



Monthly NEWS

To: The Australian Honey Industry

From: Stephen Ware – Executive Director

APRIL 2012

AHBIC acknowledges the **beekeeper suppliers** who contribute via their packer/queen bee supplier to AHBIC. We urge beekeepers to support those Packers/Queen bee breeders who contribute to AHBIC.

DOES YOUR HONEY BUYER(S) OR QUEENBEE SUPPLIER'S NAME APPEAR ON THIS LIST? IF NOT, THEN ASK 'WHY NOT?' AHBIC WORKS FOR YOU!

AB's Honey	Cugley, Kirsten	L'Estrange, Tony	Saxonbee Enterprises
Argus, Andrew	Damokas, B	Lever, Robert	Slattery, Anna
Australian Queen Bee Exporters	Daybreak Apiary	Locker, Judy	Smith, C & B
Australian Queen Bee Breeders	Davey, Helen	MacFarlane, R H	Spring Gully Foods P/L
Australian Honey Products	Davis, E	Marchant, R & S	Squire, Gary
Barnes Apiaries P/L	Deane, A J & C M	Marti, Rod T/A Gagarra Honey	Stanley, J & L
Bates, Tiffane	Den Hollander, Jeroen	McGurk M L &	Stephens, R
Beacham, V G	Dewar Corporation	Lockley, B A	Stevens, Graeme
Bee My Honey Apiaries	Dunlop, P G & R D	McLaren, Jane	Stevens, Howard
Beechworth Honey P/L	Ewington, P & M	McInerney, Neville	Stirling, Graeme
Bees Neez Apiaries	Faithfull, Mark	Meimetis, Steve	Stokes, Peter
Bell, Graham	Federal Council of Australian Apiarists	Milne, Howard	Strout, Graham
Billington, Steven	Fruet, F P	Morgan, Trevor	Tasmanian Beekeepers - NW Branch
Black, R G & M J	Gell's Honey	Morris, Wendy	Tasmanian Crop
Bowman Family	Georgiou, Athena	Mullen, Peter & Sylvia	Pollination Association
Bredenkamp, Don	Giles, G R & P M	Myers, Terry	Tasmanian Honey
Bresland, Ian	Glenister, Susan	Naisbitt, A L	Company
Brock, Margaret	Goode, T W & M A	Nevin, Denis	Thompson, N
Brooks, Graham	Griffiths, Milton	Nitschke, C J	Weatherhead, T & M
Bucktin, Brian	Griffin, Brian	Norcic, John	True Blue Honey
Bush Honey - Rosalie Waters	Hadfield, Simon	Papworth, F & E	Valkenburg, Simeon
Buzz Honey	Honey Packers & Marketers Association	Park, William F	Upton, Ralph
Capilano Honey Ltd	Hooper, B A	Paull, D M & G A	Van Dongen, A J
Ciphery, C & R	Hooper, R F & A J	Phillips, Rupert	Vermeer, Peter
Clifford, D A & J J	Hooten, Keith	Pluschke, D & M S	Wallace, P
Codde, T J	Hoskinson, H L & H M	Pobke, Barry	Warral Apiaries P/L
Cole, O F	Howard, O D	Pollard, Nigel	Watson, James
Coleman, R J	Howell, T & S	Pollination Association of WA	Weerona Apiaries
Cotton, A J &	Howie, GD	Rasmussen, Ivan	Wescobee Limited
McDonald, M A	Hughston & Sons P/L	Ravi, David	Wilson, Col
Craig, Athol	Ipswich/West Moreton Beekeepers Association	Roberts, I J & J H	Wishart, Ron
Crop Pollination Association	Jones, C H	Roberts, Glenn	Zadow Apiaries
	Kap J & E A	Robinson, Barry	
	Langan, Margaret	Roden, Helen	
		Ruiter, J H	

Thank you to all our beekeeper contributors some of whom have asked to remain anonymous. AHBIC appreciates your ongoing support.

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The following provides an update of recent activities of AHBIC naturally if you should seek any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact the AHBIC office.

