



## **AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL**

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### **AUSTRALIAN HONEY INDUSTRY MONTHLY REVIEW**

**To: The Australian Honey Industry**  
**From: Stephen Ware – Executive Director**  
**Re: March 2010 Update**

**Australian Queen Bee Breeders Association**  
**Australian Honey Products**  
**Bees Neez Apiaries**  
**Capilano Honey Limited**  
**Dewar Apiaries**  
**Gell's Honey**  
**Honey Packers & Marketers Association**  
**Hoskinson, H L & H M**  
**Mills, I N & J E**  
**Papworth, F & E**  
**Pollination Association of WA**  
**Pobke, B**

**Saxonbee Enterprises**  
**Spring Gully Foods Pty Ltd**  
**Stephens, R**  
**Stevens, Graeme**  
**Tasmanian Crop Pollination Association**  
**Tasmanian Honey Company**  
**Walkabout Apiaries**  
**Weatherhead, T & M**  
**True Blue Honey**  
**Weerona Apiaries**  
**Wescobee Limited**  
**Wilson, C**

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 QUEEN BEE SUPPLIER'S NAME APPEAR ON THIS LIST?  
IF NOT, THEN ASK 'WHY NOT?'**

**SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT YOUR INDUSTRY!**

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## **B-QUAL TRAINING DAYS**

B-QUAL has organised three training days to be held in New South Wales, Queensland & South Australia they will be held on the day prior to their 2010 Annual State Conferences.

Non B-QUAL members are invited to attend with at least six required at each venue.

It was agreed that the training would be held for a charge of \$20.00 which would include Lunch, Morning and Afternoon Tea and this would cover the cost of running the day.”

### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

Date: Wednesday 19 May 2010  
Venue: Panthers Port Macquarie Club  
1 Bay Street  
Port Macquarie NSW 2444

### **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Date: Wednesday 9 June 2010  
Venue: Goolwa Central Motel  
30 Cadell Street  
Goolwa SA 5214

### **QUEENSLAND**

Date: Wednesday 16 June 2010  
Venue: Country Comfort Ipswich  
250 South Station Road  
Raceview Qld 4305

## **REGISTRATION FORM**

To book your place please complete and return the attached Registration Form together with your cheque to the AHBIC office ASAP - but no later than 23 April 2010.

As you would be aware, most of the major packers are paying a premium on B-QUAL accredited suppliers and hence any producer who is not accredited is missing out on potentially additional income.

The B-QUAL board has substantially simplified the B-QUAL program and Mr Bruce White, formerly with DPI, who is known to most of you is to provide the training to anyone who wishes to participate.

## **2<sup>ND</sup> INTERNATIONAL MUĞLA BEEKEEPING AND PINE HONEY CONGRESS**

With a total of 4.4 million honeybee colonies, Turkey ranks second in the world, and is the fifth biggest honey producer. With over 12,000 plant varieties, of which about 3,000 are endemic, the country is home to almost 70% of the world's floral resources. And the country's bees constitute 20% of the current global honey bee gene pool.

Over 90% of the world's pine honey is produced in Turkey, and Muğla province alone accounts for 75% of it. Ever since the introduction of apiculture in Turkey, Muğla has been playing a leading role.

The province is home to 8% of all beehives and contributes 20% to total national honey production. Pine honey is a very special product with exceptional properties. Honey production is supported by the insect “*Marchalina hellenica*” which produces honeydew from pine trees. Besides being an important producer, Muğla is also the centre for pine honey export.

From 5 to 8 October 2010, the **2<sup>nd</sup> International Beekeeping and Pine Honey Congress** will be held in Muğla organised by the Union of Beekeepers of Muğla Province, and the Apiculture and Sericulture Research and Implementation Centre of Muğla University. The event will be attended by invited national and international experts as speakers, and is accompanied by a fair. With the national and international participation in the congress cum fair, the organisation is expected to become a highlight event.

The fair offers participants the opportunity to establish new business ties and strengthen existing relations. Every year from September to December, the pine honey season brings beekeepers together in the Aegean region with the majority staying in Muğla province. Our congress has been timed to fall into this period which allows for interesting technical trips and visits to apiculturists before, during and after the event. Participants will have the opportunity to share their experience with national and international colleagues and with beekeepers in the field; and the event gives us the opportunity to give you a taste of our proverbial hospitality.

For more information about the congress please visit our website: [www.muglacongress.org](http://www.muglacongress.org)

## **APIS CERANA UPDATE**

### **Advice 65 - 8 March 2010**

There has been some activity in the past fortnight.

On 26 February, beelining at Gordonvale found a nest which was destroyed and extracted and is IP69.

On 1 March, the foraging bees at Yarrabah were finally tracked to a nest which was destroyed and removed and is IP70.

