

ISSUE 16, NOVEMBER 2020

APIARIST'S ADVOCATE

News, Views & Promotions - for Beekeepers - by Beekeepers



When Beekeepers & Brewers Meet

We get the story behind a recently launched mead drawing on people, places and honey for inspiration



When Beekeepers and Brewers Meet



Despite having no experience in apiculture or alcohol industries, a vet nurse, digital marketing expert and author of a children's travel book has founded Borage and Bee Meadery. Now, two short years after first experimenting with a honey-beer brew, Chanelle O'Sullivan has just released her first mead brew for sale. O'Sullivan, along with some local beekeepers, explains how they are collaborating to establish a win-win relationship, while finding an innovative outlet for honey by applying a modern and local twist on an ancient drink.

Holding one of Borage and Bee Meadery's cans, complete with a watercolour artwork of the Southern Alps as viewed from the Lake Hawea shore she calls home, O'Sullivan knew she had reached a milestone. She wasn't ready to savour it though.

"I had the cans arrive a few weeks ago and it was so unbelievable to think I would ever be holding something in my hands," O'Sullivan says.

"Once I had it though I thought, this is cool, but now I need to sell them."

That is where O'Sullivan currently finds herself, with the 330ml sleek cans of dry sparkling session mead, which has an alcohol content of five percent, set to go on sale via online retailer regionalwines.co.nz, in Central Otago restaurants and then hopefully further afield.

Mead is not a product that New Zealanders are overly familiar with though. So, as well as creating awareness of a new product, O'Sullivan is striving to educate consumers.

FINDING THE RIGHT MIX

As far as recipes go, it doesn't get much simpler than mead, being created from water, yeast and, of course, honey. Then comes the skill though, of getting the fermentation process just right to create an alcoholic beverage appealing to the tastebuds.

O'Sullivan first started experimenting in late 2018 and, these days, she is not complimentary of her early brews.

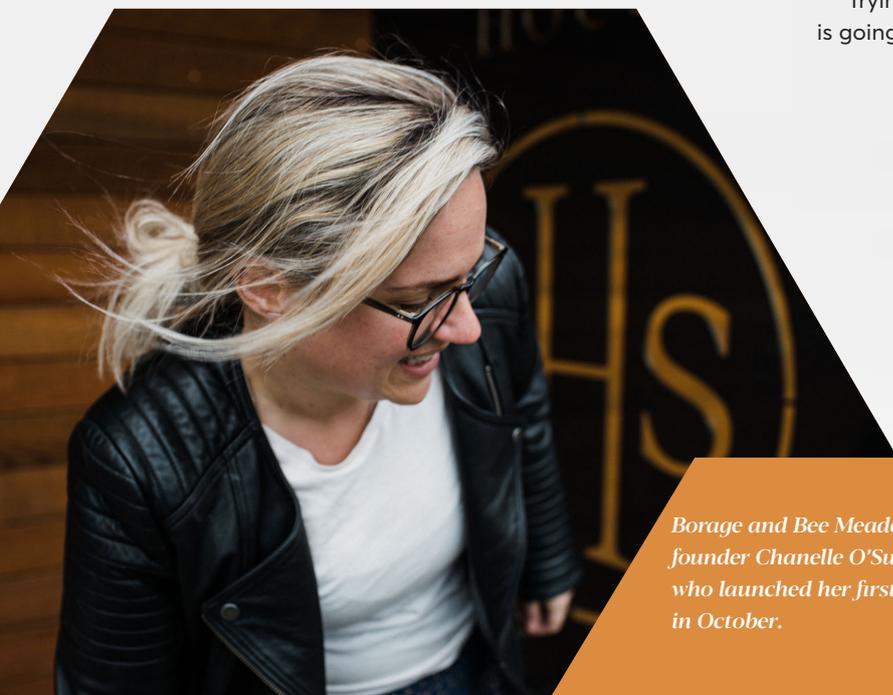
"Homebrew tastes like homebrew if you don't get it right," she jokes.

To help "get it right" she called on expert brewer Sam White of Dunedin-based Bright Beer Craft Consulting, and together they have developed a variety of brews, with the inaugural dry sparkling session mead canned in October.

Now she has a saleable product, the entrepreneurial brewer must educate potential consumers.

"Mead is making a huge comeback in the USA and the US does tend to set our trends when it comes to alcohol. I am finding 70 to 90 percent of Kiwis have no idea what mead is and the ones who do usually have an American or English accent.

"Trying to educate people on what mead actually is, that alone is going to be a massive challenge going forward."



Borage and Bee Meadery founder Chanelle O'Sullivan, who launched her first mead in October.



FINDING THE RIGHT BEEKEEPERS

It is early days for the Borage and Bee Meadery, but it has been built on solid environmental and ethical business principals, its founder says.

"My values are regenerative focused, so everything we do, or take, we have to give back more. I want to really start that from the beginning as a generous trustworthy business that is transparent in the way it operates. I want the beekeepers who we are working with to win as well."

That has led the meadery to source honey from The Swarming Sons in Twizel and Rigsbee Honey in Mt Somers, Canterbury.

"The idea is to get locally-sourced honeys from the area we wish to tell stories about."

