

Townsville and District Beekeepers Association (Inc.)

PO Box 1115, Aitkenvale QLD 4814

Newsletter No. 6, June 2015

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Varroa found in Australia

Varroa is the world's most devastating pest of European honey bees, *Apis mellifera*. Australia remains the only country free of the scourge of commercial and hobby beekeepers, but it has now been detected here. The mites were detected on a killed swarm of Asian honey bee (AHB) hive in a cable drum stored in a quarantine approved location in Brisbane in March. AHB is already established around Cairns following undetected importation. Apparently there were 14 *Varroa jacobsoni* mites isolated, although the species identification is still to be confirmed. *V. jacobsoni* is a parasite of AHB and is reported to be less destructive than *V. destructor*, which infects European honey bees, but could still cause immense damage to Australia's apiary and primary industries, worth around \$88 million and \$50 billion respectively. <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/research-programs/animal-industries/honeybee>

Some answers that are not known yet: How long had the imported AHB hive been undetected in Brisbane?, did any infected bees escaped into bushland before detection?, did any live Varroa get transferred to local bees? We just have to wait to find out. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-13/asian-honey-bee-swarm-destroyed-nest-found-in-malaysia-shipment/6465672>

A female *Varroa destructor*. The mite is the oval, orange spot on the bee's abdomen. Photograph by James Castner, University of Florida.



Sentinel Hives in Townsville

Club member Rob Stephens from DAF/Biosecurity runs a sentinel hive program in Townsville where TDBA members can assist with a national bee biosecurity program. You can host a hive that is subjected to regular disease, pest and mite inspections. Rob is especially interested in hearing from anyone who is prepared to host a hive within 5 km of Townsville Port, where the AHB incursions have already occurred as recently as this year – fortunately no Varroa mites were detected on those swarms. New member Peter Taylor has recently taken on running a sentinel hive at the Ross Creek Army base with the support of other Club Members. Contact Rob if you want to get involved, or corner him at one of our meetings for a chat. Email: Robert.Stephens@daf.qld.gov.au

How to light a smoker that stays lit!

As a newbie to beekeeping, I had varying success with keeping my smoker alight while inspecting our inherited hives. Why did my smoker habitually die on me? Where was the smoke when the bees changed pitch and became aggressive? I want the smoker to produce a cool, white smoke that calms the bees, without scorching them. It needs to initiate a feeding response, in anticipation of possible hive abandonment due to fire. Also, the smoke masks alarm pheromones released by the bees and creates an opportunity for us to open the hive and work without triggering a defensive reaction from the bees (in theory). Hopefully I've solved the problem.

Types of Fuel: There are many types of fuel that can be used in a smoker as long as it is natural and not contaminated with harmful substances. Popular fuels include twine or burlap (un-treated), dried pine needles, cardboard (free of ink and labels), wood/cedar chips, compressed cotton or leaves/bark. I use the dried pine needles as we have a handy source near to home.

Lighting the Smoker : Cleanliness is the key to success. The first step was to thoroughly clean the smoker, especially inside the lid. When we inherited our smoker, the lid was almost fully choked with fire residue. A thorough cleaning and now it is a pleasure to use. Initially I used newspaper to fire-up the smoker but have now sourced wood shavings from a friend. The advantage is that the shavings light easily and smoulder for a long time. A small fistful of wood shavings in the bottom and the use of a re-fillable, long necked gas lighter starts the process. The key is getting the burn chamber hot, really hot, to begin and sustain the fire.



Once the smoke is issuing freely, the burning chamber is packed tightly with pine needles, but the lid is not fully closed. The bellows are worked to make lots of smoke. Once the smoker chamber is hot, the smoker will usually not go out.

Loosely packed fuel will burn too quickly, and leave you with no smoke half way through an inspection, whereas tightly packed fuel will smoulder for longer, creating a thicker smoke for a longer period of time. Once you've packed in your fuel, pumping the bellows to ensure the smoker is still smouldering, close the lid and allow the top of the smoker to act as a chimney and draw the smoke out of the smoker, thereby keeping the smoulder going.



The bellows are worked fiercely creating lots of smoke. Only once the chamber is well and truly hot do you close the lid.

If you don't succeed in lighting your smoker the first time, or it burns out within a few minutes, don't get frustrated, just dump out the fuel, and try again.

