



## 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 2009 Update

**AB's Honey**  
**Australian Honey Products**  
**Beechworth Honey**  
**Bees Neez Apiaries**  
**Capilano Honey Limited**  
**Dewar Apiaries**  
**Honey DownUnder**  
**H L & H M Hoskinson**  
**I N & JE Mills**  
**Pollination Association of WA**

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

AHBIC acknowledges the **beekeeper suppliers** who contribute via their packer and queen bee supplier to AHBIC. We also 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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## **CHANGE OF VENUE - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**As a result of the change of venue of the NSW Apiarists' Association Conference, the AHBIC and FCAAA AGMs will now be held at Rydges Parramatta, 116 James Ruse Drive, Rosehill.**

Rydges Parramatta Hotel is directly opposite the Rosehill Railway Station. If you are coming from the Airport travel along Southern Cross Drive following the signs to Parramatta/Blue Mountains via Parramatta Road. Follow signs to M4 Motorway. Take the M4, take the turn off to Rosehill Gardens Racecourse on James Ruse Drive. Taxi prices from the airport will range from \$50 to \$80 depending on traffic conditions. Rydges can organise airport shuttle bookings starting at \$70 flat fee for two people.

As there is a lack of accommodation around Sydney at this time, The NSWAA has block booked rooms at Rydges. They will hold these until 2 weeks before conference – after that date they will be released. Please book your accommodation early.

Rydges has a very competitive rate of \$140 a night. This is an exceptionally good rate for Sydney and is valid for use from the 7/07/09 up until the 14/07/09. Book direct with the hotel - Phone: 1300 857 922 or email [reservations\\_parramatta@rydges.com](mailto:reservations_parramatta@rydges.com) (be sure to mention that you are attending the Conference).

Rydges has also block booked 30 rooms opposite them at the Waldorf – 02 8837 8000 (these are one bedroom serviced apartments). There is free parking at Rydges as well.

Rydges is located opposite the Rosehill Racecourse. Within walking distance are Hooters Restaurant, Woolworths, KFC, McDonalds and the Rosehill Bowling Club. It is a 5 minute drive to Westfields Parramatta and all Parramatta malls.

A Conference Registration Form is included with this Newsletter. Please complete and return to the AHBIC office no later than Monday 22 June 2009. Please note observers are welcome to attend the meeting - however there is a charge for catering.

## **RIRDC HONEYBEE FIELD DAY**

RIRDC will be hosting a Honeybee Field Day on Wednesday 8 July 2009 at the Hawkesbury Campus of the University of Western Sydney. As this coincides with the NSWAA Annual State Conference, it is apparent that some people attending that conference will need transport from Rosehill to the University of Western Sydney.

We intend to make a bus available (if needed) primarily for interstate and overseas delegates to the field day. If you would like to book a seat on the bus, could you please contact Lea Edwards on either phone: 02 6271 4132 or email: [lea.edwards@rirdc.gov.au](mailto:lea.edwards@rirdc.gov.au) by 5.00pm 2 July 2009.

Please note however, that priority will be given to international guests, followed by interstate visitors and a waiting list will then be made available for NSW residents. You will be notified of availability of a place on the bus by 6 July 2009.

It is hoped that the bus will also be hired to do a shuttle run once or twice from East Richmond Station after taking passengers from Rosehill to UWS. The bus will also do a return trip to Rosehill after the field day.

## **DRAFT PROGRAM - RIRDC HONEYBEE FIELD DAY 2009**

**Venue:** Hawkesbury Campus, University of Western Sydney

- 10.00am** Colony Collapse Disorder  
**10.30am** Nosema Ceranae  
**11.00am** Morning tea  
**11.20am** *Glycaemic Index of Honey*  
*Investigate the value added potential of the pre-biotics components of Australian Honeys*
- 11.50am** *Evaluation of anti-Varroa boards for increase in honey production*  
**12.20pm** Small Hive Beetle  
**1.00pm** Lunch  
**2.00pm** Questions to Committee and researchers on present and future research publications  
**2.30pm** Implications for Australia on Varroa in PNG  
**3.00pm** DVD - Pollination  
DVD - Africanised Bees  
**4.00pm** Close

## **ANOTHER ASIAN HONEY BEE NEST BITES THE DUST**

*Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries - Queensland Government -16 March 2009*

THE destruction of another nest of Asian honey bees, the 19<sup>th</sup> since the incursion of the pest in the Cairns area was detected nearly two years ago, has buoyed hopes of eradication this year.

Despite rain hampering Biosecurity Queensland this wet season, the Asian honey bee team used foraging bees in the Aloomba area to get a beeline direct to the nest.

Asian honey bee response coordinator Charlotte Greer said this was the first nest detected and destroyed this year.