On 2 March whilst sweeping in the Mulgrave Valley a nest was local in the wall of the Little Mulgrave Pub. It was destroyed but was not able to be extracted. This is IP71.

On 3 March a swarm at Yarrabah was identified as cerana and was destroyed. This is IP72.

There were still foraging cerana at Yarrabah a couple of days after the destruction of the swarm so it would seem that there may be another nest to find there.

Foraging cerana have been located in the Lake Eacham area. Finding this nest may reveal the source of the swarm which was IP57.

It would seem that the increase in surveillance staff has been the reason more cerana are being located.

It makes me wonder if the cost sharing had been put in place way back and extra staff were able to be put in place how much better off we would be now.

I have done a couple of radio interviews for northern stations in the past couple of weeks as a result of a press release put out by PI&F. Basically we are looking to get the unregistered beekeepers in the area registered.

There was a community cabinet meeting in Innisfail just over a week ago and some of the local beekeepers attended and spoke with Minister Mulherin.

**Trevor Weatherhead**

## **ALMOND POLLINATION IN CALIFORNIA**

*The Economist - 6 March 2010*

### **Vitamin Bee - A new attempt to save the most vital workers in the orchards**

At this time of year Gordon Wardell loves to stand amid the almond blossoms in California's San Joaquin valley, listening to the "low-pitch, warm, happy hum" of millions of bees. But the bees are not as happy as they sound, which is why Mr Wardell, who has a PhD in entomology and is a de facto be doctor, is here.



More than 80% of the world's almonds are grown in California and, to pollinate them, the 7,000 or so growers hire about 1.4m of America's 2.3m commercial hives. Thousands of trucks deliver the hives in February – from Maine, Florida, the Carolinas and elsewhere – and will soon pick them up again. The bees' job is to flit from one blossom to the next, gorging themselves and in the process spreading the trees' sexual dust.

Since 2006, however, bees have been suffering from "Colony Collapse Disorder" (CCD), a mysterious affliction that has drastically reduced their numbers. As a result, says Joe MacIlvaine, the President of Paramount Farming and the largest almond-grower in the world, the rental cost of a hive has tripled in the past five years to about \$150. Bee rental now accounts for 15% of Paramount's costs.

So Paramount has hired Mr Wardell, who has been studying bees for 30 years and CCD since it broke out. Its cause may be mobile-telephone radiation, viruses, fungi, mites and pesticides – or none of the above. In the absence of a clear explanation, Mr Wardell is concentrating on something different: nutrition.

A healthy worker bee spends about four weeks in its hive, feeding on protein-rich pollen and nursing larvae, and then another two weeks in the field eating sugary honey until its proteins are depleted and it dies. For some reason bees are getting too little protein in the hive thus dying after only about four weeks, almost as soon as they venture outside. So Mr Wardell is force-feeding them protein. He owns a patent for MegaBee, which he says "looks like a cookie dough". He puts a bit of this into the hives, blocking the bees' entrance so that they have to chomp their way through it. As part of his new job, Mr Wardell is working with beekeepers across the country to supplement bee diets everywhere.

So far he has noticed that hives are smaller this year and some colonies still collapsing. But he has hopes that his cookies will work, bringing more of a buzz next year.

## **INTERNATIONAL HONEY MARKET REPORT**

*Ron Phipps, President*

*CPNA International Ltd*

*1 March 2010*

### **North America**

In the USA official numbers on the 2009 crop have come out, showing that it was only 144,000,000 pounds, the lowest ever recorded. The yield per colony was 58.5 lbs., which represented a decline of 16%. How much of this decline was due to weather or condition of bees is not clear. The number of colonies increased to 2.4 million, an increase of 5%. Despite that increase, total honey production decreased. At the end of December 2009, stocks were 37,200,000 pounds, which represents a very substantial decline of 27% from December 2008. North Dakota was the biggest producer with 34,000,000 pounds. South Dakota was second with 17,800,000 and California fell to 11,700,000, probably as a consequence of the protracted droughts. Older inventories were sold and the recent crop is largely sold and delivered. 2010 crop prospects are more promising due to the abundant winter rains and snows.

Beekeepers remain concerned about the health and vitality of their bees. This is not due merely to mites and Colony Collapse Disorder, but to a general decline in beekeepers, stress on bees, reduction of land for honey production and the impact of increased use of pesticides on corn, soybeans, citrus groves, etc. Modern migratory beekeeping practices are increasingly suspected to put high levels of stress upon bees. Moving bees in mid winter when bees are weakest over vast distances and subjecting worker bees to mono-diets may contribute to stress levels that are too burdensome for maintaining vigorous and large bee populations. Studies at Sao Palo University in Brazil have shown how even the very vigorous Africanized bees respond poorly to darkness and noise, both encountered during late winter migrations. Because of such concerns, many beekeepers did not move their bees from east to west to pollinate the almonds recently.