Of course, the beekeepers must be able to provide the goods though – honeys which fit the flavour profile of the mead which O'Sullivan and White wish to create. So far, the brewers have been encouraged by the attitudes of the apiarists they are working alongside.

"They have said, 'you tell us the honey you want and we will get it for you'. They are really on board," O'Sullivan says.

FINDING THE RIGHT HONEY

Every beekeeper knows that it is not always as simple as getting what "you" want, and bees can produce differing honey crops, with potentially differing flavour profiles, from the same location, season to season. O'Sullivan has a solution for that potential snare though.



The team at Swarming Sons Honey, from left, Tarsh, Tom, Claire, George and Brain Bell.

Photo: Paradise Pictures

"We are going to date the cans going forward, so it's almost more like a wine in terms of the vintage. That way we will allow for those environmental and seasonal changes in the honey. I think people will be understanding to one can tasting slightly different to the next, if it is from a different year."

As the name suggests, Borage and Bee Meadery relies heavily on borage (vipers bugloss) honey to craft their mead.

"It is quite a mild-flavoured honey and sourced right from the shores of Lake Benmore. It is a nice honey to be able to use, not too strong, but a bit more of a punch than clover."

Despite O'Sullivan's plans to date cans with the various "vintages", beekeepers at The Swarming Sons are striving to provide her consistent honey to produce a consistently flavoured brew.

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"We didn't go for pure borage honey, because year-in year-out it would have been difficult to get", owner-beekeeper Tom Bell says.

"It is a bit of a blend, but definitely has the borage taste.

"We have got pollen counts so we can choose our honey next year to replicate that and it should be a reasonably easy honey to replicate. The borage flowerings can vary, but we have a few locations that flower consistently," Bell says.

Bush honeys can be used alongside the borage to provide more of a flavour punch and O'Sullivan says they have plans for numerous other meads to be released in the near future, utilising various honeys and regional produces.

"I have about 80 flavour combinations written down so it is very exciting. The principals are about using local honeys and local produce from regions across New Zealand to tell the stories of those regions. It gives us major scope," O'Sullivan says.

A SENSE OF PLACE

For their original release that means profiling their home patch, with O'Sullivan based at Lake Hawea where her husband is a farm manager, they raise their two kids and she continues to work part-time as a vet-nurse.

The design on the sleek 330ml cans reflects that high-country setting, as does the borage honey that gives the mead its flavour. The Swarming Sons are enthusiastic about providing the crucial ingredient, and Bell says a mutual focus on environmentally-friendly practices and efforts to promote their respective industries

have made for a harmonious relationship between brewer and beekeeper.

"If we were too far apart on those principals then it wouldn't have worked," Bell says.

"It has all been smooth sailing when it comes to that sort of thing and it all ties in nicely together."

So far the meadery's needs have been filled by "a couple of drums" of honey, but Bell sees potential for that to grow a lot, and there are other benefits for them too.

"Chanelle has just started out, so it is hard to say how much it will end up being. If it goes well it could be five tonne of honey a year, or something along those lines. It is also putting our name out there into the community.

"Good things happen when you have different honey products."

A SENSE OF TIME

Connections with local beekeepers, combined with hints of other regional produce to add flavour, will link Borage and Bee's meads to places. However, O'Sullivan's mission is to give the ancient tippale – of which evidence of existence can be found as early as 7000 BCE – a sense of time too.

"It is quite exciting to get something like this and put a bit of a spin on it to make it more suited to the 21st century," she says.

"It is a lot of fun, albeit a bit nerve-wracking, but this is my nature. I can't just do something over and over for the rest of my life," O'Sullivan says, adding "So, we are going to throw it all at it and give it a go."

Beekeepers will no doubt be encouraging her, and other meaderies, to grow the fledgling industry and provide wins for brewers and beekeepers alike. 🐝

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That's the Story – Marketing Tools Put to Work



In August, following months of consultation and creation, the New Zealand Story Group, a division of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, released a series of marketing tools to promote the honey industry. Now two honey sellers looking to forge new markets explain how they are already using, and plan to use, the tools to tell their New Zealand honey story.

Those tools include videos, photographs and infographics freely available to any Kiwi honey seller, via the NZ Story website.

Photographs such as this, highlighting the differences between New Zealand honey types have been designed to promote non-manuka varieties by the New Zealand Story Group, and are finding favour with honey marketers.



Apiculture New Zealand worked with the NZ Story Group to help create the resources, including collaboration between a large group of the industry body's members which set the story in motion. Rebecca Margetts was part of that work and the Taylor Pass Honey Company general manager of sales and marketing says she is very happy with the finished product and a "huge advocate for it".

The South Island company is already using many of the resources in various forms of marketing, from social media campaigns aimed at mass audiences, to more focused presentations to potential bulk buyers.

"It is all about building the New Zealand honey story and not just individual brands," Margetts says.

"Depending on the campaign, I pick and choose the aspects I want and what will work for us."

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So far Taylor Pass Honey Company has used the assets in campaigns in the USA and Thailand, while fellow producer and exporter Honey New Zealand has recently adapted several of the tools for use in a presentation to a domestic supermarket chain. However, Honey NZ general manager Aeneas Hall believes they will be more advantageous as they market their honey to potential international buyers.

