



**Next meeting** | Wednesday 1st October 2025

**Where** | Johnsonville Community Centre

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**Beginners Session: 6.45pm Upstairs. Swarms – Awareness, Avoiding and Collecting**

**Main Meeting: 7.30pm**

**Varroa Update – Antoine Felden and Joanna Merk from Victoria University will talk about their latest varroa research.**

**Cut comb, James Withington will demonstrate how to get your bees to make comb honey for consumption - and there will be samples!**

**Local group get-together. Find out who your local fellow beekeepers are and how you can help each other.**

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## From the President

Apologies for missing the last two meetings and being too slack to send in a report. I did expect to be away for August but September was an unexpected blip. I have to report though that Northern Queensland had perfect weather while I was there, a balmy 26 degree average during the day then cooling down to about 13 degrees overnight – just great.

My two hives seem to be doing extremely well, full of bees and very little varroa. Because I was away over Christmas last year I stacked my hives with lots of boxes hoping for a bumper honey harvest. As you know it wasn't a great season and it appears the rain and wind came at just the wrong time and we didn't get the Pohutukawa which is my main source of nectar. I ended up having lots of uncapped honey so went into winter this year with more boxes than ideal. I know I didn't have to put them all on the hives but I'm still getting grief about feeding the "Mega Ant Hive" in the garage. The bees have come through winter really well but the queens seemed to feel obliged to fill up all those boxes with brood. I feel that swarm management is going to be an issue again this year.

I have invested in an Instantvap 18V lite which is battery powered oxalic acid vaporizer. I have yet to use it but will report back after I have done so. It was a bit of an investment for me because I had to buy a battery and charger and also purchased a full face mask because I don't want to destroy my sense of taste/smell or burn my trachea or some such disaster.

A search of the internet gives this summary, none of which I want to experience anytime soon. "Oxalic acid vapor is dangerous when inhaled. It causes serious burns to the respiratory tract, throat, and nose. If oxalic acid vapor or dust is inhaled it can cause **nervousness, mucous membrane ulcers, vomiting, headache, nosebleed, back pain (as a result of kidney damage), weakness, and emaciation.**"



Speaking of which, do we have any club members or family of club members who are either physiotherapists, fitness trainers or first aid instructors? I think it would be beneficial to cover Health and Safety in the Apiary at one of our meetings, ideally covering Identification, Prevention or Minimisation of Hazards and also basic First Aid.

I assisted Martin Toland at the Pollination in Motion display at the Botanic Gardens on Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> of September. It was a beautiful day and the display was very well attended. Children and adults alike had a great time playing “Spot the Queen” in the Observation Hive which had been set up by Martin and John Burnet.

I’m looking forward to seeing everyone at the October meeting as we all prepare for this very busy time of year in the beekeeping calendar.

Janine



*Pollination in Motion Day*



## Member Survey Follow-up

The committee met recently to talk about the member survey results and how we can incorporate some of your ideas.

- Educational talks was the most valued club activity, so we'll continue to bring speakers and topics to our meetings. We're always on the lookout for new speakers and ideas. Let one of the committee know if you have an idea for a talk or know a person who might come and talk to us.
- A majority of members come at least occasionally to club nights, which is great. Some members mentioned that they didn't know anyone and found it hard to break into the network. So, this meeting, we'll encourage member who've been around for a while to wear a name tag and be available to talk to newbies. And, we'll organise the seating to encourage local area groups so you can get to know people who keep bees around you.
- Having a buddy system and mentoring of new beekeepers by experienced beekeepers was something quite a few mentioned, so we hope getting to know your other local beekeepers will encourage that.
- We're also exploring ways to zoom the club meetings so those who can't attend can still see a speaker's presentation. And where we have a presentation, to get that onto the website for future reference.





## Club Reminders

- New beekeepers upstairs at the Johnsonville Community Centre. Starts at 6.45 and runs until 7.30. Not just for new beekeepers, anyone can come along and learn, but primarily aimed at newbies.
- Our main meeting starts at 7.30 and we try and get our speaker underway at 7.45. That gives you a bit of time to get a cuppa between the new beekeepers session ending and the topic of the night starting. By all means come along early to the main meeting if you can, browse the library table, find someone interesting to talk to and sample some of Barbara's home baking! Anytime from 7pm.
- Club Apiary Open Days. Wingate's next open day is 1 November at 10am. Get in touch with Richard [Richardmbraczek@gmail.com](mailto:Richardmbraczek@gmail.com) if you are interested. The next Chartwell open day is this coming Saturday 4 October at 10 am (weather permitting)



*Club members at a Wingate Apiary working bee*



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## Legal Requirements for Beekeepers

We've had several requests for a copy of Trish's presentation at last month's new beekeeper session. Trish spoke about local and national legal requirements for keeping bees and some best practice behaviours to keep you onside with the local bylaws.

