



Townsville & District
BEEKEEPERS

www.beesnorth.com.au

ASSOCIATION
PO Box 1115
Aitkenvale. Qld. 4814



Newsletter No. 4: April 2025

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Next Meeting:

2pm Sunday 13 April 2025

Hermit Park State School
(McKimmin St entrance)

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

Varroa is now in Queensland – check your hives

<https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/news-media/news/varroa-mite-detected-qld>

5 March, 2025

Initial samples from a recreational apiary in the Lockyer Valley have returned a positive diagnostic result for *Varroa destructor*. Further samples from recreational and commercial apiaries have been collected and are undergoing testing to confirm the presence of *Varroa destructor* and check for other exotic pests and diseases.

Biosecurity Queensland has been preparing for this event for some time and is working closely with affected beekeepers to slow the spread of varroa mite and help guide management practices.

We expect to see increased detections in Queensland's border regions in coming months due to natural spread from New South Wales.

If you are not sure how to check for Varroa, just ask our friendly, dedicated VDO Carla. She will help you become an expert at alcohol washing (preferred method), drone uncapping and checking your brood. Remember the catch phrase – if you're not checking, you just don't know.

Feel free to reach out to me by calling 0467 236 135 or emailing carla.kersnovske@daf.qld.gov.au



Carla Kersnovske

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

T 0467 236 135 E carla.kersnovske@daf.qld.gov.au W www.daf.qld.gov.au
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 alcohol wash and check for these blighters!

Contact Carla, 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

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

Varroa Tick... The Beekeepers' Nightmare

By Dr John Hill (British Bee Veterinary Association) and Dr John Carr (James Cook University)

From The Ed: This is an extract from an older Newsletter article co-authored by our resident Vet Dr John Carr. If you would like more detail on Varroa biology, or the complete article, just “shirt front” John at one of our Club meetings.

Invasive species can cause havoc to the new environment that they happen to fall into. None more so than the movement of a small maroon coloured tick called *Varroa destructor* or *Varroa jacobsoni* on to the western or European honeybee, *Apis mellifera*.

The tick was believed to be a mite, but further analysis indicates that a tick is a better biological designation for Varroa. They belong to the spider family of arthropods, whereas the honeybee belongs to the insects. So the tick has 8 legs and no wings whereas the honeybee has 6 legs and wings.

There are many ticks and mites that infest the enormous bee family, but only a few are pathogenic. Our story begins with the eastern Asian honeybee called *Apis cerana*. This is a smaller, more hairy bee to *A. mellifera* and has a slightly shorter life cycle. Colonies of western honeybees have been moved round the world because of their fecundity and good honey production. Many colonies came to the Far East and entered into the *A. cerana* environment. At some point, about 50 years ago, a mutation took place, possibly in Korea, and the Varroa tick was discovered to have jumped species to *A. mellifera*. It was then named *Varroa destructor*; which proved to be an appropriate name. *Varroa destructor* has spread round the world very rapidly and is in all countries except Australia. But the original *Varroa jacobsoni*, can still infect *A. mellifera*. There are only very subtle differences between these two species of tick.

Apis mellifera have little natural defences against this tick. It has less hair and a longer life cycle and less grooming behaviour than *A. cerana* which all favour the tick. Varroa has an oval shaped carapace and is approx 1.8 x 1.4 mm, about the size of a written full stop. Follow the blue arrow to see the Varroa on the carapace of the worker bee in the photo.

The Varroa tick sucks and feeds on the bee's fat bodies and associated haemolymph blood. Ticks parasitise both the adult bee and the developing pupa. It is large in relation to the size of the bee. In fact one of the largest parasite to host ratios in nature. If a bee was the size of a human, the tick would be the size of a dinner plate crawling over you, sucking your blood and injecting you with viruses. The tick is amazingly adaptable and is even capable of changing the biochemical structure of its carapace to match that of its host so as the bee does not recognise the intruder as foreign pupa. It is large in relation to the size of the bee. In fact one of the largest parasite to host ratios in nature. If a bee was the size of a human, the tick would be the size of a dinner plate crawling over you, sucking your blood and injecting you with viruses. The tick is amazingly adaptable and is even capable of changing the biochemical structure of its carapace to match that of its host so as the bee does not recognise the intruder as foreign.