"It is good to have something to put a focus on honeys other than manuka, to show we are not just a one-trick pony," Hall says.

Honey NZ have been making headway in selling non-manuka varieties recently, particularly with beech honey dew into the Middle East.

"It is important to show these honeys are not just bush honey you get from the local supermarket, or the table honey with a heap lumped in together. There is specific and unique differentiation between the varieties you are getting. If you line them up on a table you can see by colour and smell that they are a different type of product and they have different applications for use with everyday life," Hall says.

Those varietal differences are highlighted in the NZ Honey Story photos and videos which display a collection of honeys alongside each other to showcase their differing appearances, as well as putting them to use in an assortment of food preparations.

Infographics are also included in the NZ Honey Story, many of which highlight the world-leading attributes of New Zealand as a food producer. At a time when Kiwi honey producers can't present their businesses to potential buyers in person, all these tools become valuable, Margetts says.

"They can't come to New Zealand right now and what we find is a lot of the buyers, when we are talking about our points of difference, our antibiotic free status, the quality of the honey, how it is not beekeeping wholly for pollination but for honey, see that is a different way of doing business and the imagery really shows that," Margetts says.

The creation of the NZ Honey Story toolkit is an example of how the apiculture industry can work together for mutual benefit, both honey marketers believe.

"For a smaller business, conducting filming and photography is really expensive. This is an easy way of getting access to some high-quality imagery and footage for free. You really can't complain," Margetts says, and Hall agrees.

"This was really good to have because without it we would have had to do all our own research, but having the tools available was very helpful in so far as it had all the information required pertaining to different varieties," Hall says.

"It has made it a lot easier for us to develop product descriptions, references on our website and so on."

Those industry benefits of working together are not just realised in the creation of the assets, but also stretch to their use, with Margetts stressing how the NZ Honey Story tools can be used by all to benefit the collective industry.

"It is the quality of the imagery that is so useful. You know how expensive it is to get a video shot these days and there are some beautiful shots there and if we can all use similar imagery which highlights the main pillars of New Zealand, the location, the quality of the craft and so on, if it is replicated and all about New Zealand honey then it doesn't matter who is posting it," the Taylor Pass Honey Co. marketer says.

"Working together and elevating the story of the quality of New Zealand honey, rather than individual brands helps everyone." 🐝

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Starting a Healthy Conversation — Dr Phil Lester on His Latest Book



With his latest book, *Healthy Bee, Sick Bee: The Influence of Parasites, Pathogens, Predators and Pesticides on Honey Bees*, Dr Phil Lester hopes to start a conversation, the right conversation, about honey bee health. The Victoria University of Wellington entomologist's second book hit shelves in October following a year of research and writing and now Lester hopes beekeepers, scientists and "anyone with an interest in bees" will read it to further their understanding of what is going on with bee health.

Healthy Bee Sick Bee is Lester's second book, following *The Vulgar Wasp*, released in 2018. This time his focus goes from a widely hated insect to a widely loved one which he describes as "fascinating" and which he gets a lot of the public talking to him and his department at Victoria University of Wellington about.

"We get a lot of people talking to us about what they can do to 'save the bees', asking 'what can I do to benefit the bee population and how bad is colony collapse in New Zealand?'. So, bees are fascinating and the public interest in them and what is affecting them was the motivation for writing this book," Lester says.

Despite the interest in bees from the wider public, Lester says many people's understanding of bee health and factors influencing it are not complete.

"There is a general feeling out there, amongst a lot of the public, that when they hear about bees they hear about pesticides and how pesticides are associated with bee deaths. So, an awful lot of the public are under the impression that pesticides are the worst things that can happen to bees and they are unaware of other things, such as how bad varroa is or how bad some of the viruses are, such as nosema and American foulbrood. So, I try to give a

balanced perspective on each of those contributing factors to bee health in New Zealand."

That information is imparted in the 255-page paperback in a style designed to be understandable to the general public, not just scientists or beekeepers, although Lester says the book will certainly make beekeepers "more knowledgeable".

"The idea is, people who are interested in bees will be able to read this and understand what is going on. I try to approach each predator or pathogen from a novice level and try to build up."

Researching and writing *Healthy Bee, Sick Bee* was an enjoyable process its author says, taking just over a year to compile and calling on knowledge built up over 20 years studying social insects, combined with the latest research on honey bees.

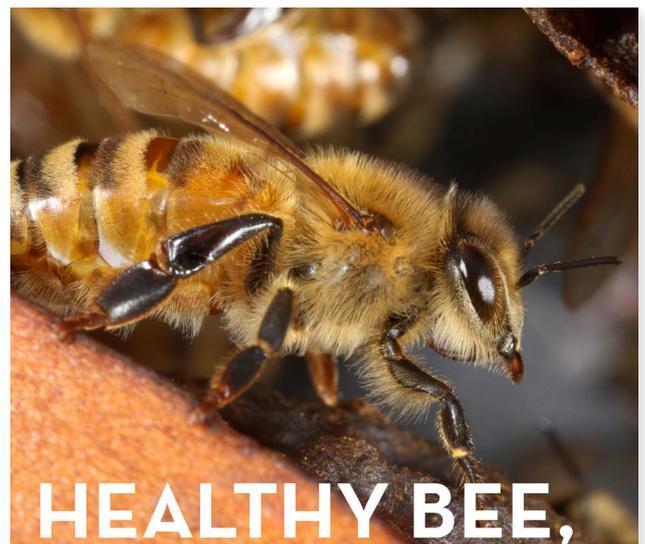
An important factor related to hive health is often the economic situation faced by any country's beekeeping industry and Lester says this is covered, from a New Zealand perspective, in his book too.

