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[www.beesnorth.com.au](http://www.beesnorth.com.au)

### Newsletter No. 3: March 2025

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- Varroa Development Officer (VDO) support
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### Next Meeting:

**2pm Sunday 9th March 2025**

Michael Hooper Park, Deeragun

**Bring a chair. Tea, coffee and nibbles available.  
Free chats with experienced and novice  
beekeepers.**

## Varroa Update- Varroa mite moves closer to Queensland

Just a reminder for us all, Varroa Mite is not far from the Queensland-New South Wales border. On 23 January 2025, Varroa mite was detected at Boggabilla, just 3 km from the border. It is more important than ever that we monitor for varroa mite using alcohol or soapy water wash, sugar shake and drone uncapping. In just one of the alcohol washes undertaken in Boggabilla, there were 37 varroa mites, which is well above treatment level thresholds. Not only that, varroa mite was found at 3 apiary sites. I know we seem a long way from the border, but it only takes one hive movement to have Varroa in Townsville or elsewhere in Queensland. Remember to always practice decontamination practices between apiary sites and come clean, leave clean.



### Carla Kersnovske

Varroa Development Officer – National Varroa Mite Management Program (NVMMMP)  
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

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9-15 Langton St, Garbutt, QLD 4814  
GPO Box 1085, Townsville, Qld 4810  
Customer Service Centre 13 25 23 (from interstate use 07 3404 6999)



NATIONAL  
Varroa Mite Management  
PROGRAM

### **Do the sugar shake and check for these blighters!**

Contact Carla, Roger Winton or Rob Stephens immediately if you see any Varroa mites.

**Rob Stephens** Plant Biosecurity & Product Integrity

M 0407 374 232 E [robert.stephens@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:robert.stephens@daf.qld.gov.au)

Fill in the [Bee 123 form](#) even if you don't see any mites – a negative result is what we all want to see.



## Support is now available for all Townsville beekeepers!

I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Carla and I am the Varroa Development Officer (VDO) for North Queensland.

I started with the National Varroa Mite Management Program (NVMMP) last August and my position finishes in September this year. This means all beekeepers in the Townsville and surrounding areas should take advantage of this free local support service now, while I'm available.

### What support can I provide?



Well, there is a lot to learn about varroa mite over the coming years and if we start preparing now, it will be easier to manage the pest once it arrives in our hives. I hope to share some tips with you, to help you manage Varroa Mite. For now, I'd like to discuss record keeping.

Since I started as a VDO, it has helped me become a better beekeeper. I have realised I need to understand my bees more. Part of this is to keep better records of what's happening in my hives. Record keeping is something I have not taken seriously before. I would make a few quick notes and that's about it. Now I realise I need to know what

my bees are doing, what might happen soon, and how I will best manage Varroa Mite when it arrives. By keeping records, I know I will be better informed.

Some of the things we need to be aware of for treating varroa mite is our brood cycle and honey flow. With the brood cycle there are different phases such as population increase, peak population, population decrease and dormancy. While we very rarely have a dormant phase in North Queensland, we do have the other three phases. Different treatments, whether mechanical or chemical, work best at different phases. It is the same with honey flow: there are periods during the year when there is less honey flow, so the most suitable treatment will be different to other times of the year.

### Did you know there are many ways we can keep records?

There are apps available, some are free while others you pay for, and there are record books available for people who prefer pen and paper. It's a good idea to talk to other beekeepers to see what they prefer to use, if you are starting your record keeping journey. I know of beekeepers who write pages about their hive inspections and others who prefer a tick and flick approach. Both approaches are good if they work for you and your operations. Records will help you gain knowledge of your hives progress. Records also allow you to refer to them for better decision making in the future.

I know bees at times do the opposite of what we expect, but by keeping records we can improve our hives health and be ready for the future. Record keeping is just one of the many things we as beekeepers need to bring into our day-to-day operations, to help ourselves and our beekeeping futures.

As your local VDO, I am available for workshops, one-on-one training and demonstrations. Another option may be to get a small group of like-minded beekeepers together and we can discuss as a group what we would like to do as a collective in the future.

