storm, swarming bees.

Join the beekeepers Hive Buddy team and learn how to read the bees as we continue to open up colonies – they will have all been fully checked for basic condition by the time the newsletter goes to print. At future spring visits we will be actively managing the bees to control swarming, drawing new comb and adding supers. We've also got an exciting requeening program, one we hope to make available not only to training programs but also to demonstrate on club member days.



Just as all this activity may seem *ho hum* to any old hand, there will be some novelty at 'play'. The new Flow Hive will be set up and turbo-charged to turn-on-the-tap condition, a double colony will be built to launch at least one Two-Queen Producer hive in early November, a remodelled Langstroth Top Bar Hive will be put back into service and there will be much active queen management based on a bank of cheerily coloured Nuc Boxes.

Hive Buddy Spinoff

A number of club members have opted to purchase the same queens that the club is obtaining at a discount bulk price. In the spirit of promoting good beekeeping practice, a number of buddies will take some newly acquired skills and queens to their backyard hives, checking for their condition, making certain they are American Foul Brood (AFB) free and giving their colonies new life. Don't think old hands have escaped the death scythe of AFB, the ravages of Small Hive Beetle or the destructive Lesser and Greater Wax Moths. Checking colonies is imperative if you want to transition from bee owner to beekeeper.

Yes we know many seasoned club members have shared their skills and assisted myriad back-yarders for donkey's years. We just hope to encourage that practice and see the beginnings of effective disease control in the ACT.



Pretty definitive evidence of AFB in a club member hive inspected recently – sunken cappings and rosy brood

A bit of Old Croc

In breaking news, the apiary management team give notice for the ultimate security protection for the club's Jerrabomberra Apiary. We are yet to undertake a risk analysis of Loch Ness Monsters [see murky image] escaping to the wetlands but we feel certain that any would be hive-nickers will think twice about venturing too close without a rifle at hand.



Early swarming alert

Reports of hives preparing to swarm or having already swarmed are now pouring in. We found three colonies full of swarm cells on the 10th of September alone. As the opportunity arises we will demo swarm control measures such as splitting colonies and performing the magic Demaree plan so you can retain flying bees for that fabled backyard bumper honey flow.

If you open your hive and you see something like this, take definitive action. We found 15 queen cells buried in this seething mass of bees. Letting those bees go is like giving away all your honey.



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Insect Hotels Inc – Saturday 9 September 2017

A bunch of really cool enthusiasts gathered in a rustic Yarralumla back garden under slightly warm early spring afternoon to construct a bevy of insect hotels.

After beavering away for several hours, a very civil arvo tea distracted even the most enthusiastic worker. Lulled by delicious goodies and real tea, the team returned with renewed building fervour until the cold shadows forced a graceful retreat. Various stem bundles, drilled blocks and a recalcitrant log will join the menagerie of hotels that are popping up around the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.



Bees of every persuasion are a fashion statement. Join us another time, maybe at the wetlands, for your turn on the swing.

Peter Abbott – Native Bee Special Interest Group Coordinator
Alan Wade – Apiary Manager

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

AHBIC – Honey Levy

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council Inc. (AHBIC) passed a motion at the Annual General Meeting in July asking that the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce, re-arrange the current honey levy. The re-arrangement requested is to increase the National Residue Survey component from 0.1 cents per kilogram to 0.3 cents per kilogram and reduce the Emergency Plant Pest Response levy from 2.9 cents per kilogram to 2.7 cents per kilogram. The total honey levy remains the same at 4.6 cents per kilogram.

A submission asking for the re-arrangement was sent to Minister Joyce on 21 July, 2017 and he has referred our submission to the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources for assessment. The Australian Government's *Levy Principles and Guidelines* provide for a six week period for lodging objections to a levy proposal. Accordingly, the formal period for objections will commence on Monday 21 August and expire at 5pm AEST on Monday 2 October 2017.

Levy payers wishing to object are asked to clearly outline which aspect of the levy proposal they are objecting to. They should also list reasons why they oppose the levy and provide suitable supporting argument and evidence, together with their contact details. Further information about making objections can be found on page 6 of the *Levy Principles and Guidelines* found at <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/ag-food/levies/documentsandreports/levy-principles-guidelines.pdf>

The AHBIC proposal, as presented at conferences, can be found on the AHBIC website at <http://honeybee.org.au/increase-in-the-national-residue-survey-component-of-the-honey-levy/> A copy of the submission to Minister Joyce can be obtained from the AHBIC Executive Director on request. Contact details are above. Objections may be made in writing to the government through the department's Levy Revenue Service by email at levies.management@agriculture.gov.au or by post at:- Locked Bag 4488 Kingston ACT 2604

Objections may also be made in writing through the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources by email at minister@maff.gov.au or by post at: P.O. Box 6022 House of Representatives Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

Trevor Weatherhead – AHBIC Executive Director 21 August 2017

NEONICS UPDATE - Taken from The Cheshire Beekeeper, Issue 149

The world's largest ever field trial has now demonstrated that neonicotinoids harm both honeybees and wild bees, increasing calls for a ban. This is the most important evidence yet for regulators considering action against neonics, including in the EU where a total ban is expected this autumn. The new research took place at 33 farmland sites spread across the UK, Germany and Hungary.