UPDATE AHBIC ACTIVITIES

Meetings in Canberra

The month of April has been busy for the AHBIC office. Your industry has met with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and also with senior policy advisors of Senator Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. During our visit to Canberra on 12 April the Department and Minister's staff was canvassed on the following issues:

- Biosecurity Issues
- Plant & Animal Health
- Bee Quarantine Facility
- Export charges
- Market Access

I am pleased to advise that considerable progress was made on each of these matters.

RIRDC 5 Year Plan

On Friday 13 April the draft Honeybee 5 year R & D Program 2012 -2017 was endorsed by AHBIC. The draft plan will now proceed to the RIRDC Board in early May for final approval. The draft plan has aggregated some of the objectives from the current plan to give RIRDC greater flexibility when making investments. Some new issues (such as Asian Honey Bees) or issues that have recently re-emerged (such as PAs) have been given prominence in this plan.

AHBIC Executive Meeting

The next AHBIC Executive meeting will be held on Monday 7 May in Adelaide. Items for discussion include the AHBIC Business Plan 2012-2017 which was previously circulated for comment and input to Industry representatives. The containment strategy for *Apis cerana* in Queensland will be discussed including a response from the Honeybee Program and Pollination Program Advisory Committee.

AHBIC Annual General Meeting

Members are again advised that the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) will be held on Friday 6 July at the Grand Chancellor Hotel, 29 Cameron Street, Launceston, Tasmania 7250. This is to be preceded by the Tasmanian Beekeepers' Association Conference. Anyone seeking further information should not hesitate to contact the AHBIC office or the Tasmanian Beekeepers' Association.

FSANZ Honey Standards

Industry also met with Food Standards New Zealand with the view of increasing the descriptive content of the Australian Honey Standard 2.8.2 and its relevance to existing international standards, which relate to markets in which Australian honey is commonly sold. In addition, the lack of detail in the Standard lowers the quality expectations of imported product when compared to other international markets.

B-QUAL

A meeting of the B-Qual Board will be held in Adelaide on Tuesday 15 May. Items for discussion include ongoing training and the current DERM project in Queensland.

NEW PESTICIDES LINKED TO BEE POPULATION COLLAPSE

Two studies confirm dangers of 'nerve agents' used on one-third of all British cropland

Worldwide declines in bee colonies, threatening much of global agriculture, may be caused by a new generation of nerve-agent pesticides, two new scientific studies strongly suggest. The findings place a massive question mark over the increasingly controversial compounds, now the fastest growing family of insecticides in the world.

[Silent menace graphic: The threat to bees](#)

Bee declines represent a serious threat to agriculture because bees are the pollinators of a large percentage of crops. Both honey bees and wild bumble bees are seriously harmed by exposure to neonicotinoid insecticides, even by tiny doses not sufficient to kill them outright, the studies by British and French scientists report today.

The British study, carried out by scientists from the University of Stirling, concludes that "there is an urgent need to develop alternatives to the widespread use of neonicotinoid pesticides on flowering crops wherever possible".

About 30 per cent of British cropland – 3.14 million acres – was being treated with the chemicals in 2010, while in the US the figures for neonicotinoid use are enormous: in 2010, 88 million acres of maize, 77 million acres of soy and 53 million acres of wheat were treated with them. The compounds, which attack insects' central nervous systems, have been increasingly implicated in the widespread decline of honey bees and wild bees over the past decade, which have culminated in the mysterious colony collapse disorder in the US – a phenomenon in which the whole population of a beehive suddenly vanishes.

The value of bees' pollination services has been estimated at £200m per year just in Britain. The global annual value of pollination has been estimated at £128bn annually.

Many beekeepers have become convinced that the new pesticides are behind the declines, and in France, Italy and other countries they have been banned. But in Britain and the US their use continues.

Last year *The Independent* revealed that the American government's own chief bee researcher, Dr Jeffrey Pettis of the US Department of Agriculture, had conducted a study showing that bees exposed to microscopic doses of neonicotinoids were much more vulnerable to disease – but his study had not been published nearly two years after it was completed. Dr Pettis's findings were eventually published two months ago and were described by *The Economist* as "a plausible hypothesis for the cause of colony collapse disorder".

The findings of the two new studies, published simultaneously in the journal *Science*, are explosive.