Feel free to reach out to me by calling 0467 236 135 or emailing

[carla.kersnovske@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:carla.kersnovske@daf.qld.gov.au)

Carla

## [Beekeepers seek chemical-free methods to kill deadly varroa mite](#)

Check out this interesting ABC article by Kim Honan, Lauren Bohane and Joshua Becker on efforts to create a chemical-free method to kill Varroa. Thank you Bosko Susic, for sharing this link. *Note: Alan C. has created a facebook link to a Q&A on this 'hot-box'.*

## **Is this Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) in the USA again?**

<https://www.beeculture.com/severe-and-sudden-losses-of-managed-honey-bees-across-the-nation/>

As commercial beekeepers in the USA inspect their bees after winter, to transport over 90% of the nation's managed honey bees to pollinate California almonds, they are discovering alarming colony losses. These losses are severe, broad, and may impact food security through inadequate pollination services. Survey results are still accumulating, but information gathered from 234 beekeepers found average recent losses well over 50%, with a combined financial loss of over \$139M. Combined with losses during other times of year, this additional loss puts many beekeepers at a loss rate of 70%-100% over the past 12 months.

The symptoms of loss are reminiscent of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) conditions which occurred in 2007 -2008 when bees suddenly disappeared from their colonies. During recent inspections by field scientists, deceased colonies often died with ample honey stores, leaving small patches of brood, with most or all the adult bees missing. Another symptom has been the rapid dwindling of surviving colonies, often within ten days of passing health inspections. Similar severe losses were seen two years ago, when **beekeepers in Florida lost up to 90%** of their colonies, incurring \$4.28 million in lost revenue. At that time, these beekeepers worked alongside the USDA-ARS Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, MD to sample and identify parasites, pathogens and pesticides involved in the crashes. Chemical exposures were also analyzed, recently presented and are awaiting publication. The eTort to sample, analyze pathogens, and calculate economic impacts are well documented here: <https://doi.org/10.3390/biology13020117>.

## **NZ pushing the merits of different honeys**

<https://www.beeculture.com/move-over-manuka-here-are-5-other-delicious-native-nz-honeys-to-try-this-summer/>

NZ honey producers are promoting the unique flavours of some of their less well-known native honey. Pōhutukawa honey, like other native varieties, tends to live in the shadow of its famous cousin, mānuka. That's a shame, because the options, and the potential for more industry growth, are certainly there.

*Pōhutukawa – the New Zealand Christmas tree also produces nectar that makes a distinctive honey. Getty Images*



All honey is primarily glucose and fructose, but the flavour profile comes from other compounds found in nectar that remain once it is converted into honey by bees. The combination of compounds varies between species, giving rise to some delectable flavours.

New Zealand mānuka honey is still highly sought-after, of course. Its unique [non-peroxide antibacterial activity](#) was discovered in the 1980s by biochemist Peter Molan. It wasn't until 2008 that the compound responsible, [methylglyoxal](#), was identified. This allowed honey to be

graded by its antibacterial activity – and the price of mānuka dramatically increased. Mānuka honey is now a household name and valuable brand. It's used medically, as well as on toast, and even been endorsed by celebrities such as Novak Djokovic and Ariana Grande. The most [expensive jar](#) ever sold went for NZ\$4,964 for 230 grams at Harrods in London in 2021.

In 2022, 76% of the \$583 million generated by the New Zealand apiculture (beekeeping) sector was from mānuka honey exports. Many beekeepers chased the mānuka flowering season while honey prices were high and honey was easy to sell, with 918,026 beehives registered in 2019.

But hive numbers are now down 34.5% and it appears the liquid gold rush might be over. A large honey surplus and weaker consumer demand are tipping the supply and demand balance in the wrong direction for now.

Heavy rains in some places last summer resulted in a [45% decrease](#) in honey production compared to the previous year.

The mānuka tree flowers for a short period, and such events can affect the volume of honey harvested and hence annual revenue.



*Liquid gold: a bee gathers nectar from mānuka flowers. Getty Images*

In fact, other varieties can compete successfully with mānuka internationally, and a rewarewa honey was awarded "[world's best tasting honey](#)" at the 2021 [Black Jar Honey Contest](#) in the United States.

Rewarewa has a rich, malty flavour. But it is also reported to have [anti-bacterial](#), [anti-fungal](#) and [anti-inflammatory](#) properties. While this is promising news, there are currently only a few studies based on limited samples.

Further research on honeys from various geographical locations and seasons is needed. But this takes time, money and resources. In the meantime, we can just enjoy one of the world's oldest foods for its taste. Here are five New Zealand native honeys to keep an eye out for:

- **tāwari** has been described as tasting like white chocolate melting off the tongue, and is superb on pancakes or ice cream
- **kāmahi** is sweet with a buttery finish, and is a match with camembert or goat's feta
- **kānuka** is described as earthy with a toffee-like finish
- **rata** is mild and rich, not too sweet, with a fruity taste and hint of salt
- **pōhutukawa** is salty-sweet, a touch of butterscotch with a sprinkle of salt.