When you're finished using the smoker, wait for it to cool and then clean it out ready for the next time it is to be used.

Jon McKinstry,

Reprinted from TDBA Newsletter, Nov 2012.

What fuel to use in a smoker?

Two of the most common questions by new beekeepers are: "What fuel do I use in my smoker" and "Why does my smoker keep going out"? The latter was addressed in an article by Jon McKinstry a little while ago (Nov 12) and is reproduced in this edition. The secret is in getting the can **hot!** From my perspective, I might add, that it helps to keep the smoker burning/smouldering with the lid open for 5 minutes first, then topping up with more fuel before closing and using it. But what fuel should you use in your smoker? The list below is not exhaustive by any means, but they are my tips on the most commonly used fuels by our members.

Pine products: Throughout Europe, the Americas and much of the rest of the beekeeping world, pine needles and pine cones are the most commonly used smoker fuel. It burns cool, which is the secret to any smoker fuel, smoulders well and stays lit for a relatively long time, especially if you are using pine cones. Pine wood chip and wood shavings are also very acceptable. Just make sure you are using untreated pine!

Advantages: Cool smoke, lights easily, stays alight and some pine products like cones and wood chip smoulder for a long time.

Disadvantages: Pine trees are scarce around Townsville, hence needles and cones can be hard to get. It might pay to take a trip to Magnetic Island, or up north to a pine plantation. Alternatively get on to a supply of pine wood chip!

Coconut fibre: Also a favourite among club members and very commonly used. It's a tropical 'discovery' by the beekeeping industry up in the north. The smoke can be a bit on the hot side, so be careful not to puff the smoker too close to the bees.

Advantages: Old brown coconuts are abundant

Disadvantages: Fibres can be a struggle to tear off. Can be slightly harder to light too and keep alight. Start with some newspaper first, then put some fibre on and get the can hot. Alternatively, start with a 'flame-thrower'!

Hessian: Also known as 'burlap'. This is one of the easiest fuels to use. As a new beekeeper struggling to keep on top on a mountain of information and things to do, stick to this fuel – at least your smoker won't give you any grief! You can buy it by the metre off the roll at Bunnings. Just cut it into 20cm wide strips and roll it up, light the end, put it in the smoker, close it and you can start work!

Advantages: Incredibly easy to light and it stays lit! Readily available.

Disadvantages: It costs, but it is cheap! It can burn fairly quickly, but you can stretch it further by rolling some pine or Sheoak (Casuarina) needles in with the roll. It also smells a bit oily and soots the smoker, but nothing that can't be taken care of.

Paperbark: Not all that commonly used but it has some redeeming features that make it my personal fuel of choice. The best part is that it is incredibly abundant in our region and peels off the tree in huge strips that will last the average backyarder for years!

Advantages: Very abundant. Burns a nice cool smoke without oily residues or smell. Smoulders for a long time.

Disadvantages: Can be a bugger to keep lit when you close the smoker! The trick is to get plenty of heat into it, so use a 'flame thrower' if you can. Keep the lid open and let it burn for a few minutes. Then top up and close the lid and you won't look back!

The fuels **NOT** to use include anything that produces a hot smoke, such as newspaper and gum tree leaves! Randomly grabbing dry leaves from around the garden is a bit hit-and-miss and probably not a good idea. Test the heat coming from your smoker by placing your hand in front of it while you puff. If it feels hot, it is likely to be too hot for the bees! Whatever fuel you use, never pack your smoker too tightly or it will not 'draw' and inevitably die out. Experience will help you judge just how much to use and how tight to pack the fuel. If in doubt, stick with the hessian roll. Happy smoking!

Ray Berkelmans



Too much smoke!!!!

More on Smokers – Flame throwers

Most tool and hardware shops sell an attachment that twists onto a butane gas cartridge and allow it to function as a powerful gas torch or flame thrower. They ignite with a pull of the trigger and make lighting a smoker a breeze, even with ‘difficult’ fuels such as wood chip, coconut husk and paperbark.



101 Things to do with your Bee Smoker: #1 in the series.

And you thought you could only pacify bees with your smoker.