The British study, led by Stirling's Professor David Goulson, showed that growth of colonies of the common buff-tailed bumble bee, *Bombus terrestris*, slowed after the insects were exposed to "field-realistic levels" of imidacloprid, a common neonicotinoid insecticide. The production of queens, essential for colonies to continue, declined by a massive 85 per cent in comparison with unexposed colonies used as controls.

"Given the scale of use of neonicotinoids, we suggest that they may be having a considerable negative impact on wild bumble bee populations across the developed world," the Stirling team says.

The French study, led by Mikaël Henry from France's National Institute for Agronomic Research in Avignon, looked at honey bees exposed to another neonicotinoid product, thiamethoxam.

The study found that even though the dose was sub-lethal, the exposure seriously affected the bees' homing abilities to the extent that they proved to be two to three times more likely to die while away from their nests than untreated bees. "Non-lethal exposure... causes high mortality due to homing failure, at levels that could put a colony at risk of collapse," the researchers say.

"These new studies put beyond all reasonable doubt the capacity for neonicotinoids to cause environmental destruction," said Matt Shardlow, director of Buglife, the invertebrate conservation trust. "Our Government must take the precautionary step of banning their use." The Government has twice been formally asked to suspend neonicotinoids; on both occasions the requests were ignored.

The problem posed by neonicotinoids is that they are "systemic" pesticides, which means that they do not just sit on the surface of the plant, but are taken up into every part of it, including the pollen and the nectar; and so even if bees are not the target species, they ingest the chemicals through the pollen and nectar when they are foraging.

Force of nature: The life of bees

Bumble bees are distinctive for their large, furry appearance. They are hugely important as natural crop pollinators. The queen is the only individual that can survive the winter, hibernating underground and emerging in spring to build a nest.

She lays eggs which hatch as worker bees. The workers fly from flower to flower gathering nectar and spreading pollen as they go. Bumble bees pollinate a great variety of plants – both wild and agricultural.

Honey bees have a different life cycle, with all the bees surviving the winter inside the hive. Honey bees are much better than bumble bees at producing honey, made from the nectar and sweet deposits of trees and plants brought back to the hive. It is these bees that are bred by beekeepers all over the world.

Both honey bee and bumble bee populations have dramatically declined in recent decades. In Britain, bumble bees have been vanishing since the 1950s. A UN report last year said that a phenomenon known as Colony Collapse Disorder that had seen the number of honey bee colonies in Europe and the USA plummet since the 1960s, had become a global problem, with beekeepers in Japan and Egypt all reporting losses of their colonies.

MYRTLE RUST IS HERE TO STAY – SO BE PREPARED



Rust diseases are quite common in Australian agriculture, with the grains industry being constantly on alert for the seasonal disease risks and trying to stay one step ahead by planting the latest resistant varieties. But one recent exotic rust disease is causing concern in industries that have not previously had to worry about them.

Myrtle rust was first detected in Australia in April 2010 on a property growing Australian native plants for the cut flower industry on the central coast of New South Wales.

Later in 2010, despite efforts to suppress the disease, Myrtle rust was found in several nature reserves and some state forests in the Central Coast of NSW and subsequently in Queensland.

Myrtle rust has now spread along the east coast of Australia, from coastal areas of Queensland and NSW to Victoria. Although technically it is no longer considered an exotic pest, any new outbreaks of Myrtle rust should be reported as part of the ongoing monitoring process.

Mr Rod Turner, General Manager of Programs at Plant Health Australia, said: “The last two years have seen high rainfall in summer months allowing the rust to spread at a rapid rate.”

The Myrtaceae family of plants that are affected by Myrtle rust includes many Australian native species, such as tea trees, bottle brushes, hakeas and eucalypts.

Mr Turner said: “It’s not known yet exactly how many species are susceptible to Myrtle rust, but the Myrtaceae family includes a wide variety of plants commonly grown for the cut flower industry, in nurseries, home gardens, urban landscaping and native forests.”

Species of Myrtaceae are found in all parts of Australia, so the potential impacts are quite large, particularly in native forests where control measures are extremely limited.

“Rust spores can be easily spread on contaminated clothing, infected plant material, equipment and hand tools, by insects, and by wind” said Mr Turner.