“The foragers have been teasing us for a while,” Ms Greer said.

“Our surveillance team kept plugging away until they found the nest on Monday last week.

“They trooped through mud in dense rainforest until they tracked the bees to a hollow in a 4m tree.”

Ms Greer said this was a significant detection because worker bees only came out to forage when rain stopped.

“Ongoing and intermittent rain can reduce our ability to keep track of bees while getting a line on them,” she said.

Surveillance manager Wim de Jong commended all the members of his surveillance team on their hard work.

“We need all their skills to cover a wide area and then to narrow in on a nest,” Mr de Jong said.

“We knew at least one more nest was out there because the foraging bees would always return to our feeding stations.

“It would be a good sign if we saw no more foraging bees in the Aloomba area. Only ongoing surveillance will prove this.”

The team continued to hunt down bees on the other front in the inner city Cairns suburbs of Bungalow and Parramatta Park.

Ms Greer said the Asian honey bee team took advantage of the recent wet weather to conduct community engagement activities at shopping centres and doorknocking residences.

“We’re impressed with how many Cairns residents are aware of the Asian honey bees and are keeping an eye out for us,” she said.

“The Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana*) is a problem because it has the potential to carry the *Varroa destructor* mite.

“The mite can enter commercial and hobby hives and destroy them from within.

“If the mite impacted on our honey and pollination industry, this would impact on our horticultural industries.”

Ms Greer said public reporting led directly to the discovery of Asian honey bee nests in the Gordonvale and city areas last year.

The public can report suspicious bees or suspicious nests to Biosecurity Queensland, a specialist unit within the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, on 13 25 23.

And Trevor Weatherhead reports....

It has been a busy week. Our phone hook-up was today, which President Rodney and I participated in. On Tuesday 17 March some cerana were found foraging on a coral vine about 3 kilometres north of IP8 & 9. By this morning IP20 was located about 80 metres away in a house. It was about 6 metres up near the roof cavity. Arrangements are being made with the owner to destroy the nest and, if possible, recover the nest.

The nest of IP19 has been recovered. The nest was estimated to be 7 to 8 months old. The brood was very patchy and spotty. Estimates were that it was about 40% so it would seem the nest was subject to a failing queen. No queen cells were evident in the nest. The pipe (hollow) of the tree was quite large, big enough to fit a man in. A window was cut to retrieve the nest but the dead bees are at the bottom of the pipe. Efforts will be made to try to recover the dead bees so they can be examined.

Bee eaters are again roosting in the Cairns area and 3 samples of pellets have been collected for examination for *Apis* wings, if they are present.

Sugar stations are being maintained but only mellifera are being found on them so far.

CCEAD had a phone hook-up on Thursday 19 March. Whilst the deliberations are confidential, I can report that a proposal for joint funding of the surveillance and eradication was submitted by Queensland and will be commented on by others States and the Commonwealth and I hope that there will be a consensus reached. It is crucial that an agreement is put in place so the work can continue. There is a lot at stake for our industry.

There is rain predicted for the north this coming weekend with a low, which could develop into a cyclone, hovering off the coast. This could curtail efforts to retrieve IP20.

The next phone hook-up is scheduled for Friday 3 April. So the next Advice will be due then unless something untoward happens in the meantime.

### **NEW RURAL R&D COUNCIL**

In January the Minister appointed the ten members of the new Rural R&D Council, including the Chair, Dr Kate Fairley-Grenot, following an open process of engagement.

The council's inaugural meeting was held on 19 and 20 February 2009. Items discussed included the terms of reference, roles and responsibilities and strategic objectives of the council

The minister will officially announce the establishment of the council in the near future.

### **RURAL R&D COUNCIL MEMBERS' BIOGRAPHIES**

**Dr Kate Fairley-Grenot** (council chair) is the current chair of a NSW Grants Selection Committee and an Independent Consultant. Previous board appointments include the Grape and Wine Research & Development Corporation (Chair, Audit Committee), Industry Research & Development Board (Biological Committee) and Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust (Chair, Finance Audit & Risk Management Committee). Kate has a research background in plant physiology and science policy (Sydney, Harvard, Sussex) and is a former Associate Director of Coopers & Lybrand (Government Services).

**Professor Robert Clark** established the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research and was its director for 10 years. He is currently Emeritus Professor and Visiting Research Professor at the University of Tasmania. He is proprietor and managing partner of a 400ha intensive agricultural property in Tasmania. He was awarded an Order of Australia for service to agricultural science in 2008.

**Ms Catherine McGowan AO** is an independent rural community consultant. She is a member of the Charles Sturt University Institute of Land Water and Society Advisory Board and a past national president of Australian Women in Agriculture. Over the past 10 years she has consulted to the sugar, dairy, meat, wool and horticultural R&D Corporations.