"Clearly bees need to eat and some of the stocking rates around the country are just way too high for the bee population. If you have stressed bees in high density you will get disease outbreaks which easily spread. It is a massive problem for the industry to face."

That is just one area where Lester hopes to get the reader thinking and talking though. How to best tackle the issue of American foulbrood in New Zealand, and whether we should be undertaking greater testing of pollens entering the hive to understand the impact of pesticides on New Zealand beekeeping, are among the other questions raised.

"I'm hoping the book will start a discussion or stimulate ideas around how we improve our bee health," Lester says.

Covid-concerns mean no official book launch has been scheduled, but *Healthy Bee, Sick Bee* went on sale in October, published by Victoria University Press. It is available through the publisher's website and major book retailers. 🐝



**HEALTHY BEE,
SICK BEE**
THE INFLUENCE OF
PARASITES, PATHOGENS,
PREDATORS AND PESTICIDES
ON HONEY BEES **PHIL LESTER**

What's Changed? – Fighting for the Right to Partake



What's Changed? is our monthly look back on a story that ran in *Apiarist's Advocate* a year ago. This issue, we go back to October 2019 where Jody Mitchell's Apimondia photography award winning snap of husband Ralph graced our cover. That was not the top prize the Bay of Plenty couple sought at the global beekeeping conference in Montreal, Canada though. Instead, they were on a mission to promote New Zealand honey by entering several non-manuka varieties in the honey awards, only to be controversially red-carded from the competition. Soon afterwards, Mitchell said her attitude was "get mad, get even". So, has she?



Ralph and Jody
Mitchell, Kaimai
Range Honey.

Diastase readings were the reason three of the four Kaimai Range Honey samples failed at the testing stage. The Mitchell's were not alone though, with around 40 percent of all honeys entered in the global competition to determine the best honeys in the world controversially ruled out at the testing stage for a variety of reasons.

Rewarewa and tawari honeys were among those to be showcased by the Mitchells, but denied.

Dr Terry Braggins, research and development manager for Analytica Laboratories, was at Apimondia 2019 and offered advice and support to the Mitchells as they sought answers from the global body. Now, Braggins and his lab are at the forefront of research to try and gain a better understanding of diastase levels in New Zealand honeys. The work hopes to help prevent future

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questions of Kiwi honey's authenticity, such as occurred to the Kaimai Range honey at Apimondia and which some exporters are facing in international markets.

The \$24,000 project has been funded by New Zealand honey producers and sellers. It is underway at Analytica and Braggins expects it to be completed soon. It involves testing the diastase levels in a variety of monofloral honeys through the ageing process.

Kaimai Range Honey has submitted previous season's rewarewa honey to the lab for testing and will also provide new-season honey as it becomes available.

"This year we will add the fourth year of data with our fresh honey," Mitchell says.

"So, then we will have super fresh off the hives honey, then some that has been aged. Terry will age some, incubate it and play around with it."

One of the problems with diastase testing globally is that the parameters are set based on European honeys and so getting some research and understanding of how Kiwi honeys differ is essential going forward, Mitchell explains.

"We should be the ones to set the parameters for what our honeys are and then we can say to the world 'this is what we produce, this is what it is, this is the quality standard for it. Here it is.'"

The research is obviously important for the industry as a whole and Mitchell feels the same way about her efforts to get Kaimai Range Honey's non-manuka varieties recognised on the world

stage. That is why they plan to enter the bi-annual Apimondia Honey Awards at the next possible opportunity – Russia 2021.

"We are going to have another crack at it. With this season's tawari and rewarewa crops looking promising the Apimondia Honey Awards in Russia next year will be our focus, getting the honeys out there and pushing them on the world stage," Mitchell says.

After their experience last time out, the Mitchells are leaving no stone unturned in their preparations, having discussed the issue at length with the global body.

"If there is an issue with our honey again, they are going to let us submit the testing and work that we are doing at the moment to prove it is not adulteration and just an issue with the specifics of the honey," she says.

In 2019 Mitchell questioned the storage of the Kaimai Range samples after they were mailed off for testing, with hold ups through border crossings potentially causing issue. So, this time around, the Mitchells plan to personally deliver their samples to the testing lab in Russia next year.

However, testing takes place in June and the conference is not until September, meaning they will have to make two trips to Russia. That is a monumental undertaking in a normal year, but with the threat of Covid and quarantines looming, it takes on added difficulty.

Mitchell says she doesn't want to leave any stone unturned though.

"It is about covering the bases on anything that can go wrong. After last time, this is the big crack at it. I'm in boots and all and we are on a mission."