## Product Review – Swiss Army Hive Tool

**What is it?** It's a heavy duty stainless steel hive tool with wooden handle – available from the Club Shop



**What does it do?** Well, like most hive tools, it does more than just jemmy open the supers. I use it for pulling nails scraping paint, and that's probably why I lose so many hive tools. This one has some extra edges for using sideways for separating brood and super frames, it has a stepped tong for lifting frames out of the box, and it has a round SS wheel that can be a hammer.

There is a grooved scraper edge for cleaning out the channel in frame top and bottom bars, and another grooved edge that can clean up waxed queen excluders, but I found the gaps didn't match very well. The sideways sharp edge is great for dragging along frame edges to clean off propolis and wax.

**Pros and Cons** Its very robust and can do a variety of things a straight edged hive tool doesn't handle too well. It's very big and heavy and all those sharp edges will puncture some delicate skin if you bend over or sit down with one in your pocket.

**How much is it? Around \$25 at The Club Shop**

**Is it a worthwhile gadget?** Yes, you will not lose it in the grass and it's too big to forget and leave under the lid in the top super, but beware of the multi angled sharp edges. It might even be more useful if you can figure out what the wheel does.

**Should you get one?** Why not, you won't lose this one unless your best friend borrows it – "just for a day".

## Bee-funny



## New Product Alert



The new The Flow Super Lifter has been launched by 'Flow'.

This new tool promises to be gentler on the bees while making hive inspections easier and quicker. The tool attaches onto existing hives, lifts the hives open and holds the box open while the hive is tended to before gently closing the hives. Certainly a back saver! Check out the product [here](#).

Note: Our club has purchased one of these for member use, currently being trialled by Ron & Doris N.

## When Bee Foundation

Keep up to date with the latest news and research from the When Bee Foundation which is an Australian not-for-profit charity that promotes awareness of the importance of bees for food security and raises funds for research.

Their newsletter provides very informative industry updates as well as education on bees. Check out their page and subscribe to their newsletter [here](#).

### **Reminders for membership renewal are sent by email – now \$35/p.a.**

Membership fees can be made electronically to:  
Townsville and District Beekeepers  
BSB: 633 000  
Account: 141 466 078

**Please make sure you add your Surname or subscription number so that your membership can be signed off.**

### **Minutes of General Meeting TDBAI**

There was no general meeting in November, instead we encouraged members to attend the Varroa workshop on 17 November. No meetings in December, January or February

### **From the Club Shop volunteers**

#### **Preferably – log onto the website and place your order there: Members Only \ Shop**

If you experience difficulty accessing the web site for orders, please use the following email address to contact the club using [tsvbeeclub@gmail.com](mailto:tsvbeeclub@gmail.com)

**Alternatively** you can place your orders via [shop@beesnorth.com.au](mailto:shop@beesnorth.com.au)

Next shop opening is first Saturday of the month.

**Location:** 3/38 Rendle St, Aitkenvale

**Time:** 9am – 10:30am

Collection at other times by arrangement and when volunteers are available.

To all visitors to our Club Shop – please be respectful, patient and polite to our Volunteer shopkeepers. Please arrive with a smile, a dose of patience, and remember your manners. We are doing this for fun. It's not a business, it's run by volunteers.

Email orders will be given priority and serviced – but walk in orders may be completed if time allows. Pre-order before midnight on the Thursday before shop opening time.



#### **Golden Rules for the Club Shop:**

Please follow this guide:

- Order and pay by Thursday midnight **before** the opening day.
- Bring your order number and print out of the request with you.
- Arrive at the Shop **after** 9:00 am
- Non-emailed or late orders may not get any attention if the Shop is too busy.
- Please take your purchases and make room for the next shoppers, thanks.

## **Welcome to our New Members**

Existing Club Members are encouraged to assist/mentor our Newbees. They have joined the club to learn about bees, so even if you only have limited experience, give them a hand if you can. Invite a Newbee to your hive opening and discuss what's inside the box, let newbies experience hive openings to become more confident, and you will learn more yourself by trying to explain what's going on in there.

## **Subscribe to the Bee Aware e-newsletter and stay up to date**

The Bee Aware newsletter is an e-newsletter for beekeepers and growers of pollinator-reliant crops, or anyone else simply interested in beekeeping or the pollination of crops. Each newsletter contains the latest in news, research and development, as well as upcoming events relating to honey bee biosecurity and the pollination of horticultural and agricultural crops. Townsville features in Issue 52 due to the latest AHB and Varroa incursion.