Since 1990, researchers have been investigating how water-soluble components of smoke are effective in breaking seed dormancy and enhancing plant seed germination. The humble bee smoker has been used as a standard piece of this highly sophisticated experimental research set-up (see photo, Item 1 and 2). There are now several commercially available smoke extracts available to help boost the germination of seeds for tree nurseries and vegetable hothouses, one is called unimaginatively “Australian Smoky Water” – doh!!!.

It all looks a bit suspicious to me. Mr Juicy orange juice bottles and garden hose used to be the items of choice. Keep your smoker locked up.



Lindsay

Source: An effective system to produce smoke solutions from dried plant tissue for seed germination studies. Applications in Plant Sciences, 2(3), 2014. J. Coons, N. Coutant, B. Lawrence, D. Finn, S. Finn.

TDBA May Meeting Minutes: 17-05-2015

Held at: Justin Traill's at Cape Cleveland

Pres. Ron opened the meeting at 2.10, welcoming members and newer members.

A very windy day so no hives were opened.

Present: as per signed book

Apologies: as per the book and the Charters Towers contingent, Doug and Sonya McBride, Neil Elliman, Robert T., Virginna Muspratt and others from the book.

Minutes of Previous meeting Taken as read.

Moved: Lindsay T. Sec: Jon Mc. Carried.

Matters arising:

Native bee workshop organizing has begun, some have paid. Frana spoke on that for the coming weekend.

Paul Payne needs volunteers for the Eco Fiesta for the last weekend of May.

Temporary absence of Grant (Secretary) discussed, carried over, people thinking about it.

Bee boxes selling very well.

We have the opportunity to use the Mundingburra Scout Den for future meetings – Ron R.

Frana spoke onto idea of having beehives at a school - Town High was mentioned. Connie N. spoke about what could happen in Ingham and will report back to the meetings

Website has been changed over and applied and yet to be confirmed. Ray has done a good job. Will have to apply for the email change as well from .org

If you wish to have your name on the web site for selling raw honey see Frana.

Correspondence: memberships have been paid in the past month.

Bendigo bank statement, Australian Post, QBA newsletter

Treasurer's report: see separate sheet. Over 132 financial members. Bank account healthy, over \$5790, but expenses will come out to cater for the Native Bee Workshop.

Moved: Ray B. Sec: Dave T. Carried

General Business

Native bee workshop on the Friday the 22 of May and 23rd of May. Cost \$40 for members and \$50 for non-members. Frana spoke at length with that. More native hives needed for splits to be done.

AFB reported from Gulliver Sonya V. spoke on her AFB and how she dealt with it. Ray B has AFB kits available from UK > Discussion about the AFB outbreak.

Wayne Taylor standing down from the Newsletter editor due to work commitments. Lindsay T volunteered to take the reins. Thank you to both Lindsay and to Wayne for the job he has done for a number of years.

Dennis has an observation hive which could be used for the club.

Some members have ordered Flow hives.

For our oncoming winter, leave your honey in the hives for the bees to keep them strong and ready of the honey flow at the end of July if it comes. Don't starve the bees. Feed your bees if necessary with a 'solid' mixture of sugar and water.

Geoff showed the meeting another form of SHB trap. \$15 costs.

Varroa found in a swarm at Brisbane port.

Reminder to do an icing sugar shake of your bees if possible to check for Varroa. Please report any tests particularly negative ones, let Rob Stevens know.

Ron asked people to consider having a meeting at their place. Grant will be standing down as secretary in the near future so please consider volunteering for the task.

Next Meeting

June Sonya's place in Gulliver. 47 McLean Street.

July Virginia's hives at the pistol (gun) club near Clare in the Burdekin.

August AGM Mundingburra Scout Den.

Meeting closed 3.15.

Coffee, tea, and some generously provided eats, and lots of discussions were enjoyed.

Classifieds

ForSale

Bottom Boards -10 Frames wood & metal pressure primed before assembly and ready for use made to Australian Standards
9mm risers & cleats
70x35 mm to fit commonly used stands

\$20 each
Graham Smith
232 Corcoran Street
Currajong 4812
t - 47796591



ForSale

We're increasing the range of items available to club members. Dan Donovan has made plastic foundation and full depths frames available, we also stock wax foundation and wire excluders (limited number) and have new stock of the vented bee jackets .