Pollinating fees remained strong as supply of bees was below demand, despite reduction of the planting of almond trees due to concerns about the adequacy of water supplies for California farmers competing with California's large urban and suburban populations. So the rains of 2010 have been doubly welcomed thus far.

### **Argentina and South America**

Given the short USA and Canadian 2009 crops, coupled with complete depletion of older inventories from previous crops, attention has focused upon Argentina's 2009/2010 honey crop. This is especially significant for white honey since it is white honey that is experiencing the most significant international shortage. Due to the poor Argentine 2008/2009 honey crop, no meaningful carry-overs existed by late 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2009.

Through December, the northern Argentine Provinces, where the honey crop begins due to greater proximity to the Equator, suffered extensive drought which delayed and reduced the overall crop. But by January, ample rains came to Las Pampas and Buenos Aires Province. These rains were mingled with regular sunshine and optimism resumed. Crop estimates grew to 70,000-80,000 metric tons.

However, rains turned excessive. Buenos Aires had in mid-February unprecedented rains. This was largely due to the El Nino phenomena which in turn led to torrential rains in both Argentina and Brazil. The same fundamental weather patterns affected the USA. I was spending a week at Claremont University in mid-January during which time we witnessed incessant rainfall. In 1 week, 20" of rain was predicted, when 14" annual rainfall is the norm. By February, many American beekeepers

pollinating the almond groves had considerable difficulties moving bees in and out of the muddy groves. In Peru, tourists were evacuated due to mudslides. The high evaporation rates from the warm Pacific caused tremendous snowstorms that affected the Midwest and the entire east coast of the USA. Both China and Europe have also experienced unusual snow through the first two months of 2010. As a consequence of deteriorating weather conditions in Argentina, the estimate for the current crop has been reduced to 50,000-60,000 metric tons.

Given the unprecedented rainfall in mid-February, the lower estimate of 50,000 metric tons is regarded as more realistic. If so, that will make the current Argentine crop turn out even smaller than the small USA 2009 crop! In general Argentina's crops from the north were very bad, central and western areas had poor crops and the central and south eastern crops are more or less normal. The significance of the rains in Argentina is manifest in an AP article of February 22, titled "Grain prices rise as rain hits Brazil, Argentina."

The distribution of colours in Argentina is now estimated to be 10% white 25MM, 20% white 34MM, 30% 50MM, 30% 65MM and 10% darker than 65MM. This modest white honey crop has accelerated demand for white honey and provoked steady, and in some cases dramatic, increases in prices.

Argentine beekeepers with poor or bad crops are thinking the only path for their survival is with an irrationally high surge in prices. The beekeepers with normal crops are cognizant of the overall situation and are selling honey in only small quantities to cover immediate costs while "waiting for higher prices." Of course, they may mis-calculate and wait too long, given the fact that the abundant rains and snows covering California and the Midwest could portend a bigger North American honey crop in 2010. The wild card variable of circumvented and cheap Chinese honey still looms large over the American honey market. In any case, Argentine honey prices are likely to remain firm. In January, about 2,500MT were exported with an additional 3,500-5,000MT are expected to be exported in February. From March through June it is expected that Argentina will be able to export about 5,000MT monthly. The overall global economic difficulties may, in the final analysis, restrain the Argentine beekeepers' ambition to achieve the historically high prices that they seek.

Demand from Europe remains robust. Indeed, the delay in exports of honey due to the short early crop has only made pent up European demand increase. Though the Euro has weakened a little relative to the US dollar, European buyers still enjoy a currency advantage of about 35% over North American buyers. The basic prevailing parity between the US and Canadian dollars has made Canadian honey much more expensive in US dollars for American packers in 2010 than was the case in 2009. Thus, more Canadian honey is staying home and will continue to do so unless prices for Argentine white honey get out of sight.

The political and economic situation in Argentina is very tense and fragile. Inflation is returning and some Argentines fear, as they put it, that "Argentina, despite its vast resources, is becoming a non-competitive country."

To illustrate the strength of the market south of the border, Mexican light amber honey is being sold at \$1.55 C&F European ports, and Brazilian organic white honey is now over \$1.75/lb. Ex-dock USA. Prices, like fish, are jumping.

It remains too early to estimate the Brazilian honey crop, but some indicate that the quantity of export to the US is anticipated to be similar to 2009. There was no rain, however, for 20 days in February, and there is concern about the lack of honey in the hives.

For Chile and Uruguay, the preferred and traditional market is Europe, whose currency sustains high US Dollar prices. The tragic earthquake in Chile will undoubtedly result in delays for exports from that region.

