

BEE NEWS

June 2026

Issue 168

**Monthly newsletter of the Sunshine Coast
BeeKeepers Inc.**

www.sunshinecoastbeekeepers.com.au



Photo of bees on wattle flowers, by Linda Blackwell

NEXT MEETING

**Saturday, 27 June 2026 at the Club
House, 43 Farrell Street Yandina.**

**Morning tea and catch up starts
9.30am, BYO plate of food to share
and the monthly raffle.**

Meeting to start at 10.00am.

President's Report

June is always a huge month for our club, and this year it has been no different! At our last meeting we held our ever-popular Greatest Honey in the World* competition, and our top three awards went to new, or relatively new, beekeepers! How fantastic to see success from our members just starting their journey into beekeeping. Congratulations everyone!

Speaking of congratulations....

CONGRATULATIONS to everyone who won big at the Sunshine Coast Agricultural Show this past week. We had a brilliant turn out in the competition with so many of our members winning the big prizes. A special mention to Ron Hulm who won Champion of the show with a perfect score of 100 for his Pale Amber Honey. We will have to wait and see if this is enough to win the Wruck Shield at the next meeting.

Our June meeting will feature a wrap-up of the show and John's visit to the QBA State Conference. At our recent committee meeting we mapped out the meetings for the year, including the Christmas Party. I wanted to reach out now to see if anyone or any businesses wanted to donate a Christmas prize for the party. If you can keep us in mind and let me know if you have a gift of Christmas Party level that your company might be able to donate. We often get beekeeping equipment, but I thought I would see if there are other businesses out there that might want to participate.

Thank you everyone, have a bee-utiful week!

Katie

Katie Livock

President

Dates to Remember

31 May - Membership Renewal for Year 1 June 2026-31 May 2027. If paying over the internet please ensure your name is on the bank transfer form

25 July - AGM

Biosecurity Notes

QBA Annual General Meeting

The range of topics discussed at the recent QBA Annual General Meeting in Bundaberg was wide and varied.

Reinfestation

Many beekeepers are experiencing reinfestations of varroa mite with large mite counts and colony losses. This is happening on the Sunshine Coast. At the meeting, actions to limit the effect of reinfestations were discussed. I will highlight some of these below.

The mite is still spreading north with recent reported positive surveillances in Central Queensland.

Mite Resistance

In addition, there is evidence of mites resistance to synthetic

Workshops for New Beekeepers

Our upcoming Beekeeper's Courses for 2025 will be held on:

- **11 July - 8 enrolled, open**
- **8 August - 2 enrolled, open**

Booking is essential.

Book online at:

www.sunshinecoastbeekeepers.com.au/workshops.



The Club Online

To save our members time searching online, the Club's website has links to the best beekeeping information and websites we can find.

www.sunshinecoastbeekeepers.com.au

Also, check out our Facebook page for more Club news.

www.facebook.com/pg/sunshinecoastbeekeepersaustralia/posts/?ref=page_internal

chemicals also spreading north, now into the northern part of the Sunshine Coast region (this was reported last week; it is likely there has been further spread since then).

With that in mind, the following are actions to consider:

- Testing of hives

Test hives at least every 4 weeks for mite load. You might consider reducing this time frame depending on the previous mite count. Many at the conference were working on lower thresholds than currently advised, for example, a wash of 2-3 mites. This may be necessary to avoid a runaway situation where, with a reinfestation more mites are entering the front of the hive than are being killed by treatment.

- Resistant Mites

You will not know if you have resistant mites at the time of treating unless you look for it. When treating with Bayvarol or Apivar, wash the hive between 7 and 14 days to assess mite drop. If less than expected, report it as such to DPI. Testing for resistance can be undertaken. If there is resistance, the treatment should be changed as soon as possible to avoid the runaway situation described above.

- Alternative to a wash

An alternative to doing a the wash after 7-14 days treatment is to monitor the tray if you have a ventilated base. A heavy mite drop is an indication of successful treatment. If there is any doubt, do a wash.

- Mite count at conclusion of treatment

Do a mite count at the conclusion of treatment for a baseline for the following 4 weeks management decisions.

- Oxalic acid

Oxalic acid on its own is not likely to control a heavy infestation unless combined with another component of IPM such as brood sacrifice or, depending on the count, queen caging.

UniSC Research

After a temporary pause in live mite collections by researchers at the University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC), we are looking for beekeepers again who are willing to “donate” mites. John is the contact for this.

John Baker

Linda Blackwell

Biosecurity Champions

Remember, **you are not alone; we are all in this together.**

Honey Extraction Dates

NOTE – all members wanting to use the Club facility for extraction of honey must first book with Lynne Hulm the Secretary to make sure we are not overbooked. You must let Lynne know how many frames that you want to extract honey from.

Please ensure that you assist with the cleaning up following extraction of honey.

Borrowing the Clubs spinners to extract honey at home:

- No bookings are taken for the 3 portable spinners that the Club loans out.
- This is first come first served basis - be at the Club at 9:00am to secure a spinner.
- All spinners can only be borrowed for a week and **MUST** be returned clean and on the following Saturday by 9:00am ready for other members to borrow.

Saturday Rosters 2026

To be published when available.

Swarm Catchers

North Coast and Cut Outs (in a house)	Grant Eisenmenger - 0401 720 004
Coolum and Bli Bli	Tony Minto - 0419 661 843
Nambour	Alby Taylor - 0418 882 282
Buderim / Maroochy	Tom Cowburn - 0494 302 366 Ron Hulm - 0432 310 707
Maleny / Montville	John Baker - 0418 791 149
Caloundra / Southern	Ian Meyers - 0412 694 058

Swarms

In South East Queensland it is estimated that there could be over 150 feral bee hives per square kilometer. In the first 18 months the majority of these hives will die out due to varroa mite infestation but these bees will also reinfect managed hives.