Trish has kindly shared her presentation and it has been uploaded to the website. You can access it here:

<https://wellingtonbeekeepers.rocketspark.co.nz/blog/post/153224/honey-bee-regulations-tricia-laing/>



*You can't keep you bees in a skep like this anymore...*





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## Reminder: Photo Competition in November

Here is the link to the site for uploading your photos for the competition:

<https://www.beehive.org.nz/photo-competition-upload/>

You can enter as many photos as you like, but you will need to do a new submission for each entry. Remember to choose the category for your picture. The photo categories are as follows:

- Bees: Photographs that reveal insights into the life cycle, habits and biology of the bee
- People and Environment: Portrayal of the people, activities, locations and environments that comprise the world of beekeeping
- Creative / Open: Innovative and imaginative interpretations of the world of the bee and the experience of beekeeping.
- Photo story: A series of four photographs that tell a story on any theme to do with bees and beekeeping

Please upload your photos by mid October at the latest so Simon Woolf has time to review and judge them before the November meeting.

And, if you want your photos to be in the “people’s choice” competition, please bring along a print so we can display them on the night.



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## Spring Checks Now!

Courtesy of Waikato Beekeepers Association, here is a handy checklist of things to do in the ocoming month:

### Swarm Prevention: Managing the Spring Surge

As colonies build rapidly, they can quickly outgrow their space, triggering the natural instinct to swarm. Swarming results in a significant loss of bees, a temporary cessation of honey production, and a considerable setback for your hive. Proactive swarm prevention is key in October.

- **Frequent Inspections are Paramount:** Your inspection frequency should be ramped up to every 7-10 days. This allows you to identify and address overcrowding or swarm preparations before they become irreversible.
- **Providing Ample Space (The Golden Rule):** The most effective way to prevent swarming is to give your bees room to grow.
  - **Adding Brood Boxes:** If your bees have drawn out and filled 7-8 frames in the current brood box with bees and brood, it's time to add another full-sized brood box. This gives the queen more space to lay and the expanding population room to move and store resources.
  - **Adding Honey Supers Early:** For very strong colonies, once the brood boxes are substantially occupied, you can consider adding the first honey super even if the main flow hasn't peaked. This provides "headroom" for incoming nectar and alleviates congestion in the brood nest. Ensure you use a queen excluder if you don't want the queen laying in your honey supers.





- **Look for Swarm Cells:** During every inspection, meticulously check the bottom edges and sides of your frames, particularly the lower brood box, for swarm cells. These are peanut-shaped queen cells typically found along the bottom bars or sides of frames.
  - **If you find them:** The colony is preparing to swarm. You have several options:
    - **Making Splits/NUCs:** This is an excellent way to manage swarming and increase your apiary size. Take 2-3 frames of brood, bees, and food from the swarming colony, place them in a separate NUC box, and introduce a new queen or queen cell. This artificially swarms the hive.
    - **Destroying Queen Cells:** If you can't make a split, carefully destroy all visible queen cells. This is a temporary measure, as the colony may build more. You must still address the underlying cause of overcrowding.
    - **Requeening:** If swarm cells are persistent, it might indicate an old or failing queen. Requeening with a young, vigorous queen can often reset the colony's swarming impulse.
- **Reversing Brood Boxes:** For hives with multiple brood boxes, reversing them (placing the bottom box on top of the upper box) can sometimes alleviate congestion in the lower box, giving the queen more laying space.

## Varroa Management: Confirmation and Removal

If you applied Varroa treatments in August or early September, October is the time to confirm their success and remove any remaining treatment products.



- **Remove Treatments as per Instructions:** This is crucial. **Do not leave Varroa treatment strips or applications in the hive longer than recommended by the manufacturer.** Overexposure can lead to mite resistance, and potentially contaminate honey if supers are added. Follow specific instructions for disposal.
- **Post-Treatment Mite Monitoring:** Even if you think your treatment was successful, it's good practice to conduct a post-treatment mite check. This could be a sugar roll or alcohol wash (if you're comfortable sacrificing a few bees) or placing a sticky board under the mesh bottom board to monitor natural mite fall over a few days. This confirms the treatment's efficacy and gives you a baseline for future management.
- **Rotation Reminder:** As a proactive measure against resistance, mentally (or physically!) note down the treatment you used this spring. Remember to rotate to a different chemical class or organic acid for your next major treatment (likely in autumn).

