



October 2026 Newsletter

Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday 7 October 2026

Where: [Johnsonville Community Centre](#)

(Entrance next to the Johnsonville Library)

Beginners Class | 6:45 PM – 7:30 PM | Upstairs in the Trust Room

Gear up for spring with **Mark Wendelken**. This month, Mark will continue with the content of preparing your hives for Spring.

Our monthly Beginners Class features an experienced club member breaking down a core topic: from basic equipment and swarm control to pests, diseases, and legal requirements. Free for all members, and everyone is welcome. Bring your questions!

Main Meeting | 7:30 PM | Main Hall (adjacent to the Trust Room)

Following the beginners session, join us for our main club meeting featuring two of New Zealand's foremost experts on bee health and biosecurity: **Frank Lindsay** will talk about **American Foulbrood (AFB) Inspections & Recognition** and **Prof. Phil Lester** will present on **The Vital Importance of Varroa Control**.

In this month's update:

- Two new Biosecurity Projects 🐝
- Bees in the City – Public Arts Trail 🌸
- Baking with honey tips 🍪
- SNIB Field Day report 📄
- Beekeeping Clubs of New Zealand (BCNZ) ♣️
- Lots of items for sale 🔥



From the President

I have to report the Cooking School at Sugar Flour organised by Michelle Cole was very enjoyable. There was a good attendance by club members and we all came away with some very yummy cakes and cookies. Kevin's cookies were of the exploding variety through no fault of his own (something to do with gluten free flour, baking soda, chemical reactions??) so I'm not sure if he got quite as many as others. Lots of photographs were taken so you can check it out later in the newsletter.

I attended the SNI (Southern North Island) Beekeepers Field day a couple of weeks ago which was held at the Crofton Downs School. This was a great opportunity for local members to hear some excellent speakers and I strongly urge you to attend these field days. As the name suggests they are always somewhat local (eg. Feilding, Whanganui) and there are usually WBA members attending so car pooling is an option. Considering this one was in Wellington the turnout from members wasn't great so we are extremely lucky to be able to prevail upon two of the speakers to repeat their presentations to the club at the next meeting.

My bees are looking good, especially on the odd calm sunny day we've had lately when the girls have been very busy gathering pollen and nectar. I've got plenty of boxes and frames, even some drawn out frames so bring on summer – for once I'm ready for it.

I have been asked for someone to give a presentation at Palmers Garden Centre in Miramar as part of a day encouraging people to get out into their gardens, connect with nature and foster biodiversity. I'm not sure of the exact date but a weekend in October.

I have also been asked for someone to give a presentation to the Upper Hutt Gardening Club at 1.30pm on Monday 9 November. They are asking for information about the purpose of bees in the garden, the benefits to the environment and what is happening with the world economy in respect to bees and honey. If you are keen let me know.

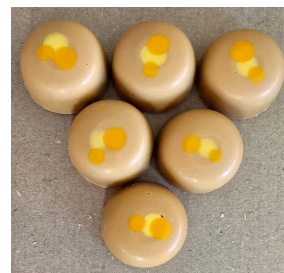
Janine



Baking with Honey Tips

A huge thank you to [Bee Fresh Farms](#) for generously donating the honey used to make the delicious bonbons crafted by Maxine for our September meeting.

It was wonderful to see such a fantastic turnout at both club night and the recent **Sugar Flour cooking class** - a warm welcome to all the members, family, and friends who joined in the fun (as you can tell from the photos we had a blast!).



During her talk, Maxine shared essential tips for successfully baking with honey:

- **Watch the sugar ratio:** Never substitute more than 50% of the sugar in a recipe with honey. Granulated sugar provides essential structural integrity to baked goods that liquid honey cannot replicate on its own. See more scientific details below.
- **Mind the acidity:** Honey's natural acidity directly affects how baking powder and baking soda react. We saw this firsthand during the cooking class when a few bakes erupted into mini volcanoes! Keep in mind that honeys behave differently depending on their source; a recipe tested with standard, mass-produced honey like Arataki may react quite differently than one made with a more acidic, raw artisanal honey like [Bee Local](#). Again, more details below.
- **Passionfruit** is one of the best fruit pairings with honey. We used it to glaze our mini honey spice cakes.
- **Reduce Oven Temperature by 15°C:** Fructose and glucose caramelize at much lower temperatures than sucrose (fructose begins caramelising around 105°C, compared to sucrose at 160°C). Honey baked goods will darken and scorch long before the interior is baked through if you do not dial back the heat.
- **Cut Liquid by 20% to 25%:** Because honey introduces extra water, reduce the other primary liquids in your recipe (milk, water, buttermilk, or fruit juice) by 3 to 4 tablespoons per cup of honey used.
- **Coat Your Measuring Tools:** Honey sticks aggressively to measuring cups and spoons. Lightly spray your tools with neutral cooking oil or warm them with hot water before measuring; the honey will slide out cleanly in one continuous ribbon without throwing off your ratios.
- **Bees wax** can be used for baking **canelé** (or *cannelé bordelais*), a French pastry. It is used to line the fluted copper moulds. You can find these pastries in Wellington at Gramercy bakery in Berhampore Village.

More details on The maximum 50% Substitution Rule

- **The Structural Problem:** Granulated table sugar (sucrose) is a solid crystal that performs mechanical work before baking begins. During the creaming stage, sugar crystals cut tiny air pockets into solid fat, which form the expansion network for steam and gas. Liquid honey cannot aerate butter this way, leading to a dense, gummy crumb if substituted entirely.
- **Moisture Imbalance:** Honey is approximately 17% to 20% water and consists primarily of fructose and glucose. Both are powerful hygroscopic humectants they actively attract and hold onto water molecules. If you swap 100% of the sugar for honey, starches struggle to gelatinise properly, proteins take longer to set, and your bake stays unpleasantly wet or collapses in the center.
- **The Golden Ratio:** Capping your honey substitution at 25% to 50% lets you retain the structure, aeration, and crispness from granulated sucrose while gaining the rich floral flavor and tenderising qualities of honey.

More details on Acidity, Leavening, and Avoiding the "Mini Volcano"

- **The Chemical Reaction:** Honey is naturally acidic, with an average pH between 3.5 and 4.5 (roughly equivalent to orange juice or buttermilk). When an acidic ingredient contacts baking soda, an immediate acid-base reaction occurs, generating carbon dioxide gas on contact.
- **Why the Volcano Happened:** Recipes formulated with neutral granulated sugar and baking powder rely on the powder's internal, heat-activated acids to rise gradually in the oven. When honey is poured into that mix, its raw acid reacts instantly with any baking soda present, exhausting gas bubbles too early and puffing batter over the rim of the pans.
- **The Standard Adjustment:** For every 1 cup (approx. 340 g) of honey you use, stir 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda into the dry ingredients to neutralise the excess acid. If the original recipe relied solely on baking powder, substitute a fraction of that powder with baking soda rather than adding extra leavener on top.

Choose Floral Profiles Deliberately:

Light New Zealand Honeys

- **Clover (White Clover):** Very pale, classic, and delicately sweet with subtle vanilla notes. The ultimate all-rounder for light sponge cakes, shortbread, and scones.
- **Pōhutukawa:** Very pale to off-white, exceptionally soft and floral with a clean, almost salty-sweet finish. Best suited for delicate glazes, pavlova drizzles, or whipped honey creams where high oven heat won't mute its subtlety.
- **Tawari:** Pale amber with butterscotch, floral, and subtle citrus notes. Complements fruit tarts, madeleines, and light tea loaves.
- **Viper's Bugloss (Boraginaceae):** Light, delicate, and clear with a crisp floral sweetness. Ideal for recipes that need pure sweetness without heavy caramel undertones.

Medium to Amber New Zealand Honeys

Balanced, aromatic profiles with enough depth to stand up alongside citrus, nuts, and stone fruit.

- **Kāmahi:** Golden amber with smooth, nutty, and slightly herbaceous characteristics. Pairs exceptionally well with almond flour cakes, brioche, and pear or apple tarts.
- **Rātā:** Smooth, buttery, and mid-golden with mild herbal notes. Adds rich moisture to friands and butter cakes.
- **Rewarewa:** Deep red-amber with malt and clean caramel tones. Sturdy enough to stand up to whole grains, sourdough crumbles, and banana breads without dominating the bake.