Honeybees, bumblebees and solitary bees living by insecticide-treated fields of oil seed rape were compared with those in fields where insecticides were not used in the year of the study. The survival of honeybee colonies was reduced by exposure to the insecticides in the UK and Hungary, but not in Germany, where the bees foraged far less on OSR. Reproductive success of the all wild bees was cut as the insecticide exposure increased. The \$3m cost of the research was met by Syngenta and Bayer, the companies that sell the two products tested, however, both companies expressed doubt about the "simplistic" interpretation of complex and "inconsistent" results, and remain convinced of the safety of their products. However, Prof David Goulson at the University of Sussex said: "In the light of these new studies, continuing to claim that use of neonicotinoids in farming does not harm bees is no longer a tenable position...the current model of farming based on huge monocultures treated with dozens of pesticides is causing devastating environmental harm, undermining vital ecosystem services that keep us all alive."



Training Update

Over the last fifteen years or so, the Association, led by Dick Johnston and his many volunteer helpers, have actively participated in the presentation of the well known Backyard Beekeeping courses, originally at Weston Creek and more recently at the CIT campus in Bruce.

With the development of our 20 strong mixed hive apiary in Fyshwick and the availability of the training rooms provided by ACT Government, the committee felt that we could offer a wider range of courses, that would not only provide more variety, but better value to our members and the general public in our mission to promote good beekeeping practices within our region.

As a result of a lot of hard work, the Association is pleased to announce, that we will be offering a number of new and exciting training courses at the apiary and training centre that will cater to both novices and experienced beekeepers alike.

The first of these courses to be offered are aimed directly at the Beekeeping Beginner and will be presented by John Grubb, our ex President and a Life Member of the Association.

To start the ball rolling, we have firm dates set for the first three of the two day Beekeeping for Beginners courses,

Beekeeping for Beginners

Course 1 is on 7th & 14th October, Course 2 is on 4th & 11th November, and Course 3 is on 25th Nov & 2nd Dec.

Please note, a highly recommended pre-requisite phase of this course is the Introduction to Beekeeping course that some people attended in August. We will be re-running this 3.5hr Intro course on the Sundays of 8th Oct, 5th Nov & 26th Nov to enable students to complete the pre-requisite.

For the first course on 7th Oct, if there are people who haven't done the Intro, they can do that belatedly on Sunday 8th Oct, but we recommend, that anyone wishing to book for either of the November Beginner courses book on one of the earlier Intro courses to ensure that they have the basic knowledge in advance.

Bookings for all courses can be made by visiting the Association Training Course booking web site - click this [link](#) for more details and to make a booking. We will be making further announcements about other new courses in due course.

Frank Derwent
Training Manager
Beekeepers Association of ACT Inc.



Kythera Bees

Kythera is an unspoilt and quiet [island in Greece](#) on the south-eastern tip of the Peloponnese peninsula, and is famous for its delicious thyme honey. My family was honoured to be shown around the island by long-term club member, Jim Calokerinos. Jim has a beautiful ancestral home and cultivates a plot of land full of trees and vegetables, including the best tomatoes I have ever tasted. Breakfast of local honey and nuts is a great way to start the day.

Like the rest of us, 2016 was not a great season for honey on Kythera but Jim assured me that the 2017 harvest was one of the best yet. Unfortunately, the island suffered a bushfire in August and many of the hives suffered – luckily after the honey was taken. One report stated that a small fire was started by a misplaced bee-smoker!



I first heard of the renowned Kythera thyme honey from a quirky short award-winning film, [‘The Beekeepers Of Kythera’](#) made for the Tropfest Film Festival. The film will give a great introduction to Kythera and the local’s love of bees.

Many thanks to Jim for his warm hospitality, and I highly recommend you put the turquoise blue waters and friendly locals of Kythera on your bucket list.

Stuart R



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](#)



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Go to our website below, select 'Forums' on the left-hand side of the menu, and then 'Members forum'. Respond to the topic: Newsletter



Classifieds

Have you heard about the **HiveKeepers Smartphone App**?

It's a great, new record keeping resource for beekeepers that is simple and easy to use. It keeps all the information a beekeeper could want and it has some amazing features. Our own hive management team started to use it in readiness for this Spring, and it is proving to be very useful and easy to use.

The good news is that the Association has teamed up with the guys from HiveKeepers and can offer a special members ONLY coupon code that gives you a great deal. You will get a minimum of 10% off the subscription price of the app. If they have a better promo discount (currently 30%) they will automatically make sure you get the best deal that is publicly available. Sounds good doesn't it?

If you visit their website at www.hivekeepers.com you can learn more about the app.

It can be downloaded from either Google (Android) or Apple (iOS) app store and they offer a free 30 day trial.

To take advantage of this great opportunity you need to use the coupon code below when you pay for a subscription via the in app billing system.

Coupon code: **BAACTIHK**

If you need some help the guys at HiveKeepers will happily answer any questions. Just get in touch with them at contact_us@hivekeepers.com.

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