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The Irish Drone

“She’s a bit flighty, I’ll warn ya”



Last month we caught up with Anthony “The Irish Drone” Morgan, who cut his beekeeping teeth on a working holiday in New Zealand pre-covid, before jetting home to County Wexford “to start a family... of bees!” This month, in part two of a recap of his first season keeping the Irish black bee, he goes from one hive to 11 thanks to some canny swarm hunting.

I arrived home one spring day to see my one hive in full swarm mode, thousands of bees frantically flying around above the hive in every direction. The bees shortly landed on the underside of a nearby weeping willow tree, about 10 feet away. YouTube had prepared me somewhat to catch my first swarm.

Now I had two hives and that second hive swarmed about a week later!

The experience sent me online to order more hives, to the hardware store to buy emulsion paint for the poly nucs, to the local deli to ask for used mayonnaise buckets so I could make traps to

catch my own and hopefully others’ swarms, back to YouTube for instruction on how to bait swarm traps, to the local forest beside the local beekeeper’s apiary to place a swarm trap, to the health food shop to buy lemongrass oil, to the same local beekeeper who kindly donated MAQS for my Varroa infested new bees, and up my own trees to hopefully trap my own bees. *(Editor’s note: for full effect read that back at speed and with a heavy Irish accent).*

Sadly, joining my local beekeepers association was a non-runner because of Covid. It was disappointing to learn that they would not be taking any new members for 2020, but WhatsApp videos to my trusted Kiwi mentor proved to be invaluable as a source of feedback and support. No doubt I pestered (pronounced *pistered* in NZ) the hell out of him with the sheer number of questions and videos I sent about my hives and God knows what time of day or night he actually received them, as I was largely indiscriminate with my impulsive timing.

2020 was not a good year for honey in Ireland, by all accounts. The season started so well, with an incredibly dry and sunny April and May. Then the rain came ... and stayed. I guess it was like an Indian summer in reverse. The blackberry/bee relationship was hit hard and there was little to forage on.

The weather was so changeable and unpredictable. The bees simply gobbled up their honey and struggled to replace it.

None of that affected me too badly though because I decided early on that I would forgo a honey crop in my first year of beekeeping.

Instead, and in the unenviable position of having no drawn comb, I was happy to let the bees put their energy into wax making.

I did experiment a little by briefly adding honey supers, but I found that the bees were not moving up into the supers anyway. So, I just did my best to rotate the comb in the brood boxes and remove frames full of honey, placing them in weaker hives and putting in fresh foundation in their place. By season’s end I had drawn comb in all my brood boxes and a little drawn super comb.

The local cash and carry was happy to supply me with 25kg bags of granulated sugar at cash and carry prices, despite my not running a shop or bakery. They said, “We like to help our beekeeping friends.” and, “If the bees go, we all go!”



Anthony “The Irish Drone” Morgan patrols his “no sting zone” in Co. Wexford.

Most of the swarms I caught were small. Some I caught in my own garden, some were my bees ... some not my bees ... but now my bees!

Having joined website swarms.ie early in the season and with lots of free time then, I became their 'go to' man in Co.Wexford.

They sent me to a house close to town and there was a decent amount of bees in a compost wheelie bin. I got what I thought was most of the bees into a poly nuc and returned near nightfall, expecting the rest of them to have entered the nuc. But instead, they all left the nuc and bearded on the outside of the wheelie bin, underneath the lid hinges. Bees can be stubborn.

Eventually I coaxed them all back in with the help of my bee brush and when I got them home I decided to make a bee vacuum, should I ever be faced with the same situation.

Other swarm hunting locations I frequented around Wexford included the Garden of Remembrance (about a cupful of bees) and in the garden of another hobby beekeeper who just allows her bees to swarm.

I came to the conclusion that, in Ireland at least, the mood of the bees is directly proportional to the weather. I found that at the beginning of the season, the bees seemed more relaxed. Then in autumn they can be fairly aggressive and I'm more inclined to wear my suit if I'm getting close to the hives.

Maybe it's simply that I have more bees around than I did at the start of the season, but already I have seen that there is at least one hive where the bees take no prisoners. I would prefer the life of a prisoner though, so I plan to requeen that one next year.

That is, if I can find anyone selling queens. They are seriously like hen's teeth here. Almost impossible to obtain.

What I think I'll do with that nasty hive is insert a frame of eggs from a nice hive, and cage and sell the queen to someone, explaining that she may be "a bit flighty". The one queen I did manage to buy this year was described exactly that way. If a queen who is "a bit flighty" manages to keep your colony alive, she'll do fine until a better queen is found, or created from eggs (pronounced iggs in NZ). *(Editor's note: resolve never to buy a "flighty" queen off an Irishman).*

That's a problem for next season though and before then there is plenty more to regale you all on next month, including the continued hunt for *The Perfect Swarm!* 🐝



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Government Handbraking Honey Exports



ROGER BRAY on the “grey trade” of honey, Daigou markets, their importance and how we may be shooting ourselves in the foot with unnecessary regulations.

Prior to 2018 a substantial outlet and market opportunity for NZ honey was conducted by tourists and foreign students in this country purchasing honey at supermarkets, farmers markets and direct from beekeepers' honey shops. They would buy in bulk, often at normal retail prices, and carry or freight the honey to contacts in their home country.

Regardless of the arrangements these operators made within their distribution chain, the practice became an established form of trade referred to as the “grey market” or “Daigou” trade in China.