Dark New Zealand Honeys

Intense, full-bodied, and robust. These behave more like molasses or treacle in baked goods.

- **Mānuka:** Deep amber to dark cream with an earthy, medicinal, herbaceous, and slightly bitter bite. Best reserved for hearty bakes like ginger loaves, spiced biscuits, and dark glazes (baking will also degrade its heat-sensitive non-peroxide antibacterial properties).
- **Beechwood Honeydew:** Very dark amber, rich in minerals, with malt, forest, and molasses flavors. Does not granulate easily, making it great for sticky toffee glazes, fruitcakes, dark rye breads, and gingerbread.
- **Kānuka:** Aromatic, pungent, and resinous with herbal notes darker than standard flower honeys. Excellent paired with toasted walnuts, dark chocolate, and spiced fruit puddings.



Deep concentration...



James was in fine form (Yours, Mine)



The final product - yummo.



Gluten Free cooking can be explosive!



Photos supplied by Jane Harding, Janine Davie and Michelle Cole.



Bees in the City – Public Arts Trail

A giant public art trail, buzzing with creativity and community.

Have you spotted many of the bee sculptures around Wellington? Send me your photos!

You only have until 8 November to view the vibrant outdoor art gallery.

- 30+ giant bee sculptures – each brought to life by Kiwi artists
- 20+ community bees – decorated by schools and local groups
- A colourful city-wide trail – free, fun, and family-friendly

At the end of the trail on 26th November, each giant sculpture will be auctioned to raise vital funds for **Life Flight Trust** – the charity that operates Wellington's Westpac Chopper and Air Ambulance Planes, providing time-critical care to more than 1,700 New Zealanders every year.

<https://beeinthecity.org.nz/>

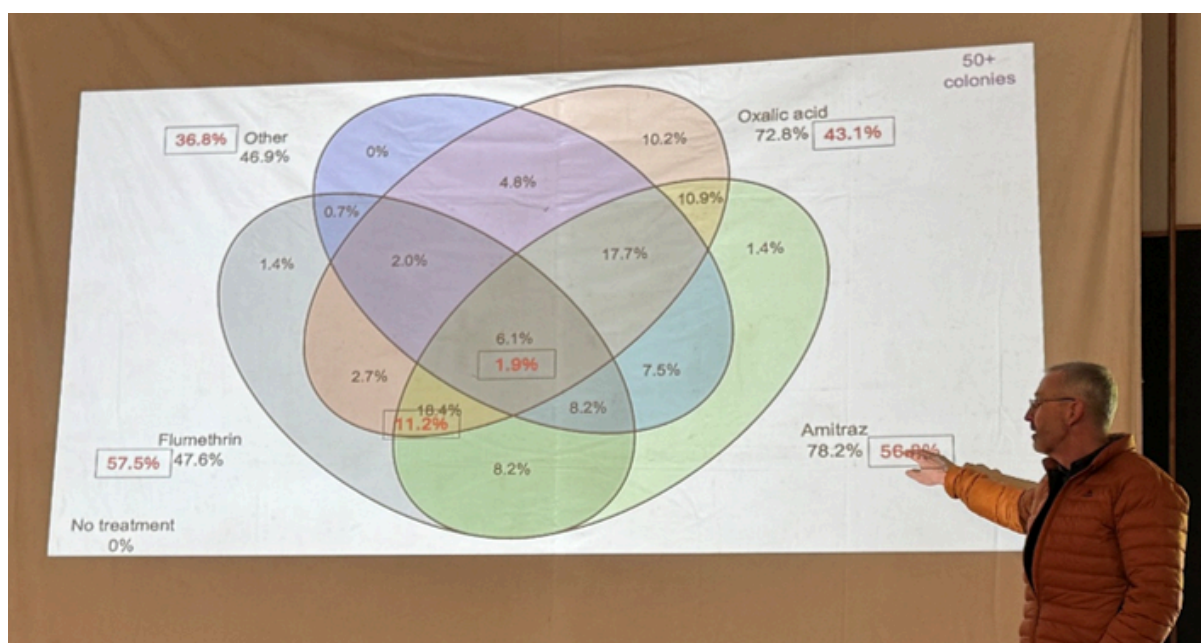


Photos: Michelle Cole and Steve Cole

SNIB Field Day Report

On Sunday 13 September the Southern North Island Beekeepers hosted a field day at the Crofton Down school. Sadly, despite the invitation being extended to the Whanganui, Otaki, Wairarapa and Wellington Beekeeping clubs the patronage of this event was grossly unattended and saw a mere 24 people in attendance.

