# THE AMATEUR BEEKEEPER

AUG-SEP 2024

## Canberra Region Beekeepers

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## INSIDE



BEEKEEPERS.ASN.AU

# Presidents Report

Vincent Schnyder, ABA President

Dear Members,

These cold and rainy days over the last few weeks gave ample time to assemble and paint some boxes, rewire some frames and get ready for the next beekeeping season. As the days get longer, the bees will start to build up and soon we will see the first swarms for the season. In fact, I've already heard about a colony with several swarm cells in mid-July here in Sydney.

**Swarm Collectors** This brings me to the first point. As you know, the ABA maintains a swarm collector database on our website www.beekeepers.asn.au/swarms where the public can contact a local beekeeper when a swarm is found. If you would like to be listed in your postcode area *(up to 10 postcodes)*, please have a look at the article later in this newsletter.

**Membership Renewal** On 1 July our new 2024/25 Membership Year started and in early June all members were invited to renew their membership. The Early Bird discount on the ABA fee was a real drawcard and over 2/3 of members have renewed their membership thus far. Overall the process was smooth and for those who experienced issues our Treasurer Jacqueline, our club Membership Officers and I were able to help out.

The membership system will issue two more notices for those who have not yet renewed before they are removed from the membership register. Please reach out to your club Membership Officer or email support@beekeeper.freshdesk.com if you have any difficulties renewing your membership.

**Membership Card** The first batch of membership cards were sent out mid-July for members who renewed their membership in June. Thanks Nikki for your effort of printing the cards, stuffing envelopes and sending them out. As mentioned previously, we decided against sending out the Beekeeper Logbook automatically to all members as we received feedback from so many members that they would not use the logbook and just throw it into the bin and we could not justify spending members money if they are not used.

Members are able to order the logbook as part of the renewal process or at any time from the ABA Shop www.beekeepers.asn.au/shop. Interestingly, only 10% of members actually ordered the logbook, which confirms that it was the right decision to discontinue the practice.

**Annual General Meetings** Between July and December all clubs will have to hold their Annual General Meetings where the committee reports back to members the activities of the clubs, present the financial statements and where the committee needs to be reappointed. This is the only formal meeting required for an incorporated association and usually shouldn't take too long *(I think I got the Northern Beaches AGM once completed within 12 minutes)*. After that members can focus again on the beekeeping and social side of the club.

The **ABA AGM** will be held on Sunday 3 November at Mittagong RSL *(refer to details later in this newsletter)*. We will have four guest speakers on various beekeeping topics, the AGM, Col. Pulling/ Bruce White Shield competition and a Members Forum. Focus of the day will clearly be on the beekeeping and fun side and members will have an opportunity in the more informal Member Forum to discuss with the new committee the direction of the Association. I hope to see as many members as possible attending the event either in person or via a webinar link. Notice and details about registration will be sent out closer to the meeting.

**Joining a Committee** All clubs are run by volunteers and without the work of our volunteers we wouldn't have our clubs and without committee members the clubs would not be allowed to continue. In order to reduce the workload of the club committees, the ABA has streamlined many processes. For example, the club treasurers don't have to worry about collecting membership fees, instead, the fees collected during the previous month are directly deposited into the club bank account. The ABA also provides easy to use web based accounting software and support if required. All club committee members get help from the ABA if they need any support. Thus time commitments are no longer as daunting as in the past and most roles on the committee don't even require any beekeeping skills.

Thus, if you want to give back to your beekeeping community, reach out to your club committee to see if your club needs any support or to allow long serving committee members to step back while others run the club for a while.

**Varroa Training** Final NSW Workshops announced. National Varroa Mite Management Program announced the FINAL workshops planned for NSW. If you have not done so, aim to attend one of these free workshops to be prepared when the mite reaches your location. Unfortunately, it's not an "IF" it's definitely a "WHEN".