**Mr Mark McHenry** is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation farmer in WA. He was the 2007 winner of Land and Water Australia's Science and Innovation awards for young people in agriculture, fisheries and forestry. His professional and research interests include renewable resources, climate change policy, regional development and clean energy technology.

**Professor James Pratley** is currently Research Professor of Agriculture at Charles Sturt University and Secretary of the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture. He is a member of the Research

Advisory Committee of the Australian Farm Institute and a member of the NSW Primary Industries Minister's Science Council. He is a former president of the Australian Society of Agronomy.

**Dr Robert Rose** has over 30 years experience in fisheries/aquaculture research, development and commercialisation and is a qualified marine biologist. He is managing director of Tropical Aquaculture Australia. He is currently a project developer for indigenous aquaculture enterprises in the Northern Territory.

**Dr Frances Shapter** is an Associate Research Fellow at the Centre for Plant Conservation Genetics at Southern Cross University, and a beef cattle producer. In conjunction with the Grain Foods CRC, Dr Shapter has helped to develop and presents workshops on IP and project management to early career researchers.

**Mrs Anne Stünzner** is Chief Executive Officer of the Central Queensland Forest Association. She has been a cattle board director for Agforce and a committee member of the Central Queensland Beef Research Committee. She is a director and shareholder of a beef cattle production business. In 2001 Mrs Stünzner was a Churchill Fellow.

**Professor Elizabeth Woods** is Assistant Director-General, Innovation at the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Queensland. She is Professor of Agribusiness at the University of Queensland. Professor Woods is a member of the R&D Sub-Committee of the Primary Industries Standing Committee. She has been a CSIRO board member and served on the board of several Research and Development Corporations. She currently chairs the Board of Trustees of the International Rice Research Institute.

**Professor Penny Sackett**, the Chief Scientist for Australia, is highly respected in the national and international communities of science and technology, both for her research and her proven experience in research management on three continents. She is a member of the Australian and American Astronomical Societies and the International Astronomical Union. Professor Sackett is an International Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and serves on the Association for Universities for Research in Astronomy Board of Directors and Defence Science and Technology Advisory Board.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Rural Research and Development (R&D) Council is the Australian Government's key advisory body to guide more effective multi-sector cooperation and prioritisation of investment in R&D for Australia's rural industries.

The principal goal of the council is to provide high level advice and coordination to better target and improve the effectiveness of the Australian Government's investment in rural R&D. This enhanced focus on R&D will improve the productivity, profitability, sustainability and global competitiveness of Australia's agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food industries, with benefits for individual rural businesses, the environment and the wider community.

The council is to:

- develop a National Australian Strategic Rural R&D Investment Plan based on an agreed list of national priorities for profitable, globally competitive, sustainable, innovative and adaptable primary industries

- develop a performance measurement and reporting framework against an agreed list of national priorities and key performance indicators
- provide advice on enhancing cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary, cross-jurisdictional and international cooperation and collaboration
- provide advice on improving communication and uptake of new knowledge and technology across all rural industries and at all scales of enterprises
- foster innovation as integral to the culture of rural communities and industries
- foster the building of capacity of the rural R&D sector to ensure that Australia is prepared for challenges to global competitiveness, productivity, adaptability and sustainable development into the future, including the challenges associated with climate change, and
- provide advice on any other matters referred to it by the Minister.

The council will have a central role in facilitating more effective use of public resources to address priority issues of importance to Australia's primary industries and associated value-chains; to enhance the speed of delivery of research outputs to Australia's primary producers and uptake of R&D by them; and to enhance domestic and international cooperation and collaboration.

The council will work closely with the rural R&D corporations and companies, industry sectors, research providers, state and territory jurisdictions and relevant Australian Government agencies to strengthen rural R&D through improved collaboration, facilitation and prioritisation of investment and performance measurement and reporting.

## **HONEYBEE R&D ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

[www.rirdc.gov.au](http://www.rirdc.gov.au)

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) is calling for applications from interested people to apply for positions on the Honeybee Research and Development Advisory Committee.

The committee consists of persons with a range of skills and experience in the research, production, processing and marketing sectors of industry together with a representative of the Corporation. The committee provides recommendations on the allocation of research and development contributions (comprising industry levies and Commonwealth matching) to the RIRDC Board.

The advisory committee is expected to consult with industry bodies and participants to evaluate the requirements for research and development, to prepare a research and development strategic plan for the industry which is reviewed annually and to monitor and evaluate the impact of research and development projects.

Applicants should note that RIRDC program committee guidelines generally preclude members of the executive of a national industry association from being a member of a RIRDC advisory committee. A joint industry/RIRDC selection process has been established to choose the committee members.