Currency relations will undoubtedly influence honey's absolute prices and the relative advantages of Europe vs. the US in procurement of South American honey. The national debt problems in Greece, Portugal and Spain have put downward pressure on the Euro relative to the US dollar. This makes the US marginally more attractive than it was several months ago for South American exporters. However, the cumulative national debt in the US still portends, in the view of many economists, to a further weakening of the US dollar and increasing commodity prices.

### **Vietnam and Asia**

As this market report is being prepared, the Vietnamese honey crop is barely beginning. Vietnamese beekeepers are transitioning from wintering their bees, feeding their bees and protecting them from disease.

At the end of January, an important meeting was held in Hanoi between the Vietnamese Beekeeping Association, various ministries of the Vietnamese Government and agents of ICE. As reported previously, the Vietnamese have taken very proactive and strict steps to prevent circumvention. It is important that both Governments work together to prevent circumvention.

Several years ago, Vietnam established Special Economic Zones where Chinese and Taiwanese companies established offices. Some of these companies have left Vietnam and one is reported to be under investigation by Interpol. As Vietnam has established a strict monitoring program for authorized beekeepers, honey factories and honey exporters, several companies which had "front or shell offices" in "Special Economic Zones" to facilitate circumvention via fraudulent documents are out of business.

Officials from scientific laboratories in Europe have visited Vietnam this year and cooperative relations among Vietnamese and American universities with strong agricultural departments have been established.

The phenomenon of circumvention is troubling not only to our US industries and our Congress, but also to China. Chinese officials in The World Trade Organization must try to negotiate issues and agreements that both open and integrate international markets and follow the rule of law. The widespread phenomenon of circumvention is a major hindrance and obstacle to implementing the rule of law in international trade.

### **Circumvention**

During the recent conventions of the American Honey Producers Association and the American Beekeeping Federation, much discussion occurred regarding the global shortages of honey and the continuing concern about circumvention. Officials from US Homeland Security spoke in Orlando to both the National Honey Packers and Dealers Association and the American Beekeepers Federation (ABF) about their efforts to stop the widespread practice of circumvention in its various forms. Many American packers, beekeepers and importers spoke with the officials, informing them of the details they encounter in the competition between "legal" versus "illegal" honey. In Sacramento, Jill Clark, from Dutch Gold and President of the National Honey Board Association; Bruce Boynton., Executive Director of the National Honey Board (NHB); Richard Adee of the American Honey Packers Association (AHPA) and this author all gave speeches which discussed this phenomena and its serious impact upon the NHB, members of the NHPDA, AHPA and ABF.

Evidence was presented in formal and informal meetings from scientific laboratories specializing in honey about analysis of honey that was ultra-filtered to remove tell-tale pollen, adulterated with rice syrups, revealed the presence of Chinese pollens in honey ostensibly produced outside of China and contaminated with improper residues. The ultra-filtration of honey removes both pollen and veterinary drug residues, providing a “disguise” of the phenomena of circumvention of Chinese honey through third countries. It is, however, relevant to note that the FDA prohibits sales of ultra-filtered honey as honey.

The buzz among beekeepers was that the situation is comparable to the Madoff Ponzi Scheme, wherein for a decade, the evidence that something was wrong in the “State of Denmark” accumulated in the SEC. Only the financial crisis caused decisive action and conviction against Madoff. What will it take for a decisive, timely and comprehensive solution to be effected to prevent circumvention of Chinese honey in order to avoid paying prevailing antidumping fees on Chinese honey? American beekeepers and American packers are increasingly asking this question.

The situation has been compounded by the fact that as of this writing, Congress has failed to: 1) renew suspension of the bonding privilege allowing importers to post bonds rather than pay cash deposit for antidumping liabilities and 2) impose duties on the honey portion in the so-called “packers blend.” The termination of the suspension of “bonding privileges” ended in summer, 2009.

The deeply partisan paralysis in Congress has thus far stymied all efforts to re-impose the requirement of cash-deposits. This failure has re-opened the door to direct imports of Chinese honey mediated by “front companies” that evaporate if, and when, US Customs comes to collect retroactively antidumping duties. It, therefore, remains an urgent goal of the AHPA to persuade Congress to promptly re-close this loophole.

All, however, is not quiet on the front to stop circumvention of honey. There is a report that about 200 containers of honey exported to the USA in 2009 were denied entry. A small number of these containers were returned but the overwhelming majority are in a state of limbo. According to the reports, this honey was accompanied by fraudulent country of origin and quality certificates. The ostensible exporters quite naturally did not accept responsibility for the shipments and would not accept return. The parties in the country that actually produced the honey would not accept return of the honey since such would entail admission of creating and submitting forged documents. We note that there has been increased scrutiny of agricultural products shipped from Asia to the USA. For example, hundreds of containers of various products were rejected by US authorities and returned to India, Indonesia and Malaysia in 2009.