The day started with a discussion from **Dr Pike Stahlmann-Brown** who was responsible for the annual colony loss survey. Although only about 30% of the nation's beekeepers responded, and completed the survey, the results were interesting and again highlighted the impact that varroa have on our hives and its destructive nature. Dr Stahlmann-Brown re-enforced the importance of treating for varroa and doing it multiple times during the season with different treatment opinions. Below is a graph showing the different treatments.



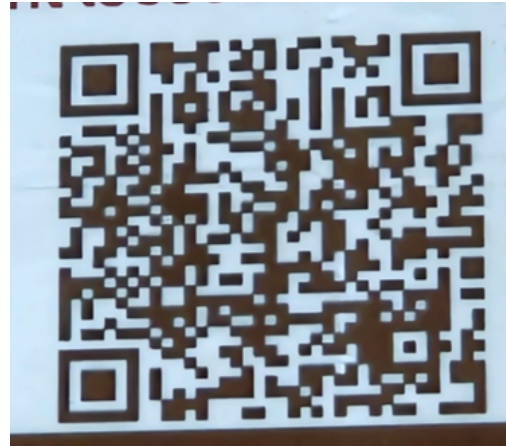
As we know there has been a decline in the number of beekeepers and hives throughout the country since the 2019's peak. In 2019 there were 900,000 registered hives in NZ, in 2025 this was down to 600,000 and continuing its downward trajectory. Likewise, the number of registered beekeepers in 2019 was 8,800 but by 2025 this was down to 5,800.

As a result of the survey the following questions can be answered from a hobbyists perspective;

- Does it matter if I treat for varroa? **Yes**
- Can I use the same product, or should I vary them? **Vary them.**
- How many seasons in the year should I treat for varroa? **Ideally 3+**
- How many times should I treat for varroa in Autumn? **More than once.**
- What products should I use? **Choose a few, vary them and follow the application instructions.**

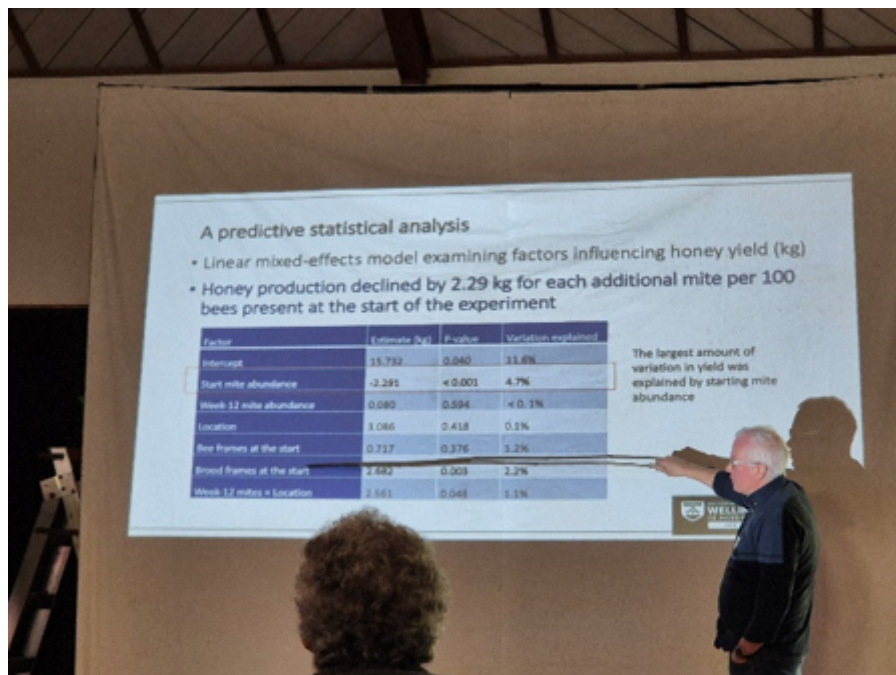
- Will my varroa problems go away as I become a more experienced beekeeper?
Experience does not prevent losses if the same mistakes are made each year.