**Written applications, outlining your skills and relevant experience, should be forwarded by Monday 1 May 2009 to:**

Honeybee Program  
Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation  
PO Box 4776  
KINGSTON ACT 2604

**If you require further information about these positions or the Honeybee Program, please visit the RIRDC Honey Program web site ([http://www.rirdc.gov.au/programs/established-rural-industries/honey-bee/honey-bee\\_home.cfm](http://www.rirdc.gov.au/programs/established-rural-industries/honey-bee/honey-bee_home.cfm)) or phone the Honeybee Program Coordinator on (02) 6271 4132.**

## **COSMETIC SUPERPOWER JOINS FIGHT TO SAVE AUSTRALIA BEES**

*March 11, 2009*

The world's leading cosmetics manufacturer, L'Oréal Paris, has become the first corporation to help finance the fight to save Australia's bee population.

Having recently launched a new hair care offering containing bee-produced Royal Jelly, L'Oréal Paris has been inspired to become involved in the fight for the nation's bee population. This week, L'Oréal Paris has proudly donated \$50,000 to further research into pollination in Australia which is in addition to numerous commitments made by the brand internationally.

Australian bees are under serious threat from a mite known as *Varroa Destructor*, which has had negative impact on bee populations across the world. *Varroa Destructor* has not been detected in Australia yet, but has been found as close as New Zealand and more recently in Papua New Guinea. Wherever it has gone, the *Varroa* has seriously affected bee populations in the wild.

Senior scientists from the CSIRO claim it is only a matter of time before the mite reaches Australian shores, with the consequent impact on the nation's wild bee population predicted to cause significant impact on the environment and Australia's agriculture sector.

Pollination Australian spokesperson Julie Haslett said today that the support from L'Oréal Paris was the first step in an urgent campaign to speed up research into pollination.

L'Oréal Paris's funding is a joint initiative with the newly formed industry body Pollination Australia, which represents the nation's beekeepers as well as many of the industries reliant on pollination.

Ms Haslett, who is also the chief executive officer of the Almond Board of Australia, said that that 80 per cent of Australian horticultural crops rely on bees in the wild for pollination.

"Obviously if those bees are wiped out it will have enormous impact on our environment, as well as a huge number of industries," she said. "We are racing against time and this research is vital to many aspects of Australia's agriculture sector."

Ms Haslett said the CSIRO is attempting to develop the world's first biological control for *Varroa* and Pollination Australia is very grateful that L'Oréal Paris has recognised the importance contributing to the pollination work.

"We understand that economic conditions are tough, but many corporations could find themselves in a much more difficult position if our bee population is detrimentally impacted," she said.

Ms Haslett said she would welcome other like-minded companies offering financial support to Pollination Australia's research into pollination.



## **RECOGNISING WOMEN FARMERS**

(Previously known as Women Leading Change)

*Applications now open and must be received by 9 April 2009 (5pm AEST).*

As part of the Australian government's Australia's Farming Future initiative, the **Recognising Women Farmers** (RWF) grants round offers support to stage events that will build the leadership and representative capacity of women in primary industries—to strengthen primary industry productivity and build rural, regional and remote community resilience to a changing climate.

Under the RWF grants round, the government will provide funding of up to \$50,000 for eligible events and will seek either a cash and/or in-kind contribution from successful applicants.

RWF offers support to stage events for women living and working in rural, regional and remote Australia that:

- build and share knowledge and experience
- increase access to planning tools and resources
- develop leadership and management skills
- develop programs to increase participation in agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries
- develop skills to contribute more effectively to government and industry decision making
- build networks among rural, regional and remote Australians.

Applicants should consider the type of event that will achieve the best results for women involved in primary industries and living and working in rural, regional and remote Australia.

Funding could support an additional component to an existing event that focuses on building the leadership and representative capacity of women and increasing their awareness of a changing climate.

Applicants should consider:

- timing the event to fit in with family and work requirements
- providing child care
- targeting a range of skill levels

RWF is not intended to fund your organisation's day-to-day operating costs.

### **Who can apply?**

Organisations involved in agriculture, fisheries and forestry at the local, regional or national level are eligible to apply.

Applications will be accepted from clusters of organisations joining together to hold an event for women living and working in rural, regional and remote Australia.

Organisations that are not incorporated under Commonwealth or state legislation may apply if sponsored by an incorporated organisation. In this case, the sponsoring organisation becomes the applicant.

### **How are applications assessed?**

Applications are assessed through a competitive process in which a panel of key representatives of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and two independent members will rank each

application. The Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, or his delegate, will make the final decision.

If successful, you will be required to sign a funding agreement with the department.

