BEE NEWS

February 2025
Issue 155

Monthly newsletter of the Sunshine Coast BeeKeepers Inc.

www.sunshinecoastbeekeepers.com.au



President's Report

Last week I was talking with a beekeeper from our club who had decided to get out of beekeeping because they were worried about the challenge of varroa mite. This news made me feel really sad. I know that soon we will be faced with the challenge of dealing with this mite.

I want to remind everyone that 24 years ago we didn't have Small Hive Beetle either, and our beekeeping community in Australia worked together to develop a way to manage them. We shared experiences and we found success. I have even more faith in the beekeeping community with the varroa challenge. Will it be another step in our management? Yes. But will you be alone in working out how to do this? Absolutely not.

I love the idea of our Sunshine Coast beekeeping community finding a way to support one another and overcoming this worry. We are so fortunate to have John as our Biosecurity Champion who is so very informed and is updating us at every meeting. I have every faith in our team and I know that we will support one another, in the same way as everyone did in 2002 when Small Hive Beetle crossed the border into Queensland. We have got this everyone! Don't give up on our bees,

NEXT MEETING

Saturday, 22 February 2025 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.

Know someone interested in bees? Why not forward this newsletter to them!

our community needs passionate and informed beekeepers to sustain our environment and our bees.

In other awesome news, our Introduction to Beekeeping Courses have started up for the year and we welcomed another brilliant group of new beekeepers to our team. Please welcome our new members when you see them at our monthly meeting. On that, I challenge you to come to our monthly meetings and talk to someone new each month.

There is a clash in February when we have our monthly meeting – it is the same day as the VDO workshop at the Maroochy RSL. I promise I won't be offended if you choose to go to the RSL workshop, in fact, I would prefer it if you went to the workshop. It's free and important information is given out.

For everyone else, I will see you at our monthly meeting.

Have a bee-utiful week

Katie Livock

President

Date to Remember

22 February 2025 - Varroa Workshop at RSL Maroochydore

If you have not attended it is not too late to apply.

The workshop will provide you with a thorough understanding of the varroa mite and the treatment options.

VDO Officer's Role

Notes from Tonia Johnson

- A group of experienced beekeepers who offer free assistance and training to beekeepers, preparing them for and guiding them through managing Varroa in their hives
- Train beekeepers on the ground demonstrating how to monitor for presence of Varroa, report observations, create a customised pest management strategy (IPM),and support them in implementing that strategy.
- Funding is nationally by the federal government, honeybee industry and pollination industries
- The VDO officers are employed through DAF, however they are not government employees and work independently.

Workshops for New Beekeepers

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

- **8 March 2025 - filling**
- **12 April 2025 - filling**

Booking is essential.

Book online at: www.sunshinecoastbeekeepers.com.au/workshops.



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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

- In Queensland there are 10,000 registered beekeepers but only 150 reports are received monthly
- With these figures there can't be any guarantee that Varroa is not already on Queensland

Lessons from NSW

The shortest time lapse example – from 0 mites in a wash to colony collapse and death is around 66 days. This is why it is recommended to check your hives every month before it is too late.

NSW is in what is called the build-up phase. This means that all unmanaged colonies (feral and beekeepers who do not go into their brood box) are beginning to acquire and spread Varroa before eventually colony death occurs.

Remember In Australia we have an estimated 50 – 150 feral hives per sqkm.

Biosecurity Update

The varroa mite has not reached Queensland as yet but we all know it is only a matter of time.

The Boggabilla infestation just south of Goondiwindi seems to have come from hives from the Central NSW Coast.

At the recent meeting as Champion, they spoke about the plans that they will be putting in place for when the infestation arrives.

Once Varroa is detected in the South East corner of the state the spread will be rapid up the Queensland coast.

Current Strategy

Testing testing and testing and reporting each time. – every 6 – 8 weeks

- continuing to monitor for varroa, alcohol wash is the gold standard.
- Drone un-capping can be done whenever you see drone brood.
- Your results should be reported to the "Report" link below.

If and when you have a positive test:

- Biosecurity through one of our Varroa Development Officer's (VDO's) will be on hand to guide you through the stages of management.

Varroa Mite Training Workshops

- an excellent way to learn all you need to know at present. Current dates in Queensland in or close to the Sunshine Coast are:

Website Manager

Kathleen has resigned from this position so we are looking for someone to take on this role. If you have the skills and are interested please contact Katie our president.

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.

- **22 March 2025**
- **19 April 2025**

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

Borrowing the Clubs spinners to extract honey at home:

- New Honey Extractors have been ordered to replace our old extractors
- As a result of our extractors being returned at times either dirty or with missing parts we have had to formalise our loan system.
- The book for the loan of extractors has been updated and a hire sheet will enable the committee member on duty to ensure that the new system is followed.

- Maroochydore – Saturday 22 February
- Brisbane - Sunday 2 March
- Bundaberg – Saturday 8 March
- Gold Coast – Wednesday 18 June
- The workshop material will be available online in due course.

Chemicals

At the course you will gain some basic knowledge about the different classes of chemicals and some general principles. The situation regarding approved chemicals and how and when they are used is still evolving e.g. there will be more chemicals approved to treat with a honey super in place.

Be Aware of information on Social Media

Be aware of everything you read on social media. Biosecurity have warned in relation to treatment of varroa, there is a lot of information there that is **wrong or misleading and possibly dangerous** if followed. Bunnings is not the supplier of chemicals to treat Varroa.

Record Keeping

Record keeping will become more important.

- noting the general health of the brood and the queen,
- you will have to record results of your monitoring,
- hive movements and
- in due course a record of your varroa treatment.

This is a time for all beekeepers to work together.