Prevention of Swarms

Management of our hives is more essential than ever with the spread of the varroa mite.

Part of our management strategy should include strategies to minimise swarms which in themselves spread the varroa mite.

Ensuring equipment is clean, the ground around your apiary is tidy, the Queen has space in the brood box, the workers

have space for honey, splitting your hive to form a nuc and that common pests such as hive beetle and wax moths are controlled.

Swarm Removal

The catching of swarms is an **important community service** and will continue.

An attempt must always be made to clearly explain the behaviour of bees to the public. Bees when swarming may stay in one place for a few hours or days before they eventually move.

The member of the public must understand that they recontact the swarm catcher if the bees have moved on.

We still have members available to catch swarms but bees caught will be tested for

varroa and treated if varroa is present and then quarantined before joining an apiary.

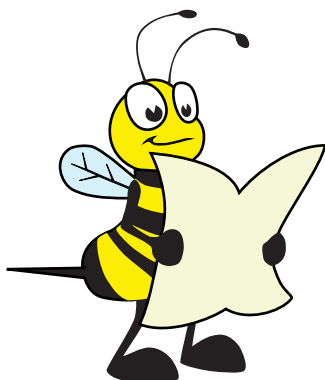
We have fewer members available to catch swarms so would encourage members reconsider assisting by gaining advice on swarm catching or be trained by one of our experienced members.

Conversation

The honeybee mite, Varroa destructor, finally breached Australia's biosecurity defences four years ago, and is here to stay. Even more concerning, our standard treatments – such as specialised pesticides – are already failing.

What does this mean for Australians, and what can we do about it?

Varroa is more than just a beekeeping problem. Managed honeybees underpin a significant portion of Australian agriculture, contributing about A\$14 billion annually. More than 30% of food production depends on pollination from bees.



BEES IN THE NEWS

Australia has already spent over \$100 million dealing with Varroa mite. Here's what we can do next

Published: 22 June 2026, The

“Hard” miticides, such as formamidines (amitraz or Apivar) and pyrethroids (Bayvarol), are synthetic chemicals designed to kill mites quickly. “Soft” miticides, including formic acid, oxalic acid and thymol, are naturally derived compounds that tend to linger less in the environment.

A new generation of pest control

As conventional treatments falter, researchers are exploring new technologies. One of the most promising is RNA interference, or RNAi. RNA is a molecule found in all living organisms that helps control how genes are expressed.

RNAi is a natural process where small RNA fragments “switch off” specific genes, blocking the production of essential proteins the pests need to survive. The RNA fragments can be delivered to bees via sugar syrup. This then gets distributed through the hive and Varroa are exposed either by feeding or absorption.

RNAi pesticides are designed to be species specific, meaning they’re unlikely to cause harm to other organisms. This makes them more desirable than chemical pesticides that can have widespread effects on beneficial insects, the environment and even human health if not applied correctly.

RNAi treatments are also unlikely to give rise to genetic resistance. This is because resistance usually involves single-point changes in the gene sequence, while these treatments target larger gene segments. RNAi is also exceptionally safe because it don’t linger in the environment as much as a chemical pesticide might.

Not just theoretical

RNAi pesticides are no longer theoretical. In 2025, the United States approved the first RNAi-based Varroa treatment, marketed as Norroa. This product targets a gene essential for mite reproduction, effectively acting as a form of “birth control” that reduces population growth within hives.

However, Norroa has its limitations. Because it suppresses reproduction rather than killing mites outright, it’s most effective when mite numbers are low. In heavily infested colonies, it can’t reduce populations quickly enough to prevent collapse.

Research is now focused on making RNAi more effective and adaptable. One key question is which genes to target.

Our research group is exploring an alternative strategy to target genes

involved in the mite nervous system or muscles. These are the same systems affected by existing miticides, but RNAi would provide greater specificity.

A pest like no other

Varroa is the latest in a long line of invasive pests to reach Australia. But its impact is unusually far-reaching, touching agriculture, ecosystems and food supply.

The situation is already serious. Beekeepers are facing rising costs for miticides (which may or may not work) and hive losses, and treatment options are narrowing.

Yet there is also a window of opportunity, and Australia can still take proactive steps to manage Varroa effectively. Norroa and similar emerging RNAi treatments are not yet available for use in Australia. Investment in research, including next-generation tools like RNAi, will be critical. So too will be coordinated management strategies, monitoring, and support for beekeepers adapting to this new reality.

The alarm bells are ringing. But with the right mix of innovation and action, we still have a chance to protect Australia’s bees and safeguard this billion-dollar industry. bees need to grow, along with enough protein to support healthy colony development.

2026 Executive and Committee

President	Katie Livock	presidentscbees@gmail.com	0414 843 342
Vice President	Grant Eisenmenger	vicepresidentscbees@gmail.com	0401 720 004
Secretary / Course Co-ordinator	Lynne Hulm	secretaryscbees@gmail.com	0421 720 628
Treasurer	Paul Bonner	treasurerscbees@gmail.com	0403 432 952
Newsletter Editor / Biosecurity	Linda Blackwell	lindaeb6081@gmail.com	0409 848 466
Facebook/website			
Biosecurity / Committee	John Baker	mail@johngbaker.com.au	0418 791 149
Committee	Tom Cowburn	tjcowburn@bigpond.com	0418 143 206
Committee	David Lee	leesbees@lisco.com.au	0414 757 220
Committee	Evan Sanders	katiemary70@yahoo.com.au	0419 764 421
Committee	Tony Minto	tonyminto@hotmail.com	0419 661 843

Club Patron: Alby Taylor

Life members: Merv Wruck, Chris Johnson, Bill Spencer, Ken Evans

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