For further information about the grants, or to apply, visit:

[www.daff.gov.au/recognisingwomenfarmers](http://www.daff.gov.au/recognisingwomenfarmers) email: [recognisingwomenfarmers@daf.gov.au](mailto:recognisingwomenfarmers@daf.gov.au)

or call the Australia's Farming Future hotline on **1800 638 746**.

## **NEXT GEN FARMERS**

(Previously known as Primary Industries Youth Development Fund)

*Applications now open and must be received by 9 April 2009 (5pm AEST).*

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is calling for applications under the Next Gen Farmers. Next Gen Farmers offers support for projects to improve the leadership and representative capacity of young people entering or involved in primary industries, particularly in the context of the challenges and opportunities in these industries as a result of a changing climate. The fund is a part of the government's Australia's Farming Future initiative.

The department is now seeking applications for eligible projects for young people through Next Gen Farmers. The grants will support activities that aim to:

- build and share knowledge and experience
- increase access to planning tools and resources
- develop leadership and management skills
- develop pathways to increase participation in primary industries
- develop skills to contribute more effectively to government and industry decision making
- build networks among rural, regional and remote Australians.

These activities could be conducted via workshops, seminars, conferences or industry events or through other innovative mechanisms.

Grants of up to \$50,000 are available.

Next Gen Farmers is not intended to fund your organisation's day-to-day operating costs.

### **Who is a 'young person'?**

The department does not use a single definition of a 'young person'. However, in assessing applications, priority will be given to activities which focus on the 18–25 age group and activities for people aged 15–30 will be considered.

Applications targeting young women, young Indigenous Australians and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are encouraged.

### **Who can apply?**

Organisations involved in agriculture, fisheries and forestry at the local, regional or national level are eligible to apply.

Applications will be accepted from clusters of organisations joining together to hold an activity for young people living and working in rural, regional and remote Australia.

Organisations that are not incorporated under Commonwealth or state legislation may apply if sponsored by an incorporated organisation. In this case, the sponsoring organisation becomes the applicant.

**How many grants will be approved as part of Next Gen Farmers?**

The number of grants will depend on the quantity and quality of applications received and the amount of funding sought by each applicant.

**How are applications assessed?**

Applications will be assessed through a competitive process by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Office for Youth. The Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, or his delegate, will make the final decision.

If successful, you will be required to sign a funding agreement with the Commonwealth. Please note that no grant funding can be provided until the funding agreement has been fully completed, signed by both your organisation and the Commonwealth and a copy of the signed agreement is delivered to you.

For further information about the grants, or to apply, visit:  
[www.daff.gov.au/nextgenfarmers](http://www.daff.gov.au/nextgenfarmers) email: [nextgenfarmers@daff.gov.au](mailto:nextgenfarmers@daff.gov.au)  
or call the Australia's Farming Future hotline on **1800 638 746**.

**FARM BIOSECURITY AWARD**

In 2009, a Farm Biosecurity Award, rewarding exemplary biosecurity practices in rural Australia will feature as part of the inaugural Australian Rural & Outback Awards.

The Farm Biosecurity Award is a key element of the Farm Biosecurity program, a joint initiative of Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA). It is a national education and engagement campaign which aims to help producers reduce the risk of diseases, pests and weeds on-farm.

The Australian Rural & Outback Awards were developed to recognise the achievements of people and their communities across rural and remote Australia.

We are very excited about being able to highlight farm biosecurity through the Australian Rural & Outback Awards. We believe it will help promote the biosecurity cause to a wide grower audience and shine a spotlight on those leading the way on better on-farm biosecurity practices.

The Australian Rural & Outback Awards also present an opportunity for your organisation to help promote the benefits of good biosecurity practices. By promoting the Awards to your industry and encouraging your members to nominate, you will raise the profile of biosecurity and help PHA identify biosecurity "champions" whose example can be showcased nationally.

The criteria for the awards will be quite broad, as we are interested in promoting interest and rewarding good practice at any level, so anyone is eligible to enter and will be in with a chance to

win. Producers will have the potential to win \$2,000 and a trophy for their efforts at implementing effective on farm biosecurity measures.

The Australian Rural & Outback Awards are being organised by Awards Australia, who have many years of experience running community awards around Australia. The Farm Biosecurity Award is one of 5 being offered as part of the awards program.

We will be keeping you up to date with developments and encourage you to spread the word. In coming weeks you will receive information about the launch of the Australian Rural & Outback Awards and how to nominate. Media and other publicity will commence this week.

Nominations will open on 16 April 2009, a form will be posted to you and you will be able to nominate online at [www.awardsaustralia.com](http://www.awardsaustralia.com) or phone 1300 735 445. For more information about the Farm Biosecurity program, visit [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) or call PHA on 02 6260 4322.