The QR code below will take you directly to the Colony Loss survey results which makes for interesting reading.



Following Dr Stahlmann-Brown was **Professor Phil Lester**, from Victoria University. Prof Lester discussed the timing of acaricide treatments to prevent varroa destructors from causing economic damage to honey bee colonies.

It has been scientifically established that a single mite among 100 bees in a hive can reduce a honey yield by up to 2.29kgs. Again, this illustrates the importance of timely treatments and having a planned strategy to ensure maximise efficiency for your treatments.



Sir Frank Lindsay could not allow this event to continue without seizing the microphone. Frank presented on AFB having recently conducted a surveillance testing on hives in the Thorndon and surrounding area. It was another timely reminder, as we start to crack the lids on our over-wintered hives. Inspections need to be done every time you go through your bees, unpicking suspect or unusual looking capping's.

A little bit of advice included cleaning your hive tools each time you go through a hive. A quick simple way is to drive your hive tool into the ground then remove any honey or propolis from the face of the hive tool. Although this does not 100% guarantee the removal of all potential spores it does remove the majority. Obviously, any hive tool that has been used in an affected hive needs to be sterilised in a Janola mix or placed into a smoker and heated to kill any spores. Good beekeeping hygiene will reduce the spreading of this disease (including regular washing of your gloves, overalls and beesuits).



After a spot of lunch, the group visited the club Churton park apiary. Shortly after commencing one of the hives was found to have AFB and the practical aspect of the day was shut down, to prevent infecting other hives.

Takeaway points from the day.

- Despite killing about 100 bees, it is important to conduct alcohol washes of your colonies to determine exactly your mite infestation levels.
- Practising good hive hygiene includes scrapping or clearing away waste from your bottom board. Failing to remove this debris allows pathogens to remain in the hive.
- Bees that have been bitten by varroa cannot repair or mend themselves. When formic acid treatments are applied to a colony, bitten bees exit the hive to escape the burning from the exposed wound site. Normally these bees will not return to the hive, hence why you can get a pile of dead bees around the front entrance. You may also note a decrease in the colony size after treatment due to this phenomenon.



Photo supplied by Janine Davie: Frank showing the bees to Milan Ryan 8 years at the SNIB Field day at the Club Hives in Chartwell.

Overall, an informative and timely reminder about hive management. Thanks to Frank and Mary-Anne Lindsay for all the hard work, the catering and support they continue to provide to beekeepers.

Report written by James Withington.



Two New Biosecurity Projects

Following on from their yellow-legged hornet biosecurity response, NZBB is pleased to share that two new pieces of preparedness work are now underway, aimed at strengthening early detection and response readiness across the sector.

Project 1: Early-warning indicator checklist

Early detection of exotic bee pests and diseases relies on beekeepers being familiar with their hive's normal health baseline. This project will deliver a simple, one-page checklist to help you recognise indicators that may warrant closer attention (such as elevated colony mortality, a decline in honey production, a hive that just seems “off,” or abnormal bee behaviour). It will also provide a clear pathway for when something should be escalated to MPI as a potential exotic organism, versus managed as a known pest issue.

Project 2: Small Hive Beetle (SHB) operational preparedness plan

Small Hive Beetle is already established in Australia, and given its ability to travel around 10 km a day and hitchhike on freight, luggage, or equipment, it's realistic to expect it could arrive in New Zealand at any time. This short, focused programme — led by NZBB with technical validation from Biosecurity New Zealand — will develop an SHB Operational Preparedness Plan covering pest biology, field identification, notification and evidence protocols, traceability, and steps that occur during an incursion response. It's designed as a reference model that can be adapted for future exotic pest threats.

Both projects are being generously supported by a grant from the Honey Industry Charitable Trust. No AFB levy funds are being used for this work.

The guidance materials from both projects will be developed by NZBB and reviewed by Biosecurity New Zealand technical experts, before being hosted on the NZBB website. They will be written so that all beekeepers (commercial and hobbyists) can easily recognise hive health indicators and understand the SHB lifecycle, given its proximity in Australia and ever-present risk of arrival. We will keep you updated as this work progresses.