There are also reports of some honey exporters being put on automatic detention by the US FDA. That means the honey must arrive in the USA, be sampled and tested and proved free of actionable contaminants as a condition for release. Because of this type of action, various companies have ceased exporting to the USA. It is predicted that 2010 will witness various exporters going out of business as their illegal actions catch up with them.

Of course, the dilemma and tragedy is that honest exporters, importers, packers and beekeepers may also go out of business if they are forced to compete with circumvented honey much longer.

In respect to the efforts to stop circumvention, there are several positive developments. Firstly, commercial laboratories and independent academic scientists have greatly increased their ability to detect and expose the various “disguises,” such as ultra-filtration, pollen addition, and adulteration with a multitude of sweeteners, which are being employed to hide the reality of circumvention. Secondly, more statistical academic and governmental data is at hand to reveal that certain alleged

countries of origin do not produce the quantity or quality of honey that show up as surges of honey from new honey exporting nations. Thirdly, through the efforts of packers all over America, more retailers and manufacturers realize that large price differentials for processed honey and aberrational chemical profiles for honey are not signs of business acumen but illegal circumvention; retailers and manufacturers increasingly realize through the concerted efforts of American packers throughout the country that collusion to circumvent to avoid antidumping duties impose upon them criminal liabilities. Fourthly, more American packers and American beekeepers are reaching out to their Congressional Representatives and Senators to persuade US Customs to devote more resources so that a thorough and timely end of the phenomena of circumvention is achieved.

Nonetheless, 2009 saw continuation of aberrational export patterns to the USA. For example, in 11 months, imports from Malaysia were over 17,000,000 pounds at values averaging \$0.72/lb. for ELA, and 835,000 pounds of ELA came in from Mongolia at values in the range of \$.62/lb. Documents exist that show that Malaysia produces only a tiny fraction of that volume and Mongolia has no ability to produce honey for export. In contrast, many newspaper articles reveal the convoluted paths by which Chinese honey has been circumvented through third countries.

While some packers believe that they are faced with the dilemma of either participating in buying circumvented honey or going out of business, most honey packers are actively cooperating to fight the corruption and fraud to which others feel compelled to submit.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion there has been renewed talk in the American honey industry, especially among American honey packers, of the need to make adjustments to assure continuity and adequacy of supply. Given several factors including 1) the international shortage of honey, 2) the increased vicissitudes of global weather patterns, 3) the prevalence of circumvention to avoid antidumping duties, 4) the vulnerability of bee populations and 5) the likely end in this decade of China's treatment in antidumping cases with surrogate country analysis, many packers are concluding that there should be a renewal in one form or another of some agreement that could impose both quantitative restrictions and minimum prices on Chinese honey and other products subject to anti-dumping orders. The prevailing political climate, including the intense and widespread opposition to the fraud which is at the heart of circumvention of Chinese honey, makes establishing a new agreement extremely difficult.

The growing sentiment among packers, however, is that they cannot have confidence in adequate supply to serve a market that consumes 400,000,000 to 500,000,000 pounds of honey annually, if the world's biggest producer of honey has no legal access to the American market. China's absence is creating stress and has helped divide the market into 2 tiers – a legal and an illegal market. Suppression of the illegal market has proved to be very incomplete and tenuous. If domestic production remains stagnant and far below consumption, pressure will continue to build to eliminate circumvention by finding a legal mechanism that will allow access to Chinese honey but which will concurrently suppress both dumping and flooding of honey.

In addition to the impact of tariff trade barriers, non-tariff trade barriers are also exerting influence upon and danger to the honey market. At every beekeeper's convention anywhere in the world discussion are dominated by the effort to develop methods to protect bees. In 95% of the world's bee yards, beekeepers engage in methods to protect their bees. The reason is that bees, like other forms of life, are vulnerable to disease and stress. If bees existed in a mythical realm of invulnerability, and if the plants bees pollinate existed in a sister realm of invulnerable botanical life forms, then there would be no need to devise methods of preserving the health and vigour of bees. However, due to the universal vulnerability of animal life, food products, including honey, do not dwell in a realm of ultra-

purity. It is this fact that makes it essential to find reasonable testing limits and reasonable tolerance levels for residues. The macro-environment of rain, atmosphere, soil and pesticides also are expressed as residues in food products. The key question is how to balance and integrate effectively protecting bees and ensuring the safety of honey and other bee by-products. Other food industries have long recognized similar needs and been able to effectively and realistically address the dual concerns of protecting agricultural production and human safety.