When I discuss the Varroa topic with my brother and sister in Switzerland they always reassure me that beekeeping is still feasible, we just have to learn how to deal with the new situation. As we were the last larger beekeeping nation to be impacted by Varroa, at least we can learn the basis from our overseas peers. However, I expect that we will have to fine-tune our approaches due to climate and other factors and thus sharing your lessons learned with your colleagues in your local club will be beneficial ■

*Happy beekeeping*

# Biosecurity Buzz

Mike Allerton ABA Biosecurity Officer

## The Conference Season

Over the course of May-July I attended the conferences of the NSW Apiarists Association in Wagga Wagga, Victorian Apiarists Association in Wonthaggi, the Bee Industry Council of WA/ Asian Apiculture Association in Fremantle and the Queensland Beekeepers' Association/AHBIC AGM in Townsville.

Here's a summary.

**NSWAA 23/24 May** not surprisingly was mainly focussed on varroa. There were scientists offering updates to their research.
Two New Zealand commercial beekeepers shared their experiences adjusting to life with varroa. Although their perspectives are that of a honey producer and a varroa Sensitive Hygiene (VSH) queen breeder, their stories still offer encouragement for recreational beekeepers.

They said those beekeepers who apply a disciplined approach to care for their bees are the ones that will succeed. That means regular monitoring for mites and treating when necessary. Early in the NZ incursion, that meant many treatments, but now it can be twice a year.

In the vendors hall, there were unregistered, unpermitted mite treatment products/equipment for sale and treatment preparation information sheets available. Sources have indicated that over 1 million strips for home preparations have been sold in Australia. This is why I think we need the "Own Use Exemption" Clause in our legislation. Associations could then provide training in the safe use of these treatments. More on that later.

I found the mood a little dark at this conference. I think two years of varroa response has taken a heavy toll on many in the beekeeping world and continues to hit the commercial operations hard.

**VAA 4-6 June** also had a theme around Varroa, but with a more optimistic outlook. The Victorians have some time to prepare for the new reality coming next season.
They have selected their Varroa Development Officers and trainers ready to soon begin their National Workshops.

Varroa expert, Cameron Jack from University of Florida Zoomed in with solid advice around mite management based on science and practical application. Like many others, he emphasised the importance of applying integrated pest

management (IPM) to avoid breeding treatment resistant mites.

**BICWA/AAA 12-14 June** consisted of a one-day apitherapy conference followed by two days beekeeping.
The Asian Apiculture Association's 17th bi-annual conference had many local and international scientists presenting research proving the therapeutic benefits of a range of hive products. From venom to honey and everything in between to treat a range of ailments. With all the venom therapy I get in the apiary, it's no wonder I feel so healthy.

Australia is a late comer to the apitherapy world with a growing membership to the Australian Apitherapy Association founded by Dr. Bridget Goodwin.

Days two and three were for the beekeepers. More talks about Varroa destructor, but the stage was shared with *Euvarroa sinhai* normally hosted by the Red dwarf honey bee *(Apis florea)* found at Dampier Peninsula in the far north of WA.

Commercial beekeeper and biologist, Randy Oliver Zoomed in from California to present updates on his varroa research and offer advice for Aussie beekeepers. He was generous with his time taking many questions from the audience.

Biosecurity is very tight in WA, but the vast area and long borders present a challenge to the WA Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development. WA beekeepers will eventually be faced with mites, so they are learning all they can to prepare.

*Red dwarf honey bee ~ Apis florea*

**QBA and AHBIC AGM 10-12 July** was the final conference of the season. The AHBIC AGM preceding the QBA conference and was a full day with updates, reports, motions and the resignation of Stephen Brewster after 20years of AHBIC service. I proposed a motion for AHBIC support of our push for a NZ type "Own Use Exemption" clause in our legislation. Success! Now for the real work. I also joined the Biosecurity subcommittee. The QBA conference featured various scientific updates including the work of Georgia Moore from the University of Sunshine Coast. Georgia is developing a database of the chemical "finger prints" of Australian monofloral honey using phenolic profiling. She says her work will help prove the authenticity and quality of Australian honey.

Chris Anderson from NSW DPI said the data is indicating that the mite spread will be like a tidal wave with heavy reinfestation for up to three years until levels stabilise as feral colonies succumb to parasitic mite syndrome. He suggested that during that time it may be impossible to avoid using the highly efficacious synthetic chemical treatments. That's not good news for those of us wanting to avoid using the synthetics.