Myrtle rust typically attacks young plants and new growth on established plants, as well as fruits and sepals on some species. Leaves may become buckled or twisted as a result of infection. On turpentine and callistemon, rust lesions are purple in colour, with masses of bright yellow or orange-yellow spores.

Tea trees grown in Australia for essential oils are now at risk of infection from this disease. Tea tree growers are finding that sound farm biosecurity practices can help to minimise the impact of the disease and limit its spread within their property and local region.

In time, growers will be able to select less susceptible plants, but until then they are encouraged to phase out susceptible and very susceptible varieties because of the risks to the whole industry. But if these cultivars are grown, then Mr Turner advises that a management plan, ready in advance, is prepared in case of a Myrtle rust outbreak.

“Having a plan for when a pest is detected on your property is one of the best defences against pests and diseases becoming established” said Mr Turner.

“Your individual management plan must take into account your property’s level of risk, including summer and seasonal rainfall, location and variety selection” he said.

A range of tactics has been used to manage the Myrtle rust outbreaks in commercial operations in Australia, including the use of fungicides and other disease management measures.

Here are six simple, routine practices you can do to reduce the threat of new pests entering and establishing on your property. Each practice should be embedded in everyday management practices.

1. Be aware of biosecurity threats

Make sure you and your workers are familiar with the most important pest threats. Conduct a biosecurity induction session to explain required hygiene practices for people, equipment and vehicles on your property.

2. Use only clean, pest-free and preferably certified, production inputs

Ensure pests and other contaminants do not enter your property with production inputs, such as growing media, fertiliser and propagation material. Purchase these only from reputable suppliers, preferably with industry accreditation or certification. Keep records of all inputs.

3. Keep it clean

Practicing good sanitation and hygiene will help prevent the entry and movement of pests onto your property. Workers, visitors, vehicles, raw material and equipment can spread pests, so make sure they are decontaminated, or have come from a clean source, before entering and leaving your property. Have a designated visitor's area and provide vehicle and personnel disinfecting facilities.

4. Check your plants

Monitor your plants and raw materials frequently. Knowing the usual appearance of the plants in your property will help you recognise new or unusual events and pests. Keep written and photographic records of all unusual observations. Constant vigilance is vital for early detection of any exotic plant pest threat.

5. Abide by the law

Respect and be aware of laws and regulations established to protect your industry, Australian agriculture and your region.

6. Report anything unusual

If you suspect a new pest – report it immediately.

More general biosecurity tips are available from the [Biosecurity Manual for the Nursery and Garden Industry](#), developed by Plant Health Australia and the Nursery and Garden Industry of Australia.

The Nursery and Garden Industry of Australia has developed the [Australian Nursery Industry Myrtle Rust Management Plan](#) to assist in the management of Myrtle rust on all plants from the Myrtaceae family in nurseries, garden centres, hardware stores and supermarkets.

At present, Myrtle rust is a notifiable disease across Australia. Any detection of the disease should be reported to the relevant state or territory biosecurity agency within 24 to 48 hours or by calling the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881. People are asked not to take samples to prevent inadvertently spread the disease. It is better to mark the spot to make it easy to return to later, take a photo and send it to your local Department of Primary Industries.

MARCUS OLDHAM RURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 2012

The Honeybee R & D Committee has for a number of years funded an Australian beekeeper to attend the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Course. The NSW Apiarists' Association also fund a NSW beekeeper to attend the course, and while the R & D Committee normally funds someone from another State, there is no restriction, and the Committee could fund a second NSW Beekeeper.

The next leadership course is scheduled from 24-29 June 2012 on campus in Geelong, Victoria.

Further background information on the course program and a nomination form can be found on the college website: www.marcusoldham.vic.edu.au – What's New and click on Rural Leadership Program then click Course Details and then click Participant Selection and you will find the Nomination Form.

If you would like further information, please contact Jennifer Jones on 03 5247 2901 or email: jones@marcusoldham.vicedu.au

REMOTE SENSING CATCHES BEES IN THE ACT

Surveillance cameras are a common form of security. However, their latest target is bees trying to sneak into the country through sea ports, potentially carrying with them pests and disease that could devastate the honeybee industry and food production.