Don't forget we still have these shirts, and I would like to get them moving. They are only \$22 each, please consider purchasing one of the remaining sizes/colours

White – 3XL; XL; L; M and S are available
Beige – 3XL, M and S are available
Womens style, we have 1 x white and 1 x beige, both Size 14 available.

Honey gate \$10 Smokers
for sale - \$35 Gloves \$20

Honey gate \$10

Un-capping knife \$15

Hive Tools for sale - \$5 MS or SSteel \$12.00 Frames
\$1.35ea

Wax foundation \$1.60 ea

Ring Frana Ph 0401 014 948 OR
franajon@gmail.com

Bees wanted to buy - Marg Crane (Swarm)



Bees for Sale

- **Jon & Frana McKinstry**
- **Mick Taylor**
- **Kevin Harding**

Anyone wanting to sell OR buy any equipment, bees, wooden ware or the like please forward an email with a photo, some details and a price to: trottindsay@gmail.com (Editor)

Eco Fiesta 2015

The Townsville 2015 Eco Fiesta was held on Sunday 31 May 20 at Queen's Gardens. It is the Townsville City Council's premier event to promote environmentally responsible products and practices. Good weather, good music and good food helped to ensure a strong showing again this year. Our club again had a stall at this event, as we have done for quite some years now. Interest from the public was good with a continual stream of people enquiring about keeping bees – honey bees and native bees. Given the nature of the event and the clientele it attracts, it was a case of preaching to the converted and the highly interested, so for those manning the stand, it was an "easy sell"!



Mick, Dave, Sonya and others at the Eco Fiesta Stall

Thanks go to Paul and Jacinta for organising our stall and all the members who volunteered on the day.
Ray B.

We're up on Facebook!

Our club has now hit the social media with a page on Facebook thanks to Connie Navarro. It's another medium to promote the club and an opportunity to share and disseminate information to the public (& members) about what's going on in the club. It is also a great way to showcase small every-day happenings in the process of beekeeping, to educate and keep stoking the fire of interest. Please follow and "Like Us" at:

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



Welcome to new members

A very special welcome to the following new members this month:

Sonya	CORKERY	MT LOW
Lola	FONTANA	MT LOW
Barry	MITCHELL	BOWEN
Virgina	KLEKAR	CHARTERS TOWERS
Shane	HORWOOD	HEATLEY
Scott	PARDON	OAK VALLEY
Karen	DESIRA	
Mia	ANASTASIOU	MUNDINGBURRA

Please make them feel at home in the club and introduce yourselves to them at the next meeting.

Farewell Ray!

Ray Berkelmans is leaving Townsville soon, but not the before I take this opportunity of personally thanking him, and on behalf of the TDBA acknowledging all his input to the Club. Ray has given huge amounts of time, enthusiasm and generous hands-on training to many newbie members - myself included. Ray has also fielded so many e-mail and phone call requests to “take a peek” inside a hive that I lost count ages ago. His IT skills have led the club from a 2 page B+W photocopied hand-out to the fully electronic, colour and e-mail Newsletter that you see today*. The Beesnorth website: <http://www.beesnorth.org/> is

pretty much all his own work with minor input from others. Our online membership application form is due to his persistence and skill, and the availability of inexpensive beekeeping gear through the Club was instigated and trialled by Ray. Ray led the team that rescued Mrs “P’s” feral hive to become a Biosecurity hive, and along the way befriended one of Townsville’s extraordinary original residents (see previous Newsletters for the saga of Mrs “P’s” hive). He has supported the native bee interest group in the Club, and tested several hive designs at home, assisted in re-housings, and volunteered and attended both Native Bee Workshops. Ray has also assisted several newbees in getting established with split and starter European honey bee hives. He has also assisted in establishment and running of the Biosecurity sentinel hives for Rob Stephens from DAF.

Ray’s scientific and electronic interests have seen some backyard wizardry and gadgetry that have had the older, more experienced beekeepers in the Club scratching their heads in wonder. Ray has developed his own wi-fi remote temperature and humidity logging system from his backyard hives to his home computer, installed a remotely operated video camera system to scan 3 separate hive entrances for bee activity via his smart phone while he was at work, utilized miniature temperature logging systems to test and record the effect of shading or changing of paint colour on hives on 24 hour temperature cycles, built and sold his own “hive lifter” utilizing a battery operated drill for the winch, developed a solar panel operated fan cooling set-up on the lid of a hive that operates when a thermostat in the hive lid senses high temperatures in the hive, is developing a wi-fi set of scales to remotely sense honey flow buildup and indicate when the hive is ready to harvest.... and there’s plenty more ideas where all that came from.