## Preparing for the Honey Flow: Readiness is Key

The main honey flow in the Waikato can start anytime from late October to early November, depending on the specific forage and weather patterns. Being prepared is vital to capture that golden harvest.

- **Honey Supers on Standby:** Ensure all your honey supers are clean, frames are assembled, and they are easily accessible. Having a stack of ready-to-go supers (especially those with drawn comb) is a huge advantage. You don't want to be scrambling to assemble frames when your bees need space immediately.
- **Queen Excluders:** If you use them, make sure your queen excluders are clean and ready. They should be placed between the top brood box and the first honey super once you add it.



- **Extractor & Tools:** Give your honey extractor a final check. Is it clean? Are all parts working? Have you got enough clean jars and lids? Ensure your uncapping tools are sharp and ready.

## Food Stores: Vigilance During Unpredictable Spring Weather

While spring promises abundance, October in the Waikato can still deliver periods of cool, wet, or windy weather that significantly impede foraging. A rapidly expanding colony consumes a vast amount of food, making them vulnerable to starvation if foraging is interrupted.

- **The "Lift Test" Continues:** The occasional "lift test" (gently lifting the back of the hive) remains your quick, non-intrusive way to gauge honey stores. A heavy hive is good; a light hive needs attention.
- **Vulnerable Periods:** Be especially vigilant after several consecutive days of bad weather. The colony's internal consumption remains high, but no fresh nectar is coming in.
- **Feeding with 1:1 Syrup (Internal Feeders Only):** If the lift test indicates light stores, feed immediately. Use a **1:1 sugar to water syrup** (equal parts sugar and water by weight).
  - **Internal Feeders:** Crucially, continue to use **internal feeders** (top feeders or frame feeders). External feeders in October are a magnet for robbing, which can weaken your hives and cause significant stress.
  - **Consistency:** Provide small, consistent feeds to simulate a nectar flow and prevent starvation.



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## Colony Loss Survey

By now you will have received at least one reminder from Pike about the 2025 Colony Loss Survey. Those at the last meeting will know how much useful and important information comes from this annual survey, giving Landcare Research a lot of really good trend data on beekeeping in New Zealand. The survey is part of an international research project so our data informs a much bigger picture on bee health around the world. If you haven't completed the survey yet, do it soon!

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## Honey Adulteration

As you are probably aware, adulteration of honey is a problem all around the world. A recent European Commission report identified that potentially 46% of honey imported into Europe in 2020/2021 had been modified with sugar syrups.

James Scott has sent through a link to this interesting article about how to investigate and measure honey adulteration. Quite technical, but worth a browse!

<https://www.sagitto.com/post/from-bee-or-not-from-bee>



*Potential Honey Adulteration Products*



## Cut Comb

James Withington is going to bring in some comb honey for us to try and talk to us about getting your bees to make honey you can use as cut comb.

If you're curious about what's involved, here's a short piece from Better Bee on what is involved:

<https://www.betterbee.com/instructions-and-resources/Betterbee-Product-Corner-Making-Comb-Honey.asp>



*Figure 1 Preparing cut comb - photo credit BetterBee*



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## Cacao Sacks for your Smoker

James also has a bunch of cacao sacks from Whittakers for use in your smoker. Great slow burning fuel for your smoker and you can tempt your bees with the smell of chocolate. Gold coin for each sack, proceeds going to the Southern North Island Bee Group research fund.

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## What's Coming Up?

November – Photo competition with Simon Woolf to judge

December – Christmas social, Christmas quiz and the mead competition. Richard Braczek will be judging the mead this year.

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## Who can I speak to?

President – Janine Davie [president@beehive.org.nz](mailto:president@beehive.org.nz)

Treasurer – Eva Durrant [treasurer@beehive.org.nz](mailto:treasurer@beehive.org.nz)

Secretary – Jane Harding 027 421 2417 [secretary@beehive.org.nz](mailto:secretary@beehive.org.nz)

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

Swarm WhatsApp Administrator - Jim Hepburn (021 926823)

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