With your support we are sure the Farm Biosecurity Award will be an ongoing success and make a significant contribution to the adoption of biosecurity practices on-farm.

## **SENATE WANTS TO HEAR FROM TAS FARMERS ON CLIMATE, ETS AND FOOD PRODUCTION**

*Tuesday, 17 March 2009*

Tasmania's farmers will next month be able to contribute to a Senate inquiry into Australia's food production and have a say on how Australia deals with climate change.

The Senate Select Committee on Agriculture and Related Issues is seeking submissions and will visit Tasmania for public hearings in Launceston on April 2.

"I strongly urge Tasmanian food growers to take up this opportunity to express their ideas and concerns to the Senate," said Australian Greens Deputy Leader, Senator Christine Milne.

"I also urge Tasmanian fruit growers and vegetable growers to seize this opportunity to tell the Senate Committee about their concerns about cheap imported frozen vegetables and their plans for a new research facility in Australia. This hearing is a perfect opportunity to advance these and other causes."

"This inquiry is an excellent opportunity for Tasmania's farmers to contribute their views about the government's approach to climate change, food labelling and trade policies and how farms can be helped to protect the environment, the integrity of the product and their income into the future."

"Australian farmers are particularly vulnerable to climate change, but they can also play a key role in reducing our emissions. Yet there are currently remarkably few incentives to help food producers green up their farms."

"While the government has rightly chosen to leave the agriculture sector out of emissions trading for the time being farmers will incur a huge cost in the future if we don't work with them now to reduce emissions. Farmers can benefit tremendously from efforts now to increase their soil carbon and the health of the soils and its capacity to retain moisture.

“We could be helping Tasmania’s food producers green up their farms, mixing their cattle or crops with wind turbines, solar collectors or bio-energy plants and increasing the carbon in their soils. This would allow farmers to stay on their land and get an income from generating renewable energy.”

“Nichols Poultry at Sassafra and Woolnorth are examples of Primary Industry using renewable energy.”

Tasmania’s future as a producer of high-quality food can only be assured if rural industries are given the support they need to deal with the changing climate and to drive innovation in environmentally sustainable production and marketing.”

Senator Milne urged farmers to get involved, make written submissions, and seek to give evidence in Launceston in April.

**The details of the Inquiry and how to get involved are available here:**

**Inquiry into food production in Australia**

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/agric\\_ctte/food\\_production/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/agric_ctte/food_production/index.htm)

Or contact the Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries by email, phone or fax:

Committee Secretary  
Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia  
Phone: +61 2 6277 3511  
Fax: +61 2 6277 5811  
Email: [agriculture.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:agriculture.sen@aph.gov.au)

## **CROP & STOCK REPORTS**

### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

The dry weather has had an effect on production. Heat wave conditions reduced hive strength in the South, although many beekeepers have produced an average crop. River Red Gum produced some honey, Yellow Box produced well despite the dry.

#### **Autumn – Winter**

Prospects are limited in the Northern inland of the state. White Gum, patchy White Box, maybe some Lapunya in the Far West. Bees are breeding well on the Tablelands but consuming honey stores.

North Coast has Ti-tree flowering at present and a little Spotted Gum may prepare bees for winter. The South has been extremely dry, however, good prospects on the Coast with Spotted Gum well budded which should provide an autumn – winter honey flow for those that work the area.

Honey stocks held by beekeepers are low, except for some fortunate beekeepers who have held onto as much honey as possible, believing the prospects for major honey production to be very low during winter – spring.

Honey prices are firming at present and beekeepers who have honey to sell will receive reasonable returns over the next few months.

***Bill Weiss***

## **QUEENSLAND**

Queensland continues to be a contradiction of climatic extremes, making crop forecasting very difficult. We have floods in the north, drought in the west and the South East is in need of more rain.

The Channel Country is very dry and needs rain urgently to present a crop. Budding is present on Yapunyah, breeding conditions are virtually non-existent at the present. The main prospect for this winter is Spotted Gum. Narrow Leaved Ironbark has grown well and may well set bud for flowering in late winter. Gum Topped Box has a patchy budding and will yield in relatively few areas. Tea Tree has budded well and if it can dodge the rain may yield a good crop of dark strongly flavoured honey. A chance remains of a small crop from Red Ash, a distinctively flavoured honey not always favoured by packers.

The difficulty for honey producers now is to maintain colony strength in readiness for the winter crops should they eventuate. Many have requeened hives and have them in really good condition; keeping them that way will present many challenges.

Few producers are carrying stocks of honey.

***Bill Winner***

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

The two weeks of extremely hot weather in late January-early February finished Lucerne off, but good breeding conditions prevailed in some areas.

Some hives and many nucs melted down in the heat and needed to be refilled. The heat took the cream off the hives condition, the bees just had to work too hard carting water.