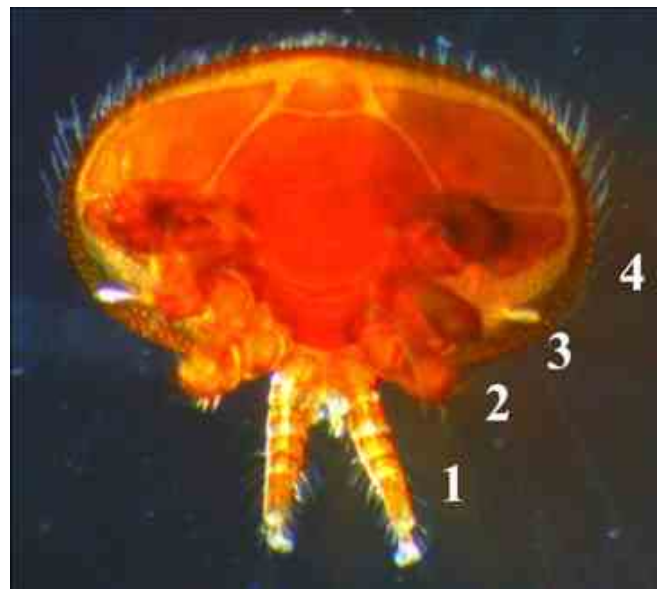


Fig 1. Varroa tick down the microscope counting their legs



Fig 2. Varroa tick on the thorax of the honeybee (UK)

Beekeeping Through Generations: A Family Story from Ukraine

Submitted by our newest member, Karyna Thomas

Beekeeping has been part of my family for many generations. Both my maternal and paternal great-grandparents kept bees before World War II. However, it was my grandfather, Vasyl, who introduced me to beekeeping in the village where I grew up. His journey in beekeeping was self-taught. Initially, his father had attempted to cultivate a hive but was unsuccessful. Already in his 30s, Vasyl's lifelong path in beekeeping truly began in 1960 with the purchase of two bee colonies residing in hollow log hives.

A year later, he managed to buy a book on beekeeping and some beeswax foundation for frames. With our village being relatively remote and without access to a library, Vasyl determinedly rode 60 km by horse to the nearest city to acquire the book. Using this newfound knowledge and his carpentry skills, he built beehives, frames, and all the necessary beekeeping equipment himself. He even forged and sharpened special knives of his own.

Soon, nature took its course, and the apiary flourished. The first honey harvests for the family were true celebrations. Over time, the apiary grew, producing an excess of honey, which they sold to friends and at the market. Sometime after becoming an established beekeeper within our community, my grandfather noticed counterfeit honey being sold - honey made from processed syrup rather than real flowers. He deeply despised deception and took it upon himself to teach people how to distinguish genuine honey from fakes.

For my grandfather, beekeeping was a passion. He loved reading about bees and used his knowledge to prepare medicines from propolis, royal jelly, and pollen. He took great pleasure in teaching beekeeping free of charge. I still remember a 16-year-old girl from the neighbourhood who often came to our yard to learn from him. Some gave up quickly, but my grandfather Vasyl was always proud that he had trained four worthy apprentices who turned beekeeping into their life's work.

Grandfather spoke about the life and behavior of bees as if telling fairy tales. In the summer, I helped him at the apiary. He showed and taught me the different performance dances of bees, how queen bees fought, and the development of broods. I learned by listening to the sounds of young and old queens calling to each other—it was all fascinating. My grandfather told me that you could stop a swarm from leaving by imitating thunder. He also taught me how to introduce a young queen to an established hive by briefly holding her in water—this weakened and removed her scent, preventing other bees from attacking her and allowing them to accept her into the hive.

There were also many funny moments, like the time an entire swarm fell on my head while my grandfather was trying to collect it into a box from high up in a tree. I was standing below holding the box when suddenly - whoosh! - the bees landed right on me. It felt like an eternity waiting for them to fly off as I stood rock-still! Or when we experimented by making "milk honey" by feeding the bees syrup mixed with milk.



Vasyl Platonovych Bilyk (1930-2024)

My grandfather kept bees his entire life, right up until his passing in November of last year - a total of 64 years with bees. I am incredibly proud of my grandfather, and I would love to continue his legacy by making beekeeping a part of our family's life in Australia.



Buzzing with Excitement: A School Visit to North Shore State School

In March, the beekeeping association had the wonderful opportunity to visit **North Shore State School**, where we spent time with the enthusiastic **Grade 3 students**, sharing the magic of bees and beekeeping. Our Association President, **Frana**, led **four interactive 30-minute sessions** with the assistance of **Karyna**, our newest club member, in introducing the students to the fascinating world of bees.