This form of trade has provided benefits to us as producers in the form of product exposure in foreign markets and brand recognition for New Zealand companies, without the cost of promoting their products off shore. It has become an important revenue stream for Kiwi beekeepers, although this form of trade, often through on-line sales, is not able to be quantified.

As a result of the Covid-19 border closure, tourists and foreign students who undertake Daigou trade activities have not been able to come to New Zealand and purchase their requirements. The limited avenue still open to continued trade in small consignments is through the courier and freight forwarding agents.

When the government, through the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), introduced the General Requirements for the Export of Honey (GREX) in 2018 they shut some regulatory doors to the export of honey. If the requirements of GREX had been enforced at the border it would have shut down Daigou, a market avenue that ultimately provides revenue and jobs to the country as a whole.

The GREX requirements that were designed to restrict the export of honey came under scrutiny recently when there was an issue with honey being sent through the provisions of the UPU, or Universal Postal Union (NZ Post) system. MPI conducted a consultation process and subsequently provided for up to 2kg of honey sent through UPU to be exempt from traceability requirements, presumably because NZ Post provides traceability for items that have a postage stamp affixed to the package.

MPI did not relax any of the other GREX requirements though and still insists that anybody who wishes to export any quantity of honey – even up to 2kg – must be listed as a beekeeper and pay a fee. They also have to provide documentation relating to syrup feeding bees, AFB checks at harvest time, and that honey only comes from boxes that have a unique number marked on them.

These restrictions appear to be far greater than overseas countries require for the importation of honey. They also appear far more restrictive than citizens of other countries need to adhere to for the export of bee products from their country.

As a result of submissions received and questions asked at the time of the 2kg allowance coming into force, MPI stated, “We have kept the maximum parcel size at 2kg but we may review this in three months’ time to see if the GREX meets the objective of facilitating exports or if there are traceability issues”.

It is apparent that exports of honey are being handbraked because those wishing to do so are not beekeepers. They should not have to list as beekeepers to send a few kgs of honey out of the country. We all assume that products found in supermarkets, farmers markets, tourist outlets, and beekeepers’ own honey shops meet the processing requirements that make them suitable for human consumption regardless the nationality of the people or location where the honey is consumed.

It is now three months since the changes to “facilitate exports” of honey have been in place. It appears MPI have failed to grasp that the impediments to trade are not the weight restrictions,



Roger Bray

but the listing and production requirements that seem far removed from being necessary to prevent people being harmed from the consumption of honey.

People are being prevented from sending even up to 2kgs of honey from our shores because they do not wish to pay \$155 to list as a beekeeper simply to be eligible to send the honey out of New Zealand. Any honey for sale in this country must conform to the requirements of the Food Act and should not be subject to additional requirements such as marking honey boxes, unless there is a real need that cannot be covered within the provisions of the Food Act.

Perhaps our government or MPI should better explain why it places impediments on the sale and promotion of New Zealand honey in overseas countries through on-line sales and the Daigou trade when it appears there is a real beneficial effect for the beekeeping industry of such trade.

Roger Bray is a Canterbury beekeeper of 55 years' experience, a member of the New Zealand Beekeeping Incorporated executive council, an Apiculture New Zealand member and former executive council member of the National Beekeepers Association. 🐝



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Views From Outside the Apiary: It's Australia, stupid!



IAN FLETCHER

So, the election's over. Community transmission is back in the box (for now), and low interest rates and a lot of government spending means the economy is probably doing better than we'd feared. That's cold comfort if its your job or business that's gone, but overall it could actually be a lot worse. What might happen next?

Australia. New Zealand's relationship with Australia is the one foreign relationship that really matters directly for ordinary New Zealanders (and beekeepers). Australia has had a "good" pandemic too, compared to most other rich countries. But (as with the 1919 flu) it's changing the Australian political landscape and that'll affect us directly. Australians get their health care and policing from State governments that are much more independent than many New Zealanders give credit for. This year, state governments have imposed border controls on each other, and effectively vetoed aspects of Federal border policy. A new coordination mechanism (the so-called National Cabinet) has helped but tensions remain.

Not since the 1930s has the Federation seemed so loose, and those tensions been so evident. There'll be a backlash (there always is). The backlash usually involves immigration rules (the central question on Australian politics since Federation is about who is allowed in) and access to healthcare. New Zealand needs to make sure it has strong separate links with the States as well as Canberra, and that we have a voice on all sides of Australia's complex politics. Otherwise we are just collateral damage.

The other issue is China. China's growth has sustained Australia's economic boom in recent decades. China and Australia are New Zealand's largest trading partners – and their economic ties mean our future prosperity really is a bet on China's continued growth and stability. Now Australia faces an ugly choice: to sustain its intimate security relationship with the US, it must be less compliant with China. The Chinese hit back (there are other places with coal and iron, after all). Australia must walk a wobbly tightrope in coming years.

Ian Fletcher

That affects us directly. Forget talk of New Zealand's 'independent foreign policy'. That's only true on issues that don't matter. On security and trade, as well as immigration we dance to Canberra's tune. We need to learn that fact and get a lot better at understanding how Australia works and thinks. If that means talking to people who sell 'Australian Manuka' honey, welcome to *realpolitik*.