I talked with a beekeeper from Cairns who said he has seen quite a few Apis cerana colonies in his area. He noted they are always very small and tend to abscond frequently.

Dr Roc Gloag gave us some potentially good news in that there have been no new incursions of Asian honey bee in the area, and that all the colonies are

experiencing a genetic bottleneck that may well lead to their demise.

Leisa Sams from the Stanley River Branch hosted a guided honey tasting Thursday evening featuring some of QLD's finest varieties.

Celebrity chef Matt Golinski prepared amazing dishes, each featuring a different QLD honey for both the honey tasting evening and the 120th AGM Anniversary Gala Dinner. Matt's passionate description of each course added to the gustatory pleasure.

### Registration of treatment chemicals

I recently spoke with the importer/registrant of the oxalic acid product Aluen CAP. It is slowly progressing through the registration process. As each step is reached, more funds are required to move to the next stage. It's a slow, expensive process but each step taken is in the right direction.

I have no news on the progress of the Api-bioxal product.

### "Own Use Exemption" Update

Not surprisingly, there has been no reply to our letter to Senator the Hon. Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. I will be reaching out to him again soon.

As mentioned earlier, I secured confirmation at the AHBIC AGM that the other member bodies will support our bid to have the legislation changed to include an Australian version of the New Zealand "Own Use Exemption" clause. How that support materialises is yet to be determined and I hope my new position on the AHBIC Biosecurity Subcommittee will define and drive it.

At the least, I hope to reach the wider beekeeping community via each state member association through which federal members of parliament can be encouraged to support the change to legislation. Also, it could increase the number of signatures on the petition to parliament. The more voices that speak, the harder it is to ignore.

The recently appointed CEO of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), Mr Scott Hansen could be an ally. He has a 10 year history as director general of NSW DPI, during which a good relationship with AHBIC was developed by AHBIC CEO Danny Le Feuvre. Danny told me Mr Hansen now has a good understanding or the beekeeping sector.

Our next move is to create several versions of a form letter for beekeepers to send to their federal member of parliament. The letters will briefly explain the benefits of the proposed clause. I'll be talking with as many of those parliamentarians as possible.

Further along, we may raise a partition to parliament. There is a six-week deadline for partitions, so we want to raise awareness ahead of time to ensure the greatest support.

Another approach I'm considering is to create a draft of the proposed amendment based on the NZ legislation. I'll need help with that, so if any of you have experience with legislative documents and can help create the draft amendment, let me know.

Also, if any of you have journalist/media contacts that may be interested in a story about our cause, I'd appreciate an introduction.

### AFB Minimisation Program

There were four positive results in the latest round of 17 samples tested for AFB by the DPI lab. These were from postcodes 2446, 2541, 2577, and 2830.

I've sent out a round of kits to those clubs who've recently joined the program. Any clubs wanting to participate, please contact me by email. It's free!

### Varroa Workshops

The last of NSW Workshops are rolling out now, so get along to one. Some are being held on weekends to help make it easier for people to attend. There is a recorded version planned, but there is value in attending in person for the Q&A opportunity.

### Club Visits/Presentations

Let me know if you'd like a presentation at one of your club nights. Does your membership have questions for the ABA? I'll come to your meeting to answer all I can or bring them back to the committee to follow through.

Until next time ■

Mike Allerton ~ biosecurity@beekeepers.asn.au


# Chemical free method for controlling Varroa

Sven and Ana Martin, Amber Drop Honey

When we started our beekeeping journey in 2015 and joined the Central Coast Beekeepers Association, we heard about this pesky mite we were so lucky to live without. And, like so many others, we hoped it would be a very long time before we had to deal with it, whilst knowing that it was bound to arrive sooner or later. So, now and again, we would read about new developments but with the carefree interest of someone not directly affected by it.

Of course, we kept our fingers crossed that it could be controlled when it arrived. But as our hopes for eradication dwindled, so did our willingness to live with it.

We didn't use chemicals with our bees and weren't keen on starting a constant rotation of them. The idea of deciding what to use, taking supers out for some treatments and finding storage for them, missing out on nectar flows, or trusting the unreliable weather prediction for the correct temperature bracket was positively overwhelming.