However, despite the negatives, generally a good season was had by most.

Bees are now on Stringy Bark (*Eucalyptus Baxteri*) and Tea-Tree (*Melaleuca Lanceolata*) to rebuild for almond pollination come August.

Some bees are still chasing honey from Peppermint (*Eucalyptus Odorata*). Banksia has some cobs but mostly not enough for commercial use.

West Coast advise that Tea-Tree is nearly finished and White Mallee (*Eucalyptus Gracilis*) is just starting with average potential.

Let's hope for good Winter/Spring rains.

**Wendy Thiele**

## **TASMANIA**

The state has received very good rains over the last two weeks, the last this weekend being wide spread & of great benefit to the agriculture sector. The preceding week of good weather produced the last of the Leatherwood Honey flow. Over the next few weeks Hives will be stripped and left for winter. A good flowering of Ti tree and some patches of Leatherwood will ensure Hives go into winter with good stores.

Reports indicate the Leatherwood Honey flow will be an average yield. Although the far North West has reported the worst for 50 years and some Beekeepers there have had a very poor year as the white Honey crop was also down. Some Tasmanian Manuka was gathered from this area. A better than average crop from some Beekeepers working the higher Leatherwood country will ensure sufficient supply to meet demand. Quality of the Leatherwood Honey produced varies slightly with Ti tree darkening some early Honey. The bulk however is very good colour and flavour.

Three of the major packers have Honey stocks carried over. All are seeking an improvement in prices offered as all production costs have risen.

**Ian Stephens**

## **VICTORIA**

January weather has been ideal summer honey gathering weather until the extremes of above 40° temperatures towards the end of the month.

Red Gum (*Euc. camaldulensis*) generally yielded honey until the last flowers frizzled in the heat.

Yellow Box (*Euc. melliodora*) blossom, though severely damaged with the December rains, recovered with some later buds on a percentage of the trees and yielded honey in late January with the tail-end of the Red gum flowering.

Generally speaking, there has been a large crop of choice table honey produced from Red Gum and Yellow Box right across the State from late December until the end of January.

The excessive heat in the last week of January (and continuing) has created problems with later honey prospects.

The excessive heat of late January, followed by the 7<sup>th</sup> February bushfires have had/will have a dramatic effect on honey production and bee hive nutrition for the rest of the season.

**North West** – Acorn Mallee (*Euc. oleosa*) has revived a little after the heat and is yielding a little nectar and pollen.

Yellow Mallee (*Euc. dumosa*) has started to flower and is also yielding a little. However, Yellow Mallee in a dry year can be hard on bees.

**Western** – Some Brown Stringy Bark (*Euc. baxteri*) is budded and flowering in places and is providing a little sustenance for bee hives.

**South West Plains** - has Sugar Gum (*Euc. cladocalyx*) flowering, although having a light budding is providing good breeding conditions.

Manna Gum (*Euc. viminalis*) in Mount Cole and Wombat forests and, in some places in the north east, could provide good quality pollen shortly.

**Gippsland** – Saw Banksia (*B. serrata*), after ceasing to yield with the heat has revived a little with some rain, and Rough Barked Manna Gum (*Euc. viminalis*) are proving to be some help, but haven't got long go to finish.

**Future** – Beekeepers need to be very careful in relation to honey stores for the winter as all possible autumn prospects are capable of helping to sustain bee hive populations with very little possibility of providing surplus honey.

Some beekeepers may need to look seriously at sugar feeding later on.

There seems to be more competition in the sale of sugar than in the past, and there is a good possibility of better prices available if we are prepared to bulk orders together as we have done in the past.

#### **FEBRUARY 2009 SUMMER HEAT/BUSHFIRE IMPACT FIGURES**

The following are figures as far as I have been able to ascertain on the effects of the excessive summer heat of late January, followed by the bushfires a week later.

There are approximately 200 commercial beekeepers in Victoria controlling 70,000 to 80,000 bee hives. Some 700+ bee hives have been burnt by the fires.

**Heat Stress** has caused losses of honey flows/crops, potential honey flows, and breeding sustenance.

All honey flows throughout Victoria ceased to yield because of the several days of above 40° temperatures.

**North Central Victoria** - Yellow Box (*Euc. melliodora*), although towards the end of its flowering cycle, had its blossom prematurely frizzled up two weeks earlier than expected. This finished one



of the heaviest honey flows from this source the Victorian beekeepers have experienced in recent years.

Loss of honey production      500 tonnes,  
Beekeepers effected            approximately 50,  
Owning                              20,000 bee hives  
Equivalent to 25% of commercial beekeepers.