The aim is to pick up almost immediately any foreign bees that enter so-called ‘decoy hives’ which are set up around ports and coastlines, and to reduce the cost and time involved for inspectors to regularly travel to the sites to see if there has been an incursion.



Experience overseas shows early detection is vital to dealing with foreign bee pests and diseases, as once they get established they are almost impossible to eradicate.

The research project is being funded by the Pollination Program and undertaken by the National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture (NCEA) based at the University of Southern Queensland. The Pollination Program is run as a partnership between the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL).

Equipment for remote surveillance of bee hives



NCEA Team leader, Dr Cheryl McCarthy, says field trials are now underway with a beekeeper near Toowoomba. “We started by reviewing existing technology including off the shelf sensors for weight, temperature and humidity as well as the motion detection cameras,” Dr McCarthy said.

“We’re now working with the beekeeper to entice groups of bees into an empty hive set up with the equipment to see how sensitive it is. So far it’s working well with around a thousand bees, and we’re testing whether it can detect a hundred.”

Dr Cheryl McCarthy

The hive itself is on scales and there’s a bar inside it with weight sensors too. The temperature will change once bees move in, settling at 34 degrees Celsius inside the hive regardless of whether it’s mid-summer heat or freezing outside, so that’s also being monitored.

“Within the next couple of months we aim to have a site set up at the Port of Brisbane, which will help us to test the remote monitoring and allow inspectors to become familiar with the technology,” Dr McCarthy said.

“Eventually, we’d hope to have data from the decoy hives all over the country beamed back to a central location with inspectors monitoring for alarms from the office and only going out for a first-hand look if there’s suspicious activity. “Even just seeing remote images of the hives will be an enormous boost to current efforts, providing a more effective early warning system.”

JOINT AHA - PHA MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING LETTER TO MEMBERS

We are pleased to inform you that the Chairs of Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA) have recently signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on behalf of the two companies.

PHA and AHA have a strong collaborative history, particularly in our work on biosecurity and emergency response preparedness. The MoU formalises and strengthens existing partnership work between our two companies.

Through the MoU the companies have established a mechanism for consultation, management and implementation of joint projects and services to members. This supports and further strengthens the mechanisms established for the joint management of the *Farm Biosecurity* program. It also supports ongoing work to streamline our two emergency response Deeds and collaborate on additional biosecurity initiatives, including the newly created Biosecurity Planning Reference Group, comprising government, plant and livestock industry member representatives.

A proposal for co-location of the two companies and sharing of administrative and program support services is a key feature of this MoU, with both companies supporting the pursuit of office co-location in the near future.

In consultation with members, the two companies will also consider arrangements for the future resourcing and management of national biosecurity activities, including opportunities for AHA and PHA to support the biosecurity continuum through our own cooperation.

Several joint projects have been outlined in the MoU and are the cornerstone of these collaborative arrangements. A Program Management Committee is overseeing the management and implementation of MoU activities and will report progress to members. There is a strong commitment to the continued pursuit of opportunities to collaborate for the benefit of our members and the national biosecurity system.

2012 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND SECTOR CONFERENCES

New South Wales Apiarists' Association	24/25 May 2012
Tasmanian Beekeepers' Association	5/6 July 2012
Victorian Apiarists' Association	20/21 June 2012
WA Farmers Federation - Beekeeping Section	8 June 2012
Queensland Beekeepers' Association	14/15 June 2012
South Australian Apiarists' Association	28/29 June 2012
Honey Packers' and Marketers' Association	June 2012
National Council of Crop Pollination Associations	17 July 2012
Australian Queen Bee Breeders' Association	TBA
Australian Honey Bee Industry Council	6 July 2012
Federal Council of Australian Apiarists' Associations	6 July 2012

CITY ROOFTOPS WILL SOON BE ABUZZ WITH BEES

A local beekeeping company has been given a \$28,000 City of Melbourne grant to double the number of beehives on city rooftops. Melbourne City Rooftop has a waiting list of 270 residents and businesses who want bees on their roofs, including Federation Square, restaurants and galleries.