We covered everything from the **importance of bees in nature** to the **tools and techniques of beekeeping**. Frana gave a full demonstration of a beekeeper's job, showing how honey is extracted and letting the children touch and feel the tools we use. The students also learned about the **different types of bees in a hive** and their roles, as well as the **various products bees**

produce, such as honey, wax, and pollen, and their **differences in color, flavor, and uses**.

The highlight of the day was **tasting fresh honeycomb**—the students absolutely loved it! It was inspiring to see how much they already knew about bees. In fact, in a class of 30 children, around **five students had beehives at home** and were actively helping their families care for them.

It was a fantastic experience to share our passion for beekeeping with the next generation. Seeing their excitement and curiosity gives us hope for the future of bees and the environment. We look forward to more school visits and continuing to spread awareness about the importance of bees!

🐝 **Happy Beekeeping!** 🐝

From the Prez: A special thank you to Karyna for her help with these presentations, I couldn't have done it without her.

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](#).

Membership

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 Newbees experience hive openings to become more confident, and you will learn more yourself by trying to explain what's going on in there.

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.



Some of the 40 + people who attended the first meeting of the year.



Ron demonstrating the hive Super Lifting device. It was much clearer in the pictures, than using an imaginary super.

This is available for loan to members. To see it in action:

<https://www.honeyflow.com.au/pages/super-lifter>

Minutes: Committee Meeting 1 March 2025

Bohle Barn Hotel

12:30pm

Attendance – as per Sign-In book

Business from Previous Meeting

- TGS visit - Frana and Ron visited. Discussion only at this stage. On going
- Helene, TCC meeting with - Helene is still our main contact.
- Discussions regarding upcoming events will be handled by Shandelle
- QBA Conference 2025 Gold Coast, 18 - 20 June. 18 to be field day. Program for 19 & 20 June to be advised closer to the day. Proposed that we send 2 reps, no decision made. Request that QBA video the conference
- Email Addresses - Vice President and others to be given access to various addresses

Upcoming events

- 23 - 24 May Ag event in Ingham. Discussed who might be interested in attending. Free camping available in Show Grounds. Friday 23 is visits from schools and the like. Saturday 24 open to the public. - Display of posters, photos and brochures, honey extraction, children activities, members encouraged to sell produce. Carla will also be available to discuss Varroa.
- 20 May Bunnings Domain WBD. Members are encouraged to attend and interact with the public. Opportunity again to sell produce.
- Lions & Rotary club have requested guest speakers

Calendar of events

Shandelle displayed draft copy. Awaiting further details. Finish copy will be available on website.

Website Management

On going. Asking Brendan Driemel to be web manager

Permanent Venue

- Discussion around purpose for venue, various possible sites, funding, locality, on going costs, available grants.
- Decided to postpone discussion for 6 months. Acknowledged that club members at a general meeting should be included in discussion.
- LendLease Grant – to be fulfilled by 30 June 2025
- Discussion on how and if Club should become involved with Native bees. This led to discussing how to handle the situation the Club has been left with following Nick Smith departure. Discussion is ongoing.

General Business

- Grant applications for Varroa Controller
- Rotating monthly meetings between Michael Hooper Park, Hermit Park SS and private homes.
- John Carr appointed as our club rep for the DPI Bee BioSecurity Round Table. The Round Table is set to take place over 1/2 days in Brisbane in May 2025.
- Carla requested that our monthly Newsletter informs members to prepare for Varroa incursion in our area. Highlighting the fact that Alcohol Wash is the most efficient and humane way of detecting Varroa mites. Please report all results on the DPI website BEE123. It will come so we have the opportunity now to consider actions that are available. We need to be prepared.
- Discussion around formulating a list of equipment available to club members on a loan basis.
- Need to add Social events to the calendar

Meeting Closed 2:15pm

Minutes of March General Meeting TDBAI

Date: Sunday 9 March, 2025

Note taker: Liz Hennig

Apologies: see Sign-in book

Attendance: see Sign-in book.