For any questions regarding these projects, please get in touch with the NZBB Team on info@nzbb.org.nz



For Sale: \$500 the Lot!

A Kāpiti beekeeper would like to sell all the gear they had for beekeeping on Whareroa in one \$500 transaction. Great deal for someone wanting to pick up beekeeping from scratch.

- 1 beekeeping suit - size large
- 2 pairs of beekeeping gloves
- 1 electric wax cutting knife
- 2 full size black plastic sugar feeders
- 4 hive bases
- 3 top hive lids
- 2 queen retainer plastic mats
- 2 black plastic excluder frames - used at harvest time to clear bees of frames that will be harvested
- 1 full size hive box - empty
- 2 full size hive boxes complete with wax frames - some a bit damaged
- 3 3/4 size hive boxes complete with wax frames - some a bit damaged
- 1 hive knife
- 1 hive brush

If anyone is interested please contact **Lawrie Duncan, Kāpiti**.
Cell: 0275467019

2026/2027 Annual Subscriptions are Over Due

A friendly reminder from our Membership Secretary, John Burnet: if you haven't already settled your annual subscription, please transfer the **\$25** fee to the Wellington Beekeepers Club bank account **03-1534-0009311-00**.

Please note: members who joined the Club and paid their subscription after 1 Jan 2026 are exempt from paying again until the next financial year starting 1 June 2027.

For those who have already processed their payment, thank you very much for staying connected to our community!

New Opportunity for New Zealand Mānuka honey

Quantum Technologies Limited is planning to raise investment through PledgeMe to scale up its OH BEE HAVE™ technology, which uses a specially processed Mānuka honey and royal jelly protein ingredient called MEL-RJPI™.

Why is this interesting for beekeepers?

For beekeepers, this could mean:

- a new potential market for Mānuka honey;
- a more sustainable price / kg for the beekeeper
- greater value being created from New Zealand bee products;
- an opportunity to invest in a New Zealand company developing downstream products from the beekeeping industry; and
- the opportunity to follow and participate in the development of a new export platform.

The aim is to create **new, higher-value applications for Mānuka honey** in personal care, wellbeing and future biotechnology products. Rather than competing with the existing jar-honey market, the technology could provide another commercial pathway for New Zealand honey producers.

The current expression of interest is intended to gauge industry interest in helping Quantum Technologies move into larger-scale cGMP manufacture so that it can supply prospective international customers and further develop the market.

Sign up here to receive more detailed information:

<https://check.pledgeme.co.nz/quantum>

Dr Keryn Johnson
CEO, Quantum Technologies Limited
Founder, OH BEE HAVE™ – Empowering Healing
Quantum Biology Research Institute

Please Note: *Notices, listings, and member contributions are published as a service to our local beekeeping community. Any contact or arrangement made between members is entirely personal and does not represent an endorsement or warranty by the Wellington Beekeepers Association.*



BCNZ Beekeeping Clubs of New Zealand Discussion – Summary

The meeting took place on Monday, 21 September 2026. John Burnet attended on behalf of the WBA, joining representatives from 17 beekeeping clubs across the Auckland area, Hamilton, Wellington, Nelson/Marlborough, and Dunedin.

The representatives met online to discuss whether clubs should work together through a national organisation. The feeling was that this is worth progressing, provided it remains practical, affordable and focused on helping clubs. Such a body could make it easier to share resources and good beekeeping practice, support clubs, and provide a coordinated voice for club-based beekeepers when one is needed. This was an initial discussion. The votes below show the direction supported at the meeting, but the detailed structure, costs and rules still need to be worked through with clubs.

What was agreed:

- Purpose: Support beekeeping clubs, share education and best practice, and represent club-based beekeepers on matters such as biosecurity, regulation and local government engagement. All three priorities were supported by 16 votes.
- Membership: Membership would initially be for beekeeping clubs, rather than individuals or other organisations. This was supported by 13 votes.
- Working name: Beekeeping Clubs of New Zealand (BCNZ) was adopted as the working name, with 15 votes in favour.
- Structure: The meeting gave an indicative preference for working towards a formally incorporated national organisation. About ten participants supported that direction, while a small number preferred remaining informal at this stage. The legal structure and governance arrangements remain to be worked through with clubs.
- Finances: Eleven participants supported postponing decisions on fees and funding until the governance arrangements, likely costs and expected benefits are clearer. A small number preferred beginning work immediately.