It will not do to adopt a sectarian attitude that says in effect "I can have my residues, but you can't have yours." Given the inexorable move toward global economic integration, establishing global science-based standards, testing limits and tolerance levels will become imperative if consuming nations are to ensure adequacy of supply and continuity of quality. Testing methodologies have become hyper-sensitive promising to detect and measure parts per ten billion or per trillion. But the issue is not "testing the test" but ensuring 1) protection of the ability to produce the food supply and 2) safety for food consumption. The world's bees, it is realistic to estimate, are crucial to global annual production of over \$100 billion dollars of food. It is this context that impels global science to create global standards. Realism must prevail over mythology, sound science over harmful illusions.

There must be cooperation in this effort to establish standards. The global integration we witness entails greater integration of economies, science and law. If issues of both tariff and non-tariff trade barriers are not addressed, the honey market will become increasingly unpredictable and efforts to guarantee adequacy and continuity of supply and quality will become ineffective. The current global shortage of honey compels us to think about all these issues from a more strategic and long term perspective.

Given the current global economic recession and high rates of unemployment and underemployment, there are obvious and real restraints on how high honey prices can rise. Reducing or removing tariff and non-tariff trade barriers will become a strategic requirement to ensure both adequacy of supply and reasonableness of price. If, as we hope, the creative use of good science as a marketing tool to promote the health benefits of honey matures, then ensuring adequate supply to meet growing demand will become even more challenging.

## **PLANT AND ANIMAL HEALTH WEBSITE WILL LINK RESEARCHERS**

*17/03/2010*

The Federal Government has launched a network for researchers to talk about animal and plant pests and diseases.

At a cost of \$16 million, the Australian Biosecurity Intelligence Network is a web site for 60 State and Federal agencies, and major research bodies like the Australian Animal Health Laboratory.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation, Richard Marles, says it would be a good tool if equine influenza broke out again. "Yes, it's a network of computers, but it's an also network of people," he says.

"If there's an outbreak in future, those people involved in rapid response mechanisms would now be in greater contact and have a much greater sense of what work's been done by those who, over a long period of time, have been engaged about the research in the particular area."

The website is [www.abin.org.au](http://www.abin.org.au)

## AUSTRALIAN PLAGUE LOCUSTS

### **Situation: North West (NSW) - 12 March 2010**

The Australian Plague Locust Commission (APLC) expects to commence aerial control operations within 7 days to manage any areas of the current population that represents a significant threat to agriculture in more than one state. In addition, some ground control operations by landholders and other agencies may also be implemented during a similar period.

Significant nymphal 'band' infestations of the Australian plague locust (*Chortoicetes terminifera*) are developing in north-west parts of the New South Wales (NSW) Western and Darling Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA). These have resulted from eggs laid in summer 2010. The overall area of interest is expected to be approximately bounded by: Wanaaring – Wilcannia – Broken Hill and the New South Wales Border with South Australia and Queensland. The population appears spread over a very wide area with simultaneous operations likely to be conducted from both Tibooburra and White Cliffs. Smaller, related infestations may emerge and will be addressed as circumstances allow. In cooperation with affected parties and counterpart agencies, APLC is continually monitoring and evaluating the situation through ground and aerial surveillance to assist coordination of management efforts at all levels of responsibility.

At present, and pending ongoing evaluation, infestations in the region are considered to pose a moderate immediate threat to interstate agriculture.

Reports and ground control by landholders and local authorities play a very valuable role in the management of locust infestations.

It is likely that a substantial proportion of the population will comprise small, lower density infestations not suitable for aerial control by APLC. Populations that do not form targets suitable for aerial control may cause localised damage and concern - warranting pre-emptive control by affected landholders.

More closely settled districts and a higher incidence of sensitive areas restricts access for aerial application – emphasising the need for ongoing commitment to ground control by affected landholders and local authorities.

This population (if not managed/controlled) may continue to pose a threat to currently affected regions through breeding and the establishment of successive generations, extending through the following spring (September 2010).

Adults from the current generation also pose a significant threat, which could result in successive generations establishing in adjacent as well as more distant areas, including interstate.

Numerous localised infestations of Australian plague locust have also been identified in several LHPA areas west of the Newell Highway and will require ongoing vigilance and intervention as required.

Locust activity should be reported, in the first instance, to the nearest Livestock Health and Pest Authority [LHPA] (formerly-Rural Lands Protection Board [RLPB]), the Industry & Investment NSW [I&I NSW] and/or to the Australian Plague Locust Commission (APLC Free call: 1800-635 962).

## **Situation: Elsewhere**

Recent widespread, flooding rains are greatly hampering surveillance efforts and information on locust activity in other areas is limited. Vigilance and reporting of unusual levels of locust activity is essential.

