



Next meeting | Wednesday 5 March 2025

Where | Johnsonville Community Centre

Editor | Jane Harding janeh@xtra.co.nz

Beginners session: Autumn varroa treatments and stores for winter

Main meeting; 7.30pm in big downstairs room at JCC

Preparation for the Honey Competition, rules and samples



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From the President

March has snuck up on me incredibly quickly and I'm not sure I have much to report except that as feared I have a lot of honey but much of it is not capped and I don't think we have a second nectar flow in my area. I have sorted the boxes and put the most likely to get capped nearest the brood (QE is still on the hive) and put the least likely above a divider board at the top of the hive. I'm hoping the girls will sort it from there. I have managed to extract a couple of boxes but the storage of the built out frames is an ongoing problem. My son thinks I am intent on cultivating a mega nest of ants in the garage.

March is officially the first month of autumn but it certainly doesn't feel like it. It feels like the height of summer at my place, minus the honey flow. We should be starting to think about completing the honey harvest, varroa control and getting our hives ready for winter. I prefer to slowly decrease the number of boxes on my hives – seems a bit cruel to me to take 3 or 4 boxes off a hive then expect the girls to cram themselves in like sardines or hang about outside, especially in this heat. However, that's just my opinion.

I note that several members have made submissions to the Porirua City Council on the Keeping of Animals Bylaw. Jim Hepburn and Patricia Laing will be speaking in person as individuals at the hearing and John Burnet is speaking as the Wellington Beekeepers representative.

I have had a couple of requests from Michaela on behalf of the OATS Team who are a registered charity in Lower Hutt. They are searching for a new registered beekeeper to manage their 24 hives in 14 locations around Lower Hutt. This is a paid position. Further details in the newsletter.

Michaela is also looking for donations of beeswax to make candles, balms, wraps and furniture polish. Michaela can pick up the beeswax or you can drop it off at The Remakery, 310 Waiwhetu Road, Lower Hutt. See below for more information about the Common Unity team.



Beeswax wanted

Common Unity in LowerHutt is looking for beeswax for their products. If you are able to donate any beeswax to them, they would be very grateful.

Michaela writes:

Common Unity is a charity based in Lower Hutt with a mission to create resilient, connected communities by fostering sustainable practices, education, and social enterprise.

Last year, we started making and selling products like candles, balms, and wraps using beeswax from our hives, to support our fundraising goals. Our candles and especially our furniture polish were a big hit, selling out quickly and we're eager to make more!

To continue this work and become more self-sufficient, we're looking for donations of beeswax. If you have any spare wax (even just a few kilograms), we would be so grateful for your support.

We can pick up the wax from you or you can drop it off at The Remakery, 310 Waiwhetu Road. Every little bit helps us continue our community initiatives! Thank you for considering our request. Your generosity means so much to us, and together we can make a positive impact! If you have any questions please contact admin@cupa.org.nz 🌿 🐝

#CommonUnity #BeeswaxDonations #SupportLocal





Beekeeper Wanted

Common Unity are also looking for a registered beekeeper to manage their 24 hives in and around Lower Hutt. The hives are in 14 locations around Lower Hutt. This is a paid position. If you are interested please contact admin@cupa.org.nz.

They would love to hear from you.

Whats Happening Science-wise

The best way to count the Varroa on your bees By Phil Lester

Varroa is the #1 problem pest for most beekeepers. An important part of managing this parasite is monitoring their numbers in your hive. So how should you most accurately monitor your mites? This was a question examined by Michelle Taylor and a group from an apiary in Hamilton, in a study published this year (Taylor et al., 2025)

They tested eight different methods to extract Varroa from adult bees: (1) icing sugar shake; (2) low-suds detergent wash; (3) ethanol wash; (4) Apistan® strips in a jar; (5) ether roll; (6) grapefruit leaf smoke; (7) fluvalinate smoke; and (8) tobacco leaf smoke.

Icing Sugar Shakes.

They found that about 10 g of icing sugar worked best. Exposing the bees more than 10 minutes resulted in the icing sugar becoming sticky, making mites harder to find. Using just one icing sugar shake recovered about 80% of the mites. Doing another shake on the same bees increased the recovery rate to about 95%.

Low-Suds Detergent Washes.



Their low-suds detergent wash used 1 Tbsp of Persil® per litre of water. They tested shakes ranging from 15 to 240 seconds. A single 240-second shake removed just over 90% of the mites. Again, applying the treatment a second or third time could increase the efficacy of low-suds detergent washes to nearly 100%.

Ethanol Washes.

A single four-minute ethanol wash recovered more than 95% of the Varroa from the bees. A shorter, two-minute wash reduced the recovery rate to around 80%. As with the previous methods, repeating the ethanol wash would recover more mites.

Apistan® Strips in a Jar.

Apistan® strips in a jar proved to be quite effective. The method involved placing a half-cup of bees into a jar, with: "a piece of white card (75 × 125 mm) with a full-length Apistan® strip stapled to the top corner was inserted so that the card curled around 75% of the jar, and the Apistan® strip curled around the jar fully, with part of the strip resting on the base."