<https://beeaware.org.au/subscribe-to-newsletter/>

## **Native bee Newsletter – join the group and check out some great info and photos**

The CROSS-POLLINATOR – Newsletter of the Australian Native Bee Association  
Original articles, new information and news from the world of native bees. The Association has branches in Sydney, Brisbane, Wide Bay and Gladstone, but no Townsville branch??  
Are there enough interested native beekeepers to get one “flying”?

Check out these sites:

<https://australiannativebee.org.au/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Australian.Native.Bee.Association/>

<https://www.instagram.com/australiannativebeeassociation/>

## **TDBAI Office holders and Committee for 2024/2025**

Position	Name	Contact
President	Frana McKinstry	<a href="mailto:president@beesnorth.com.au">president@beesnorth.com.au</a>
Vice President	Al Cooney	
Secretary	Liz Hennig	<a href="mailto:secretary@beesnorth.com.au">secretary@beesnorth.com.au</a>
Treasurer	Louise Clark	<a href="mailto:treasurer@beesnorth.com.au">treasurer@beesnorth.com.au</a>
Event Co-Ordinator	Shandelle O'Reilly	
Biosecurity Awareness Officer	John Carr	
Newsletter Editor	Lindsay Trott	<a href="mailto:editor@beesnorth.com.au">editor@beesnorth.com.au</a>
Assistant Editor	Lesley Barr	
Membership Officer	Frana McKinstry	<a href="mailto:membership@beesnorth.com.au">membership@beesnorth.com.au</a>
Shop Managers	Ron Newitt & Mark Finn	<a href="mailto:shop@beesnorth.com.au">shop@beesnorth.com.au</a>
Shop Assistant	N/A	
Librarian	Beryl Smart	
Website/social media Officer	Vacant	
Native Bees Representative	Jon McKinstry	
Committee 1	Doris Newitt	
Committee 2	Maria Finn	
Committee 3	Greg Skellern	
Committee 4	Carla Kersnovske	
Committee 5	Blake Steward	
Committee 6	Wendy Aspery	

### ***TDBAI Committee is involved in many activities – can you lend a hand?***

Contact any of the Committee Members to find out how to get involved

#### ***Swarm Contact List:***

Please advise Lindsay Trott (Editor) [editor@beesnorth.com.au](mailto:editor@beesnorth.com.au) if you wish to be removed from this list.

Contact me with your name, phone number and suburb if you want to be added to the list.

#### **Swarm Collection – honey bees**

Alex Jenkins **Townsville to Rollingstone** 0459 472 166

Ben Taylor **Douglas, Riverside Gardens** 4728 4992 or 0428 186000

Sonya Verburgt **Gulliver** 0408 530 991

Sharene Dougall **Bluewater** 0415 426 903

Phillip Plant **Townsville, Ayr, Rollingstone** 0456191 000

Bruce Mogensen **Railway Estate/Idalia** – 0427 174 705

Liz Hennig **Northern Beaches** – 0409067 367

Ronelle Nord **Alice River, Rupertswood** 0417 752 622

#### **Native bee removal**

Bruce Warren 0413 395 928

Jon McKinstry 0401 014 948

#### **Nest Removals from houses, trees and other structures**

Alex Jenkins **Townsville to Rollingstone** – 0459 472 166

Phillip Plant **Townsville, Ayr, Rollingstone** 0456 191 000

Remember that Varroa is down South and we don't want it up here – check those swarms.

### ***Editor needs your input – why not tell me your story?***

#### ***Club Member Profile Questionnaire***

Send stories and pictures to : [trottlindsay@gmail.com](mailto:trottlindsay@gmail.com)

Name /HIN /Suburb /Native or/and European bees /No of hives/area of hive locations? Type of hives? / Type of foundation? /Beetle protection?

Year commenced beekeeping?

Who was your mentor?

Who is involved in your household?

Is anyone allergic/sensitive to stings?

What has been your biggest success? / failure?/ mistake?/ biggest lesson?

What would you do differently if you had to start beekeeping again after a disaster like fire/ AFB /Varroa /cyclone

Do you sell/barter/give away honey?

How much honey does your average hive produce?

Do you make any other products from your hives?

Do you volunteer for the Club at Open days, markets, school events, public displays?

Would you like to participate?

Any stories you would like to tell?

Attach photo please?

That's it!!!!

Just fill it out and send it to me, and you will be a rock star in the Monthly Newsletter.

Please provide more than just a one word answer!! Cheers The E

#### ***Blooper of the Month?***

***Send me your blooper for totally anonymous recognition- honestly***