Ian Fletcher is a former chief executive of the UK Patents Office, free trade negotiator with the European Commission, biosecurity expert for the Queensland government and head of New Zealand's security agency. These days he is a commercial flower grower in the Wairarapa and consultant to the apiculture industry through both the Manuka Charitable Trust and NZ Beekeeping Inc. 🐝

Big Buzz Seeking Beekeeper Stallholders



Despite challenges caused by Covid-19 during the initial planning stages, The Big Buzz festival is moving forward and will take place as scheduled in Matakana, Auckland on February 14. As plans march on, organisers are inviting stallholders from around New Zealand to register their interest now while there are still a few spaces left.

There is a full schedule of free talks from key note speakers, free workshops and live music, free children's activities and much more set for the festival (which was profiled in the August issue of *Apiarist's Advocate*) to celebrate all things honey bee.

"It is going to be a great celebration of New Zealand honey and bees and good day out for the family," festival co-director Isabella Sullivan says.

"We would really like to widen the offering of products from the beekeeping industry, so any beekeeping businesses or brands who wish to showcase their honey or their work should make contact with us ASAP as our application process will close mid-November."

Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies and Auckland Council have come on board as sponsors of the festival which will take place at Matakana Primary School, organised by local beekeepers Sullivan and Grass Esposti.

Details on being a stallholder can be found at www.thebigbuzz.nz/stalls or by emailing bigbuzznz@gmail.com. 🐝

Supplied Insights



BRUCE CLOW

Managing Director Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies



With the election behind us, and the Labour government's motto of "Let's Keep Moving" having seen it successfully back into power, it begs the question, "where are we and where are we going?"

I have the privilege of speaking frequently to many beekeepers, and I must say that there is a much-improved sentiment out there. The winter months, with us deep in lockdown and the spectre of thousands of Covid-19 infections and deaths hanging over us, brought a sense of concern and foreboding. But that has melted away in the lengthening of daylight hours and warming temperatures. There is definitely more positive and hopeful expectation coursing through the apiculture industry. Non-manuka honey prices are still depressed, but word is that product is starting to move.

WHERE ARE WE?

Where we are is at the starting line again, with hope. Is it like this every spring? Probably. But after a long period where even hope was fading, the very agent of fear (Covid-19) that was brought into our lives may have opened a crack to let the light in.

Honey sales worldwide are on the rise because of the expectation that there are health benefits from eating honey. A recent medical research article confirmed that honey (not just manuka honey) is better than pharmacy sold cold and flu remedies at treating coughs and sore throats. This, we in the industry, always knew and took for granted, but the wider world now is hopping on the bandwagon and it is helping our beleaguered industry.



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<https://www.ceracell.co.nz/apiguard-50g-tray-box-of-10/>

Let's say it, the worldwide approval of Jacinda's handling of the pandemic has also raised New Zealand's profile. Talking to other companies' export managers, it is clear that "brand New Zealand" has received a huge boost to its profile. We only need to leverage off it with hard work and clever marketing to see export sales of honey grow some more. Here's to the honey businesses who have seen that and have built some wonderful brands and the internet marketing to move product overseas when travel is impossible.

I just encourage those businesses to be ready to share in the improved returns with the beekeepers who have persevered through some hard years. This needs to be a team effort, and the spoils need to move down the supply chain.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

I believe we are on a road to a stable and profitable beekeeping industry. Not one where only the manuka honey chasers are successful, but all hard working, conscientious, serious, and committed beekeepers can be financially successful doing what they love to do.

Bruce Clow is the owner and managing director of Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies. Born in Canada, he has lived in New Zealand for the past 38 years. Email: bruce@ceracell.co.nz 🐝

NZ Beekeeper Journal to Publish Bi-Monthly



A "changing economic climate" is one of several reasons New Zealand's longest serving apiculture publication will change from monthly publishing, to every second month, starting in April next year.

The New Zealand Beekeeper is published by Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ) and has been distributed monthly to the industry body's members, with two editions a year going out to all registered beekeepers in New Zealand. Now, as stipulated in an email signed by ApiNZ chief executive Karin Kos in October, the magazine will publish in only April, June, August, October and December 2021.

Reasons for the change, as well as the changing economic climate, are a desire to reduce workload for both unpaid contributors and paid staff at ApiNZ. It is hoped the move to a bi-monthly publication will free up management staff to focus on "other projects and responsibilities".

The April and October editions will still be distributed to all registered beekeepers. 🐝



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Club Catch-Up

Brought to you by Hive World



For this month's Club Catch-Up we head to the bountiful Hawke's Bay, an area of high beehive density and home to Beekeepers Hawke's Bay Incorporated. With active manuka in the hills and orchards on the plains to base commercial beekeeper businesses around, plus a growing number of hobbyists keeping hives, the club is well supported and has plenty of purpose.

"It is not the number of hives you have, but the quality and the production you can get from them," says Brian Cowper, president of Beekeepers Hawke's Bay Inc.

Cowper received that advice from long-time Hawke's Bay commercial beekeeper David Hills about six years ago when he first moved to the region and began keeping hives. It is the knowledge of experienced operators, such as Hills, John Berry and other commercial beekeepers, that make the local club so valuable to all beekeepers.