After attending one of the DPI workshops, we realized we weren't the only ones.

We understood that living with Varroa dramatically increases the labour needed to look after the hives, but we felt that if we had to add the use of chemicals, our beekeeping values would be compromised.

Fortunately, through a random chat with a German beekeeper friend, we learned about this machine for treating Varroa: the very aptly named Varroa Controller.

After some research and confirmation from our friend that it was indeed very effective and safe for the bees, we talked to the inventor, Dr Wolfgang Wimmer, from Austria. We checked testimonials and documentation and were so impressed we wanted to spread the word. We couldn't believe this option wasn't being discussed among beekeepers in Australia.

### How Does the Varroa Controller Work?

The Varroa Controller is a device for the heat treatment of the capped bee brood, with a proven treatment of 97%. Considering that 80% of the mites are located in the brood, this allows for a substantial reduction of the Varroa numbers in a colony.

The principle of heat treatment with the Varroa Controller is based on the different heat resistances of bee brood and Varroa mites: The capped brood frames *(after brushing all adult bees)* are hung into the device and heated for two hours to a temperature that is lethal to the mite, while the pupae develop healthily. At the same time, the device automatically ensures the correct humidification and ventilation.

Unlike other heat treatments, it doesn't treat the whole colony, which is inefficient and causes unnecessary stress for the bees trying to keep the temperature down.

There is also an optional duplex frame box to cage the queen, reducing the breeding space to two frames. This allows for more effective treatment and can also be used as a swarm prevention method.

The controller comes in a ten-frame and a twenty-frame size options and fits all types of frames including Warrè and Topbar.

## Advantages of Using this Method

- **Chemical Free Honey and Wax** - no need to worry about chemicals affecting the quality of your wax and honey.
- **No Mite Resistance** - as this is a short & targeted treatment, the mite is not able to build resistance.
- **Safe for the Bees** - it does not affect the queen or the fertility of drones, which is good news also for queen breeders.
- **No Missed Nectar Flows or Storage Issues** - keep your supers on at all times.
- **Flexible Treatment Frequency and Timing** - particularly with the high reinfestation rates occurring now in the affected areas.
- **Cost-Effective:** a one-off investment compared to recurring expenses. The units are built in Austria and the first ones are still running after 14 years, a testimony to their quality.
- **Safe for the beekeepers:** no exposure to any chemicals when working with your bees.

### An opportunity for Australian Beekeeping

It took Varroa a long time to arrive here, now it is our choice to learn from others' mistakes and consider any innovations in the industry that we can benefit from.

With high infestation rates and no brood break in many beekeeping areas, relying solely on chemicals seems restrictive. It is also costly to maintain.

Of course, this system might not suit everyone, but it is a very effective solution for those who value clean honey and are concerned about the long-term effects of chemical exposure on the bee`s health ■

Amateur Beekeepers Australia

# ABA Conference, AGM and Col Pulling Competition 2024

**DATE:** Sunday, 3 November 2024
10:00 am – 4:00 pm

**VENUE:** RSL Mittagong and via Webinar link

Please keep your diary free for this packed day of beekeeping information and fun.

We start the day with two guest speakers in the morning followed by the AGM of the Association. After lunch we will have two more guest speakers before we hold our annual club Col Pulling/Bruce White Shield Competition and a member's forum to round up the day.

The event will be held at the RSL Mittagong and live-streamed via a webinar link. If you plan to attend in person and need accommodation, please book early as this time of the year is busy in the Southern Highlands.

We hope to see you there.