- You will benefit from the support that brings – you are not alone.
- In addition, it will be important for beekeepers who live near to one another to coordinate treatment when the time comes. This will reduce the risk of reinfesting of each other's hives.

John Baker.

- The Spinner must be returned to the club by 9:00am the following Saturday cleaned and ready for the next member to borrow.
- If for some unforeseen reason the spinner cannot be returned to the club by 9:00am the following Saturday please contact the Secretary to inform her that they are unable to return the spinner at the agreed time.

Winter / Spring Swarm Season

We are still looking for members interested in learning and being trained as a swarm catcher and volunteer please contact the Secretary.

Southern: Ian Meyers, 0412 694 058.

North Coast, Sippy Downs: Grant Eisenmenger, 0401 720 004.

Buderim: Tom Cowburn, 0418 143 206.

North and central areas: Alby Taylor, 0418 882 282.

Maleny and surrounds: John Baker, 0418 791 149.

Sale, Purchase, Swap

A separate sheet is attached to the newsletter each month headed " Sale Purchase Swap". This will be for the information of members only and will not be downloaded onto the website with the newsletter.

If you would like to list anything could you please send an email with photograph if required to the Newsletter Editor at the following email address: lindaeb6081@gmail.com by the Friday the week prior to the meeting each month. This will coincide with our committee meeting when any additional inserts to the Newsletter are discussed. This provides me with a deadline.

Saturday Rosters 2025

We would like to thank all the members who volunteered to work at the Club over the preceding months.

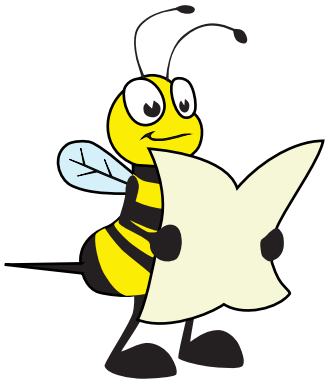
FEBRUARY

22/02/25	Open	Elise Winton Ashley Frost	

MARCH

01/03/25	Open	Lachlan and Guy Fielding	Paul Bonner
08/03/25	Course	Alby / Tom / Graham / Evan Catering - Mary Spencer	Katie Livock
15/03/25	Open	Ces and Mark Siegel-Sebolt	David Lee
22/03/25	Harvest	Shane and Marcia Simpson	John Baker
29/03/25	General Meeting	Kylie Aalbers Joanne Brayshaw	

If the rostered dates don't suit OR you are unable to attend please email Lynne Hulm – secretaryscbees@gmail.com



BEES IN THE NEWS

Major cause of honeybee mortality can be easily reduced: Sanjana Gajbhiye Earth.com Feb 2025

Honey bees play a vital role in pollination, supporting food production and maintaining biodiversity. However, their populations have been declining due to multiple threats, including habitat loss, pesticides, and climate change. Among these dangers, one menace stands out – Varroa destructor mites.

These parasites latch onto honey bee larvae, weakening entire colonies and leading to their collapse.

Researchers at the University of Exeter found that many beekeepers are not following recommended treatment schedules. As a result, their hives suffer higher losses than necessary

The study analyzed data from 4,339 beekeepers across 37 counties in England and Wales. Using information from the National Bee Unit's BeeBase, the researchers examined 18,700 colonies between 2016 and 2020.

By tracking Varroa mite treatments, they found that the type of treatment used was important, but its timing played an even greater role in determining colony survival. Delayed or premature applications led to a higher rate of hive losses, regardless of the treatment method.

How honey bees fight back against deadly varroa mites — with a little help: Belinda Smith ABC Science Feb 2025

Australia was stripped of its title as the last inhabited continent free of varroa in June 2022, when mites were detected in a hive at the Port of Newcastle.

Varroa mites reproduce and feed upon developing baby bees, and can also spread potentially lethal honey bee pathogens such as deformed wing virus.

Varroa treatments

There are broadly two ways of ridding a honey bee hive of varroa mites: chemical and mechanical treatments.

Chemical techniques involve applying chemicals, such as synthetic miticides, to kill mites on adult bees.

Use chemicals too much, though, and varroa mites can quickly develop resistance to them.

What we advocate is for an

integrated pest management approach.

Mechanical treatments include using “drone combs” — commercially available wax combs with large holes that encourage the queen bee to lay eggs that will produce male bees or drones.

Another mechanical treatment is called a “brood break”, which involves temporarily removing the queen bee from her colony.

Without the egg-laying queen, no new baby bees (or baby mites) are born. This means any mites in the hive end up on adult bees, which can be treated with pesticide.

How can bees fight varroa mite?

While there is no such thing as a fully varroa-resistant honey bee, there are some populations around the world that have naturally developed defences against the parasite.

These more resistant honey bees have a few traits that keep mite levels down:

- baby bees change the chemicals they emit at various stages of development, which affects varroa mite reproduction
- worker bees, tending to the bee nursery, are better at sniffing out and disposing of mite-infested babies
- adults are more adept at grooming and removing mites from their body.

How can breeders help bee defences?

So bee breeders are trying to create colonies with some of these defences against varroa while retaining their positive qualities.

They select drones from colonies that seem to do better against varroa mite and take their sperm using a tiny syringe.

Bee breeders then use the collected semen to artificially inseminate a “virgin” or unmated queen — a delicate operation conducted under a microscope.

Breeding varroa resistance into honey bees is a slow process, and varroa continues to spread, but Australia is lucky in a way

“Thinking about it relatively, we’ve got quite a number of different treatment options — both chemical and non-chemical — that we can use … No other country has had as many options when they first got varroa.”

2025 Executive and Committee

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

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