## **Pest Management Program (NSW) - 12 March 2010**

The Australian Plague Locust Commission (APLC) (possibly in conjunction with state and local authority cooperation plus landholder operations) expects to commence locust control operations within 7 days of the date of this advice in accordance with provisions of the relevant sections of the NSW Rural Lands Protection Act.

<b>Species:</b>	Australian plague locust ( <i>Chortoicetes terminifera</i> )
<b>Location:</b>	Expected to initially commence in the Western and Darling Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA) - concentrating primarily in between the Wanaaring – Wilcannia – Broken Hill and the New South Wales Border with South Australia and Queensland area but potentially also in surrounding districts and elsewhere on a needs basis. (Other agencies, and landholders, may be conducting separate management operations both within and outside these areas)
<b>Anticipated Commencement:</b>	14 March 2010
<b>Anticipated Duration:</b>	Up to 6-8 weeks (may be intermittent and dependent on a variety of factors)
<b>Method:</b>	Aerial application of ultra-low volume (ULV) insecticide
<b>Possible Materials:</b>	a) Adonis [Fipronil] (ULV) (Chemical control agent) b) Sumithion [Fenitrothion] (ULV) (Chemical [organophosphorous] control agent) c) Green Guard [ <i>Metarhizium anisopliae</i> ] (ULV) (Biological control agent – limited supply, reserved for use in sensitive areas) d) Fyfanon [Malathion] (ULV) (Chemical [organophosphorous] control agent)
<b>Personnel:</b>	<p>All APLC personnel are appointed as ‘Authorised Persons’ in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Act of each respective jurisdiction and are employed as Australian Public Servants, subject to evaluation of suitability and police checks, obliged to abide by the Australian Public Service (APS) Act / Code of Conduct, evaluated for fitness for duty, participate in a formal APLC Induction Programme and are required to satisfactorily complete relevant training.</p> <p>APLC employs a competency-based training programme to address the particular needs associated with the specialised nature of APLC operations and for which no alternative external service provider exists. Some relevant examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conducting ground and aerial surveys to assess locust populations and environmental conditions.</li><li>• Participation in locust control campaigns, including aerial and ground target search and marking plus assessment of control efficacy.</li><li>• Assist scientific staff in research and development work, e.g. field testing insecticides, damage assessment, and locust behaviour.</li></ul> <p>The APLC is the lead agency in locust control in Australia with a similar international reputation. Internal policy guidelines require officers to satisfy accepted competency standards before performing identified tasks. Officers who have not yet attained competence are not authorised to perform identified tasks without the direct supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced APLC officer.</p>
<b>Consultation:</b>	Consultation with landholders will take place before any operations on or near their property. Apiarists are advised to notify relevant authorities of hive locations and consider appropriate precautions. Post-control advice will also be provided to landholders after any aerial application on their property.

## RURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

### PUBLIC INQUIRY

Amongst other things, this inquiry will examine the:

- rationale for Commonwealth Government investment in rural research and development
- appropriateness of current funding levels and arrangements - particularly levy arrangements, and matching Commonwealth contributions
- extent to which Rural Research and Development Corporation (RRDC) funded projects provide for an appropriate balance between industry-specific and broader community benefits
- effectiveness of the RRDC model in enhancing the competitiveness and productivity of Australia's rural industries
- scope for improvements to the RRDC model - and any alternative models that could deliver better outcomes.

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#### **Further information:**

- [Productivity Commission Inquiry into Rural Research And Development](#) - Joint media release from the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (external link)
- [About the public inquiry process](#)

## CROP & STOCK REPORTS

### NEW SOUTH WALES

A lot of hives were taken East over Summer to work the Eastern Grey Ironbark, Spotted Gum, Broad-leaved Ironbark, some Brush Box and Eastern Bloodwood. Most beekeepers in the Northern half, harvested good honey during this period, however, most operations would be still short of normal production due to dry spring conditions. Southern beekeepers battled extremely dry conditions, however, most harvested reasonable to good crops (Canola, Curse, Blueweed, and Peppermint). At present many hives are working Red Stringybark which has yielded reasonably, until heavy rain shortened the flowering.

The beekeepers who work the Channel country, (Yapunya), are anxiously waiting for country to dry sufficiently to shift hives in to what is expected to be a good budding-flowering.

Most of New South Wales has few prospects for the next 3-4 months.

Honey prices have been reduced by some packers, and been increased by others. The packers who have reduced their prices may not receive much honey as beekeepers are breaking with their traditional selling pattern and becoming more fluid in their marketing.

Apart from a few large operations, honey stocks held by beekeepers will be small to non-existent so it would be expected that prices will firm up over the next few months.