## Guest Speakers

**Prof Sasha (Alexander) Mikheyev, Evolutionary genomics**

Australian National University, Canberra

### Topic: Evolution of honey bee viruses

**Biography:** Sasha Mikheyev is a Russian-American-Australian evolutionary biologist interested in understanding how organisms adapt to rapid ecological changes. One of his two main areas of focus is Biological invasions and host-pathogen evolution. He works with honey bees *(Apis)* as a model of pathogen evolution. Western honey bees *(Apis mellifera)* are an agricultural mainstay, with 65% of Australian agricultural production relying on their pollination services. Originally native to Europe, West Asia and Africa, these bees have been spread worldwide by humans. Globalisation also facilitated the spread of many bee parasites and diseases caused by bacteria and viruses. As other insects, honey bees evolve rapidly and, given their agricultural relevance, a lot about their pathology is known. His lab focuses on (1) characterising how new pathogens enter a naive host population, (2) ecological and evolutionary dynamics of pathogen spread and (3) responses by the bees and coevolution. Given the recent arrival and spread of Varroa mites in Australia he is particularly interested in collaborations focused on their impact on the Australian ecosystem and what can be done to mitigate it.

**Elizabeth Frost, Technical Specialist Honey Bees**

NSW Department of Primary Industries, Tocal

### Topic: Making honey in a Varroa hotspot from a mite-loaded caught swarm

**Biography:** Elizabeth Frost is the Technical Specialist – Bees with the NSW Dept. of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Frost co-managed Australia's National Honey Bee Genetic Improvement Program *(Plan Bee)* with Dr Nadine Chapman of University of Sydney/ NSW DPIRD, University of New England's Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit, Better Bees WA, the Wheen Bee Foundation and beekeeping and horticulture industry stakeholders. Frost provides technical assistance to the beekeeping industry, government, media and the public and teaches queen bee artificial insemination courses at Registered Training Organisation Tocal Agricultural College. Current work includes the National Varroa Mite Management Program, Bushfire Industry Recovery Program, honey sensory survey work, and the HortInnovation-funded project "Exploration of advanced control and detection methods for Varroa mite.

**Dr James Dorey, Lecturer in Biological Sciences**

University of Wollongong

## Topic: Understanding Australian native bee biology and diversity to conserve and make use of their pollination abilities

**Biography:** Dr James Dorey is an evolutionary biologist that mostly researches wild bees in Australia, Fiji, and on a global scale. He has a particular interest in the drivers behind diversity and how those same drivers might threaten diversity. He is very interested in a diversity of topics ranging from macroevolution, macroecology, conservation, systematics, and organismal biology. He tries to answer questions relating to these topics using diverse methods such as R-coding, phylogenetics, geographical information systems (GIS), field work, morphometrics, statistics, and whatever else he can use to learn about the natural world. He prefers to use an integrative approach and falsify or support hypotheses using diverse methods.

He is also an award-winning macro photographer which he likes to use in combination with his research and for science communication efforts. Author of "Bees of Australia: A Photographic Exploration".

**Dr Madlen Kratz, Honeybee Industry Development Officer**

NSW Department of Primary Industries, Tocal

## Topic: Honeybee nutrition, health and productivity

**Biography:** Dr Madlen Kratz works with the Department of Primary Industries in NSW as the Honeybee Industry Development Officer. Her background is in research on honey bee nutrition, foraging behaviour, and pollination, focusing on honey bee health and productivity for the Honey Bee and Pollination Industries. Current areas of work include evaluating supplementary feeding practices for their costs and benefits to beekeepers, assessing alternative pasture species for their value to honey bees, and evaluating the attractiveness of blueberry flowers to bees under crop covers ■

# RECIPE BREAD AND HONEY BUTTER PUDDING

## INGREDIENTS

- 100g Sultanas
- 2 tbs Orange juice
- 8–10 slices of buttered bread
- Your favourite honey
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup of thick cream

## DIRECTIONS

1. Soak sultanas overnight in orange juice *(discard the orange juice)*,
2. Butter the bread and spread with honey. Arrange in layers in your chosen oven proof dish scattering the sultanas between the layers.
3. Beat the eggs, milk, cream and 2 tbs of honey together then pour over the layers.
4. Place the dish in a baking tray filled with hot water. Place in a 160$^{C}$ oven for about 1 hour.
5. Let cool before serving with cream. Enjoy a big slice and have a nice nap as its quite rich ■

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# ONLINE DOCUMENTARY SECRETS OF THE BEEHIVE


A fascinating documentary that details quality issues from imported “overcommercially produced” honey. The story goes into detail on the medicinal benefits and markets for secondary beehive products including propolis, bee pollen and royal jelly from the industry in different parts of the world ■