Leaving the bees in the jar for about 40 minutes resulted in a near 100% recovery of mites.

Ineffective Methods.

The other methods were found to be hugely variable and largely ineffective.

Their research suggests you should not be using them to monitor your mites. The methods you should probably discard (with the range or average mite recovery rates in brackets) were the: ether roll (42%); grapefruit leaf smoke (0-54%); fluvalinate smoke (0-89%); and tobacco leaf smoke (0-54%).

For nearly all the effective methods, repeating the wash or shake improved the mite recovery rate.

Another interesting finding was that a half-cup of bees equated to 291–440 bees—not the 300 that most of us assume.



Their conclusion noted that the sugar shake method has been recommended previously by other researchers, but low-suds detergent, ethanol, and exposure to Apistan® may be equally useful.

I anticipate that some beekeepers will argue that a particular brand of detergent works better, or that a specific mite-shaking container is optimal. They might be right! But in practical terms, I'd be happy monitoring mites in my home hive with >80% accuracy. I use sugar shakes at home to avoid killing my bees, but based on this research, I'll be adjusting the amount of sugar I use and the duration I leave the bees exposed.

Reference

Taylor, M. A., Goodwin, R. M., McBrydie, H. M., Cox, H. M., & Dominiak, B. C. (2025). Relative effectiveness of methods that sample worker honey bees to estimate Varroa destructor populations in Apis mellifera colonies.

Apidologie 56(1), 14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13592-024-01143-y>



How many bees? - somewhere between 291 and 440



Nucs for Sale

1 Nuc for Sale

1 x five frame nuc in coreflute nuc box

Newly mated laying queen

No history of AFB

Reg no. S0288

Cost \$200

Able to deliver central and nearby suburbs

Rural delivery additional \$30

Name: Islam Boukendakdji

Phone: 027-807-9018

Email : islambou23@gmail.com

2 Nucs for Sale

Richard Hall has 2 nucs for sale:

5 frame (full depth) with good store of honey and new queens. I'll be able to deliver to the buyer and they'll be in new corflute boxes (Ceracell).

\$250 each, delivered if in Hutt Valley. Wellington, or Porirua I'd add an extra \$25 to cover my costs.

Contact Richard at oldyello@gmail.com





Wingate Apiary Update

Last year we spent some time with Lucy from Wainuiomata College who wanted to learn beekeeping as part of her Gateway to Employment programme. Lucy has always been interested in bees and unlike many her age, has no fear of them. She was a pleasure to have along as she was keen to learn everything she could about bees. Special thanks to Reb and Angie, her beek buddies.



Lucy and Reb at Wingate

Incidentally, Lucy has continued to come along to our Wingate meetups and has expressed an interest in joining the club.

Also interested in seeing bees close up were some of Priscilla's visiting relatives from Singapore. They enjoyed seeing something which they weren't able to see in their own high-density country. Other visitors we had were some students from Victoria University who wanted some varroa for their studies. Unfortunately we were able to supply these!



Before Christmas we had a hive wear tidy up session followed by a barbecue after the work was done. Thanks to PK for sourcing a barbecue for us:



Nothing like a sausage when the hard work is over...





Last week we took off some honey and had it processed at Chris Howard's extraction plant in Naenae. It was really enjoyable to be able to just stand and watch as the machinery did all the work! Many thanks to Chris for doing this for us.



Honey extraction at Chris Howards

Sadly, Terry and Lorraine Driscoll have decided to flag their beekeeping journey. They kindly donated their bee suits to the club where they will be put to good use. They still have some bits and pieces left to sell. Contact Lorraine on 021 688 504 if interested.



Te Aro School Hives

Many of you will be aware of the hives at Te Aro School in the Aro Valley. WBA members have for many years supported the school teachers to manage the hives and introduce quite a few cohorts of students to the gentle art of beekeeping. The Post has done a lovely article about the recent honey extraction at the school, which you can read here:

<https://www.thepost.co.nz/nz-news/360576898/central-wellington-schools-students-get-hands-sticky-annual-honey-harvest>

Claire Hart is the beekeeper looking after the hives at present. Claire credits the success of the programme to the dedication and longevity of Martin Toland who Claire took over from last year.

Who can I speak to?

President – Janine Davie president@beehive.org.nz

Treasurer – John Burnet 027-4379-062 treasurer@beehive.org.nz

Secretary – Jane Harding 027 421 2417 secretary@beehive.org.nz

Membership - James Scott - (04) 565 0164

Web Master - Jason Bragg - (021 527 244) Librarian - Ellen Millar - (021 709 793)

Supper co-ordinator - Barbara Parkinson – (04) 2379624

Swarm WhatsApp Administrator - Jim Hepburn (021 926823)

PK Tan - 021 109 3388

Graeme Chisnall - 021-246-8662

Frank Lindsay - 027-403-4559

Millie Baker

Newsletter Editor - Jane Harding - 027 421 2417