What still needs to be worked through:

- Whether an incorporated society or charitable trust would be the best legal structure, and what each option would cost and require.
- How much administration would be needed and how member clubs would be represented.
- What the organisation would cost to set up and run, what funding may be available, and what value clubs would receive.

- How BCNZ could speak for clubs when appropriate without replacing local relationships or telling clubs how to operate.
- How club-based beekeeping should be described. The general view was that clubs should decide who their members are, and that earning some income from bees should not automatically exclude a beekeeper.

Next steps:

- Clubs are asked to discuss the proposal with their committees and members, particularly the purpose, club membership model, governance options and likely costs.
- We will continue contacting beekeeping clubs throughout New Zealand. Clubs not represented at this meeting are encouraged to join the discussion and share their contact details.
- Ken Brown will continue as coordinator on a month-to-month basis until formal arrangements are in place. When he asked whether he could continue representing hobbyist and club-based beekeepers at relevant hui, no objections were raised and the meeting indicated its support.
- A smaller steering group was not considered necessary at this stage.
- The next online meeting will be held on Monday 2 November 2026 at 7pm. Meetings are intended to continue on the first Monday of each month.

For anyone who was not at the meeting: This is still at an early stage and nothing is set in stone. The aim is to build relationships first and develop something useful, affordable and credible for beekeeping clubs across New Zealand.

Hive Placement Opportunity: Moonshine Valley, Porirua

Landowner St. John Wakefield is offering an opportunity for a member to place hives on his 110-acre property at [531 Moonshine Road](#) (RD1, Porirua).

Property highlights:

- **Extensive forage:** Established native bush with abundant mānuka, ongoing planting of additional native species, and extensive plantings of exotic hardwood trees.
- **Hive health:** No other known beehives in the immediate vicinity.
- **Accessibility:** Easy drive-on access leading to a selection of sheltered, flat hive sites.

If you are interested or would like further details, please contact St. John directly at stjohn.wakefield@protonmail.com



Are you looking for fuel for your smoker?



Whittaker's Hessian Sacks for Bee Smokers

We have secured a supply of empty Whittaker's cacao hessian sacks (sadly, no leftover chocolate blocks included!). Once lit in a smoker, the hessian burns steadily for hours, delivering a cool, consistent stream of smoke - complete with a subtle hint of chocolate.

Frank Lindsay MNZM will have a limited supply available at this month's meeting for a gold coin donation, with all proceeds going directly to the Southern North Island Beekeepers Research Fund.

Depending on interest, more sacks can be picked up from the Whittaker's factory for the November meeting. If you'd like some, please let Frank know your numbers so we can arrange the next collection.

James Withington



WBA WhatsApp Group for advice and Information

Designed for members to connect, the WBA WhatsApp forum allows you to seek guidance from senior club members, ask experienced keepers questions, and share general insights about beekeeping. The platform is fully operational, and Sarah welcomes new participants to sign up.

To become a part of the group and find answers to your complex questions, please reach out to Sarah Dye at sarah.c.dye@gmail.com.

What's Coming Up?

- October | Varroa Planning
- November | TBC
- December | Xmas Quiz and Food Truck

Who can I connect with?

- **Janine Davie** | President president@beehive.org.nz
- **Eva Durrant** | Treasurer treasurer@beehive.org.nz
- **Michelle Cole** | Secretary & Newsletter Editor secretary@beehive.org.nz
- **John Burnet** | Membership info@beehive.org.nz | 0274 379 062
- **Tatjana Manabe** | Librarian committee@beehive.org.nz
- **Kevin Campbell** | Webmaster webmaster@beehive.org.nz
- **Barbara Parkinson** | Supper Coordinator
- **Jim Hepburn** | Swarm WhatsApp Admin 021 926 823

We welcome your stories, articles, recipes, podcast links, and photos! If you have any content you would like to share in the newsletter, please email it to secretary@beehive.org.nz.