On a personal note – I would like to thank Ray for making the world of bees so interesting and accessible to me, and for being my bee mentor. Ray helped me so often in hive maintenance, swarm collecting, harvesting, and inspections that we became known as the “B Team” or the Bee Brothers. Everyone in beekeeping needs a bee mentor - so I encourage more experienced Club members to share their enthusiasm and knowledge with the newbees, as Ray has to me and many other Club members. Thanks Ray, Farewell and Best Wishes down South.

(*Personal apology from the new Editor who does not have Publisher and cannot match the layout skills of previous Newsletter Editors)



Ray describing the benefits of solar powered, fan forced cooling on hive temperatures.



Nice home made floral veil Ray

Native Bee Workshops a big hit for the second time!

The native bee workshops in October last year were such a sell out (with people clambering for available spots) that the Club embarked on a second round of native bee workshops. Two one-day workshops were held on May 22 and 23 at the Oonoonba Community Centre. Interest was strong and the club again brought up Dr Tim Heard to run the workshops. Attendees travelled from as far afield as Innisfail and Bowen to participate. Having attended both the 2014 and the 2015 workshops, I can say that the second was just as good and enjoyable as the first. A great deal of new information was gained (mostly due to first-time neuron overflow...). A number of hives were opened during this workshop where Tim decided not to go ahead with the split. The reasons why were the 'gems' of information which makes it so special to have one of Australia's

(and the world's!) experts among us to teach us what, why and how!



Dr Tim Heard describing some of the mysteries of native bees

One of the most interesting aspects of the workshop was meeting a whole horde of new people, some of whom had been keeping native bees for 20+ years, but still found it useful to seek out a workshop like this to expand their knowledge! The feedback on both days was exceptionally positive! The practical sessions were again a hit as were the in-depth (but not over-the-top) lectures.

As you can imagine organising this workshop was a massive effort and we are greatly indebted to Frana McKinstry for taking this on. Thanks also to the small band of helpers on both days!

Ray

A nice *T. carbonaria* brood



Ray delicately extracting a hive



Ray grinding away to get to the hive



Club Shop Price List.

Item	Price	Comment
Veil with drawstring	20.00	
Jacket / Round hat	50.00	
Ventilated jacket	70.00	
Full Suit	75.00	
Gloves	20.00	
Hive tool (S/S)	12.00	
Hive tool (Yellow)	5.00	
Smoker	35.00	
Queen Excluder - Wire	20.00	Limited supply
Queen Excluder - Plastic	5.00	Ideal for use as inner lids
Frames - Full depth	1.35	
Foundation - Plastic	1.90	
Foundation - Wax	1.60	
Bee Brush - Natural bristle	8.00	
Bee Brush - Synthetic bristle	7.00	
Club Polo Shirts	22.00	
Queen Catcher	3.00	
Frame Gripper	8.00	
Gate valve	10.00	
Capping knife, serrated	15.00	
Comb scratcher	6.00	
Honey jars 500gm	0.75	
1kg Buckets	1.25ea	
TRAPS		
Apithor trap	6.50	
Silver Bullet trap	7.00	or 3 for \$20
TK Beetle mat	6.00	
"Die Ya Bastard" trap	2.00	
Diatomaceous earth	2.00	
Booklet - Managing AFB	6.00	

TDBAI is supported by ...

THE AUSTRALIAN BEE-KEEPER MAGAZINE (ABK)

Published monthly

Subscriptions \$72 per year.

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Dan Donovan

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TK Mats for SHB \$6

Silver Bullet SHB traps \$7

See our Treasurer—Frana....



*All locally available in Townsville:
Club Members Only!*

Bee Jackets \$50

Hive tools \$5

Bee Brush \$7

Gloves \$20

Smokers \$35

All five items sold as a Beginners Kit \$90

Uncapping knives sold separately - \$15

Gate Valve \$10

Frana Ph 0401 014 948



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www.beesnorth.org