"The difference in my beekeeping over a couple of years, learning from the likes of Dave, is amazing. It is about observation and understanding what is going on in your hives."

With several apiculture training programs in or nearby to Hawke's Bay turning out new beekeepers, most with hives obtained as part of the course, it is important that those who do not get employed within the industry get support, Cowper says.

"We are getting lots and lots of people coming from private training establishments and that is great from a membership point of view, but the club needs to be able to provide information and ongoing training for those people just to manage the impact on local beekeeping."

And beekeeping is a highly important industry to the region, with the fertile soils home to commercial kiwifruit, cherries, apples, peaches and apricot orchards, plus seed crops, which require pollination services. Pastures rich in clover benefit from the high hive population, while beekeepers can gain active manuka honey crops in the area.

The attractiveness of the area to apiarists comes at a cost though, Cowper explains.

"Hawke's Bay is a bit of a fruit bowl and the pressure comes on the Heretaunga plains with a lot of hives being overwintered, ready to go onto the manuka, as well as in pollination. So, the density of hives is quite high. With the lack of rainfall the forage for bees has been reduced substantially."

Last summer and autumn saw the Hawke's Bay suffer one of its worst droughts in history, which has been followed by a mild winter. Those factors combined are throwing beekeepers some unwelcome challenges.

"Out on the farms there is very little grass and I wonder how the clover will perform this year," Cowper says.

"The other thing we noticed was, due to a mild winter, an increase in the wasp population. I witnessed the shepherd having difficulty in feeding his dogs meat due to the wasps who were all over it. I had to go and treat with Vespex."

Like most clubs, Beekeepers Hawke's Bay meet monthly, but they also have several events throughout the year. Recently around 15 members gathered at John Berry's Havelock North property and were shown through hives by Berry. Previous to that over 100 attended a presentation by eminent entomologist, Dr Phil Lester, an event ran in collaboration with Hawke's Bay Royal Society.

The club also runs an annual honey competition, sponsored by Farmlands, where the winner gets a complete hive.

There are around 60 members of the club and, as well as offering and receiving support and knowledge, Cowper says they work with academics and researchers when they can.

"We have a good group of people with lots of experience. It is not just about working with local members, but also about adding to and drawing from the broader body of knowledge."

Next meeting: 7pm on the first Thursday of the month at the Pakowhai Community Hall.

Email: beekeepershbinc@gmail.com

President: Brian Cowper, ph 06 836 5225 



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Editorial



Have you been reading *Supplied Insights* each month? You should have!

Supplied Insights is a column written by people with a great feel for what is going on among beekeepers and the apiculture industry as a whole – those at the helms of the leading companies supplying beekeeping equipment.

For the past seven issues of *Apiarist's Advocate* Bruce Clow (managing director Ceracell Beekeeping Supplies), Dave Wrathall (chief executive Ecrotek Beekeeping Supplies) and Nick Taylor (general manager New Zealand Beeswax) have taken turns supplying their insights to us.

I have given them a free rein on the topics they wish to tackle and the trio have not disappointed.

Bruce Clow has provided some perceptive thoughts on where he sees the honey market heading, as well as a heartfelt column in our August edition where he implored beekeepers to help each other and look for help themselves in the tough times.

Dave Wrathall has provided insights in June and September so far, both giving what I would describe as a great "bird's-eye view"

or "macro look" into our industry. His June column relating the various stages of apiculture's "boom, correction and maturing" as compared to his experiences in the IT industry during its boom years of the 1990s is particularly interesting.

Last month Nick Taylor provided us with an array of insights into how Covid-19 is impacting our industry, as well as offering opinion on how he thinks beekeepers can take advantage of the changing world. Previous to that the NZ Beeswax GM took the opportunity to update readers on several key markets and happenings in our July issue.

Because of their regular dealings with beekeepers, Clow, Wrathall and Taylor are all well placed to get a feel for the industry and so I want to make it easier to access their written words. So, I have added a page to our website which lists each of the *Supplied Insights* columns, www.apiaristsadvocate.com/supplied-insights. All the columns are still pertinent today, so I invite you to have a read if you haven't already.

Thanks must go to all three men for taking the time to connect with the industry like they have. As I have said before, our advertisers are the reason we are able to make this content freely available to all. I feel a bit guilty then asking the same people to provide content!

However, they seem to be enjoying the space to voice their thoughts and I hope you are too. Let me know what you think of *Supplied Insights* or anything else in the magazine.

Never be shy to drop us a line! editor@apiadvocate.co.nz and advertising@apiadvocate.co.nz.

Apiarist's Advocate is produced by Patrick & Laura Dawkins, owner-operators of Pyramid Apiaries, Marlborough. 🐝

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Editorial

Editor: Patrick

To make comment or send press releases please email editor@apiadvocate.co.nz or phone **Patrick, 027 383 7278**.

Creative

Design: Ashleigh Ryan

Top cover image: Paradise Pictures.

Advertising

For more information or to make a booking, email advertising@apiadvocate.co.nz or phone **Patrick 027 383 7278** or **Laura 021 130 7446**.

Booking deadline is the second to last Friday of the month prior to publication and artwork must be supplied by the final Friday of the month.

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