Meeting opened: 2pm

Meeting closed: 2.48pm

Number	Agenda item	Tabled by:	Action and date
1.	Visitors and newbies Welcome by Frana Visitors: Tatiana – Karyna – Burdell/Honey bees Phil – Kirwan /Honey bees Kathy and Bob/ Honey bees/ Kelso Elda – Ingham/ Honey and native bees	Frana	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting: October 24 Included AGM Varroa Workshop in November Xmas get together at Bohle	Frana	
3.	Business from previous meeting Awards from 2024 handed out	Frana	
4.	President Report, committee positions filled: Jon – Native Bee Rep Brenden and Jess – website managers Website crashing		need to develop a new, fully integrated website asap.
5.	Treasurer Report Report tabled by Lou Beryl (accepted) and Bev (seconded)	Lou	Attached
6.	Club Shop	Ron	Reduced stock New shelving Updated signage to assist volunteers If large orders required – please advise in good time Thanks to the volunteers who assist.
7.	Library report	Beryl	Advised of available books to borrow
8.	Bio-Security Varroa in QLD Advised by a Recreation bee keeper – found varroa Alcohol wash detected varroa Samples to the lab and confirming varroa Contacted beekeepers in the Lockyer Valley 7 confirmed sites of varroa Must monitor Alcohol wash Soapy water Sugar shake – bees suffocate Drone uncapping – very good tool to detect varroa BEE123 website – enter data – negative surveillance is just as important	Carla	Alcohol wash and impact on varroa Registration of hives Monitor of hives Bee123 website

	<p>Map that will advise who has done monitoring Heat map will be available soon – positive varroa Q – guess in time how long TVLE has? Difficult to ascertain. DAF have advised NOT to utilise any beekeeping equipment from BNE. Registration of hives is essential. QLD BEE.Alert register Management of hives is essential.</p> <p>1 mite – first egg laid is a male – then subsequent females. Thereafter population expands.</p>		Management of hives – not eradication
9.	Flow hive lifter demonstration	Ron	Can be adopted to a timber hive. The club has purchased one.
10.	Event in May – Ingham 23-24 May Overnighter		
11.	13 April – How to inspect hives	Jon	Meeting presentation Venue: TBC
12.	Sunday 27 April 9-3pm Venue TBA	Jon	Native bee workshop \$30 What is a NB Social Solitary Splitting Club members first option
13.	April Meeting		Venue to be advised
14.	Swarm kit		Equipment to be on hand Sheet Broccoli box Frames Queen clip Mosquito net Brush
15.	Alcohol wash demonstration by Carla		

Ukrainian soldiers throw beehive at Russians after running out of grenades

(submitted by Miles F.)

Video posted on Telegram appears to show ingenious improvisation against troops in cellar near Pokrovsk, in east of country. https://apple.news/AT-_u1uYkTKWEgniUiFoUww

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

Alternatively you can place your orders via 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, its 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.

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 honeybee 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/>

Swarm Contact List:

Please advise Lindsay Trott editor@beesnorth.com.au or Lesley Barr lesleybarr@y7mail.com with your name, phone number and suburb if you want to be added to or removed from the list.

Swarm Collection – honey bees

Alex Jenkins: Townsville to Rollingstone 0459 472 166
Sonya Verburgt: Gulliver 0408 530 991
Sharene Dougall: Bluewater 0415 426 903
Phillip Plant: Townsville, Ayr, Rollingstone 0456 191 000
Bruce Mogensen: Railway Estate/Idalia 0427 174 705
Liz Hennig: Northern Beaches 0409 067 367
Ronelle Nord: Alice River, Rupertswood 0417 752 622
Tito Parigi: Magnetic Island 0418 796 951
Pat Dury: Aitkenvale 0419 252 829
Wendy Davey: Woodstock, Alligator Creek, Giru, Charters Towers 0413 319 933

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 now in Qld and we don't want it up here – check those swarms.

TDBAI Office holders and Committee for 2024/2025

Position	Name	Contact
President	Frana McKinstry	president@beesnorth.com.au
Vice President	Al Cooney	
Secretary	Liz Hennig	secretary@beesnorth.com.au
Treasurer	Louise Clark	treasurer@beesnorth.com.au
Event Co-Ordinator	Shandelle O'Reilly	
Biosecurity Awareness Officer	John Carr	
Newsletter Editor	Lindsay Trott	editor@beesnorth.com.au
Assistant Editor	Lesley Barr	
Membership Officer	Frana McKinstry	membership@beesnorth.com.au
Shop Managers	Ron Newitt & Mark Finn	shop@beesnorth.com.au
Shop Assistant	N/A	
Librarian	Beryl Smart	
Website/social media Officer	Brenden & Jess Driemler	
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

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

Club Member Profile Questionnaire

Send stories and pictures to :

Lindsay Trott: trottlindsay@gmail.com

Or:

[Lesley Barr <lesleybarr@y7mail.com>](mailto:lesleybarr@y7mail.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 Ed.

Blooper of the Month?



We finally have a blooper – remember those warnings not to leave wax unattended on the stove? This is why, and this pic was taken well into the cleanup . . . It wasn't as bad as the last time though, where it reached the ceiling. Some people are slow learners.