*Bill Weiss*

### QUEENSLAND

Many honey producers are concentrating on re-queening colonies to be sure to have them headed by young queens in the spring or ready to move to winter crops such as Yapunyah and perhaps patches of Narrow Leaved Ironbark.

The incredible rains that have inundated many regions of Queensland will lead to an above average spring and summer crop. The Channel Country has been given a huge boost but the early country will not be accessible for 6 to 8 weeks. Expect a late crop for Yapunyah with plenty of interest from those with sites in the far West. Herbage will provide plenty of breeding conditions prior to winter.

The rains may have come too late for Narrow Leaved Ironbark but there are reports of patches budded. Breeding conditions have been good on the Darling Downs, which has had good rain, but not flood rains. The Downs will need follow up rain.

The sub soil moisture has been refreshed. From the look of new growth on trees all over the South East we will be expecting good production in the spring and summer months. With a bit of luck plague locusts will not be a major concern.

Production for this year however has slowed with producers holding little honey.

*Bill Winner*

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

*Eucalyptus diversifolia* is looking promising across most of the State.

Lincoln weed has had good rain in places and should yield and build good bees.

*Eucalyptus odorata* (Peppermint) is looking good and showing nectar but coming out fast in most areas.

*Eucalyptus fasciculosa* (Pink Gum) has potential to be a good crop in the South East of the State. There has been some excellent rainfall in many areas over summer, trees are looking good and many are budded for next season.

Ground flora, such as potato weed, skeleton weed and paddy melons (where they haven't been sprayed) are a good building source for bees at present.

Lack of success in re-queening has been a real issue this season, the losses have been great due to them superseding or just not taking. Despite this, bees should be in excellent condition going into winter.

***Wendy Thiele***

## **TASMANIA**

Tasmania has experienced a very good season for Honey Production. The Ground Flora was of exceptional quality (after the very good winter rain, the blackberries produced the first time for many years and good yields were produced).

A Warm Summer (until just this weekend when rain and gale force winds saw the end of the Leatherwood Honey Season) resulted in the best flowering of leatherwoods some younger beekeepers have ever seen. Bees and their Beekeepers were kept extremely busy with hives recording excellent production yields.

Honey is available for sale, but with the AUS\$ so high getting the right price will be difficult. Tasmanian Manuka is gathering interest and with the right reading, bringing a better price. Some Beekeepers have worked the Ti Tree now there is a market.

Hives will now be shut down for the winter with any autumn flow going into winter stores. Indications are that we will have a cold hard winter.

***Shirley R Stephens***

## **VICTORIA**

January/February weather has been typical summer with some general rains early to mid February. The February rains were very heavy in Gippsland with minor flood warnings for many of the rivers.

A general budding of Red Stringy Bark (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*) got underway in January and continued into February.

Red Stringy has been yielding heavily in north eastern Victoria, nicely in East Gippsland, and a light flow through the foothills of central Victoria.

Pollen loads were very small to nil during early flowerings, but improved after the early February rains. Flat Weed flowering consistently after rain has been the main pollen supply in many places.

Red Stringy has generally finished in north central Victoria and Gippsland, but is still going in the north east (late Feb.)

Summer flowering Iron Bark (*Eucalyptus tricarpa*) has been yielding well since mid January. Some of the early bloom has finished.

Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microstata*) started to flower in the second week of February and is yielding honey from the first bloom.

Pollen loads are large and is helping greatly with bee hive nutrition. Trees are coming out quickly and, unless we have adverse weather, it should last through March and hopefully, into April.

Very heavy rain from 60-100mm during early March over the Box Ironbark belt has had a negative effect on the Grey-Box blossom.

Warm weather after the rains has ensured the Grey-Box has continued yielding honey, but the blossom is disappearing fast.

***Future:*** Winter flowering Iron Bark has a forward budding and is flowering and secreting nectar from mid-March and could provide surplus honey into April if the weather stays warm.

Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxydon*) is also carrying a reasonable budding. The budding varies in size with some forward enough to start flowering in late autumn, to quite small. The later will extend flowering well into next spring.

The good rains of November and December resulted in good growth on many Eucalypt species and good bud set for next season.

These include Yellow Gum as already mentions for next spring, Red Box (*Eucalyptus polyanthemus*), River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), and Messmate (*Eucalyptus oblique*).

Present indications are that Victoria will produce a reasonable crop of honey this autumn, and prospects at this stage indicated the possibility of a good run next season.

***Bob McDonald***

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Blackbutt only produced a small crop but was useful for building bees. Powder Bark produced well and was a good lead up to the Redgum (Marri) crop which is still continuing in northern areas. White Gum (Wandoo) has started flowering in our winter areas and should produce a good crop judging by the amount of bud to be seen.

Autumn and winter areas are desperately in need of rain and all prospects are dependent on a good break to the season.

***Rod Pavy***