**North Western Victoria - Acorn Mallee (*Euc. oleosa*)**

Began yielding honey in mid-January 2009. Flowering normally lasts until early-mid March.

Loss of honey production      approximately 50 tonnes (plus honey stores for winter),  
Beekeepers effected            7,  
Owning                              approximately 2,000 hives

**HEAT STRESS & BUSH FIRES**

**North Eastern Victorian Mountains – Mountain Blue Gum (*Euc. stjohnii*)** began flowering in mid January, also usually lasting till mid March.

The Blue Gum began yielding honey immediately and was expected to produce a crop of 30kg to 40kg per hive. In general, beekeepers were shifting bee hives off River Red Gum at the time the excessive heat started. The heat checked the blossom from yielding nectar.

There were approximately 3,000 bee hives shifted into Beechworth, Alexandra and Tallarook Forest districts prior to the excessive heat, followed by the fires.

Four beekeepers lost a total of 610 bee hives in the Beechworth fire. There would have been another 3,000-4,000 hives shifted on to the Blue Gum flow if the Total Fire Bans/fires had not eventuated.

Lost production is difficult to estimate as the fires are having a huge impact on this area. It is expected that the Blue Gum - at best – will only provide winter stores.

**Gippsland – Saw Banksia (*B. serrata*)**

The major possible source of late summer/autumn honey flow is Saw Banksia. This Banksia grows extensively through the coastal forests from Yarram through to Nowa Nowa; also in the forests of Won Wron, Mullungdung and Holey Plains National Park.

Saw Banksia began flowering and yielding nectar in mid January with the heat curtailing the honey flow shortly after. The rains of 40 - 50mm have revived the Banksia and it is again yielding, although not as heavily as before.

84 bee hives belonging to 1 beekeeper were burnt in the Won Wron fire, as well as 28 bee sites completely destroyed.

With the renewal of the fires on the Currajung end of Won Wron forest and eastwards into the Mullungdung, several beekeepers are shifting their bee hives out of these forests. There are approximately 60 bee sites in these forests.

The ongoing risk of fires in these forests has made the 45 unburned bee sites too risky to use this season and the excessive from the fires as also effected the blossom on unburnt bee sites.

It is expected that Saw Banksia will provide some surplus honey this autumn, but the stocking rates in some of the coastal areas will be very high because of the non-use of the high fire risk areas. All Gippsland beekeepers were - and are - working Saw Banksia, as well as some northern Victorian beekeepers.

**To summarise:**

Honey production and bee hive sustenance is being badly affected by the excessive heat of recent weeks. All commercial beekeepers in Victoria will be affected financially - in varying degrees.

The excessive heat has also resulted in a substantial number of bee hives 'melting down' ie, bees wax combs melting and leaking honey, drowning the bees.

More widespread has been a decrease in the population of bees within all bee hives with the low humidity compelling bees to fly across crisp, dry areas to water sources.

I estimate that at least 1,000 tonnes of honey has been and will be lost because of the impact of the excessive heat. This would amount to 20% of a possible annual crop of approximately 5,000 tonnes.

In many instances there are ongoing problems in relation to bees gathering sufficient honey and pollen for sustenance/population build-up during autumn, and for winter stores.

There has been a loss of queen bees, replacement of which is another financial burden. There will be a need to feed substantial amounts of sugar during late autumn and winter in many areas.

As well as the reported approximately 700 hives burnt, there is a number of bee hives owned by hobbyist/recreational beekeepers whose hives were also lost in fire storms.

In general, as with all other primary industry pursuits, the stress factor on beekeepers' families in these situations is the unseen result of this crisis.

***Bob McDonald***

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

We have come to the end of one of the best Red Gum flows for many years. However beekeepers are uncertain about future crops with some looking at Banksia.

Most beekeepers are holding good stocks of honey.

***Stephen Fewster***

**AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC.**  
 Annual General Meeting and Conference - 12/13 July 2009  
 Rydges Parramatta Hotel, 116 James Ruse Drive Rosehill NSW

**REGISTRATION FORM**

Name: .....

Spouse/Partner Name: .....

I will be attending as:

**Voting Delegate Representing**

.....

**Non Voting Delegate Representing**

.....

**A Presenter**

**An Observer**

*Observers are welcome on both days - however there is a fee for catering*

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>12 July</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>\$30.00</i>
<i>Monday</i>	<i>13 July</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>\$30.00</i>

The Annual Dinner is to be held on Sunday 12 July 2009  
 Tickets are **\$50.00 per person (Presenters will be admitted gratis)**

**I will be attending / not attending the Annual Dinner - My guests will be:**

.....

.....

**I attach a cheque for \$ .....** *Please return to the AHBIC office:*  
*PO Box R838 Royal Exchange NSW 1225 - by Monday 22 June 2009*