There are already 30 sites with 42 hives in Melbourne and up to 20 new sites are planned for the city centre in the next year. Owners Vanessa Kwiatkowski and Mat Lumalasi want to create a different batch of honey for each suburb in Melbourne. Each batch will have a unique flavour because the bees will gather nectar from plants and trees dominant in a given area.

“Initially, we were doing it as a hobby and just did it for free,” Ms Kwiatkowski said. “But after a while we started to build it into a social enterprise. We collect swarms and re-home them from things like compost boxes or possum boxes.”

Mr Lumalasi said restaurateurs were the people most likely to “take the time to get involved and embrace it”. Part of their council proposal included buying a scooter to travel between hives.

Reported courtesy of AAP.

FARMERS’ YEAR MORE THAN A CELEBRATION

The Australian Year of the Farmer in 2012 should not only be about recognising Australian farmers for the work they do, but should also be focused on addressing a number of issues impacting on the agricultural sector, the Member for O’Connor (WA) Tony Crook has told federal parliament.

Mr Crook highlighted the importance of the agricultural sector to the Australian economy, noting that it generates \$41.8 billion each year, with \$31.2 billion of this in the export market.

“Agriculture supports 1.6 million jobs in Australia in farming and related industries accounting for 17.2% of the national workforce,” he said. Australian farmers produce almost 93% of Australia’s daily domestic food supply, while exporting 60 per cent of our total agricultural production.

Mr Crook said live exports reforms, ongoing drought, biosecurity risks, skills shortages and supermarket pricing are the significant issues many Australian farmers face day in and day out.

“We must help our farmers so they can continue to remain on the land, driving our economy, protecting our food security and sustaining our regional communities,” he said.

CROP POLLINATION AGM & CONFERENCE

When: Tuesday 17 July 2012
Where: Shepparton RSL
88 Wyndham Street
Shepparton Victoria
Time: 8.30am Registration
Cost: \$60.00 if you pre-register (*Form will be sent to CPA Members early May*)
\$70.00 on the day for non-members

For more information contact:

CPA Secretary: Stephen Targett on 0428 649 321

HONEY EXPORT AWARD

Just over ten years ago the Australian Export Heroes Awards were created by the Australian Institute of Export to acknowledge the efforts of those hard working people who often spend years and years building their companies and taking them to global success; while also supporting Australian industry.

Taking a company to export success, as most established exporters can testify, is no small feat and for Australian companies they have an even bigger mountain to climb, given our location. Yet, the seven 2012 Australian Export Heroes, often spending personal time away from family and friends in far flung and often dangerous locations around the world, have achieved success for their business, and more importantly they have sold Australia and Australia's diverse range of industry capabilities to the world. We salute these individuals who have taken on the world and won. Congratulations to Eduard Planken of Wescobee who is also the deputy Chairman of AHBIC.

On the 16 April the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO officially presented the 2012 Australian Export Heroes Awards to these seven high achieving Australians.

All of the Australian Export Heroes are special people who not only demonstrate an ability to take on challenges and win against the odds and the best the world can offer. They also show us and the world that Australia is much, much more than wheat, wool and minerals.

Ian Murray, Executive Director of the Australian Institute of Export said: *"People who receive an export hero award have fought and won on the international stage."*

Technically smart, creative and hard working, they are able to show the world that Australian's can not only do anything, but can do it as well and often better than anybody else. We congratulate the 2012 Australian Export Heroes.

CAPILANO HONEY ANNOUNCES CEO APPOINTMENT

The company, as part of its succession planning program, advises that on 1 July 2012, Mr Roger Masters will resign as Managing Director and Dr Ben McKee will take over Mr Masters' position as Chief Executive Officer of the Company. Mr Masters will remain as a non-executive director of the company and will assist the company with the transition of the CEO role to Dr McKee on a consultancy basis.

Dr McKee is currently the General Manager – Operations and has been an employee of Capilano Honey for 9 years. He has a Bachelor of Agricultural Science Degree (Honours), a PhD in a field of study related to the honey industry and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Previously, Dr McKee worked with the University of Melbourne and within the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, as well as managing his own commercial beekeeping enterprise.