**USE THE LINK BELOW:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoMDBqF-XRY&t=1746s

# Understanding the Process for Registering Veterinary Chemicals in Australia: A Guide for Beekeepers

Nikki Potgieter

In 1937, over 100 people in the United States died after taking the antibiotic, Elixir sulfanilamide. At the time, sulfanilamide was a very effective drug used to treat streptococcal infections, but it was only available in tablet and powder form. A pharmacist discovered that the powder could be dissolved in diethylene glycol, and by adding raspberry flavouring he was able to create a palatable and easy to take liquid formulation. However, one critical factor had been missed – diethylene glycol, a chemical we now know as antifreeze, is a deadly poison.

In the late 1950s, doctors began noticing a sharp increase in the number of babies being born with severe birth defects, including limb deformities, heart problems and damage to the nervous system. It was eventually discovered that thalidomide – a drug sold as a sedative and to treat morning sickness in pregnant women – was the cause. It is estimated that around 10,000 children in 46 countries were born with deformities as a result of thalidomide.

At the time of these incidents, there were no regulations requiring pharmaceutical companies to prove their drugs were safe and effective through well-controlled studies. The thalidomide disaster led to major changes in drug regulation and testing protocols worldwide, making it mandatory for new drugs to be undergo extensive testing before being approved for use.

In the 1970s Industrial Bio-Test Laboratories (IBT) was the largest independent testing laboratory in the US. It conducted safety testing for pharmaceutical companies, chemical manufacturers and other industries. However, in 1976, the US FDA audited IBT and found widespread falsification and manipulation of research data, including fabrication of results and the use of improper testing procedures. This scandal led to significant changes in the oversight and regulation of safety testing and was one of the driving forces for the development of international Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) guidelines. These guidelines set the standard for the conduct and monitoring of non-clinical health and environmental studies and ensure the generation of high quality and reliable data. These guidelines have evolved over time and are now recognised by global regulatory authorities.

So, you may be asking yourself, what does this have to do with me, as a beekeeper? Well, those same principles, guidelines and regulations that were introduced to ensure that medicines prescribed to people are safe and effective are also applicable to veterinary medicines.

Varroa and varroa mite control is at the forefront of all our minds at the moment. Maintaining the health of our bee colonies is an important part of being a responsible beekeeper and therefore monitoring and controlling parasites, such as Varroa, is no different to deworming your dog or treating it for ticks and fleas – other than for the fact that parasiticides used in dogs and cats are more readily available.

Veterinary products developed to control parasites usually contain at least one active constituent, as well as a variety of excipients. While the active constituent is the ingredient that actually kills or repels the parasite, the excipients help the active to work better by delivering it to the right place, preserving the product so it lasts longer, or by making the product easier to use. In addition, excipients and the way a product is packaged/formulated can control how quickly the active ingredient is released. This can help maintain a steady level of the active ingredient over a set period of time. The combination and concentration of actives and excipients in each product are carefully selected and tested to achieve a specific outcome when used in a particular way – changing the concentration of any of the ingredients or using the product in a way that it was not intended will change the way the product works. The manufacturing process is also strictly controlled to ensure that each batch of product is the same and will therefore deliver consistent results.

In Australia, the regulator of agricultural and

veterinary chemicals is the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). According to the Australian Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994, bees are considered food-producing animals, and therefore any chemical product that is used to control parasites such as Varroa, must be registered through the APVMA.

The registration process involves scientifically evaluating the safety and efficacy of a product to protect Australia's trade and the health and safety of people, animals and the environment.

If a manufacturer or distributor wishes to register a product in Australia, they will need to submit an application to the APVMA; and each application must include a dossier with detailed and complete information to support the application. Data provided in the dossier must be able to prove the accuracy of the proposed claims on the product label. In short, the data submitted to the APVMA must demonstrate that the product is safe and effective. The quality, reliability and integrity of the data is therefore essential.

When assessing the application and dossier, the APVMA uses a scientific, evidence-based approach to evaluate the data, combined with a risk analysis framework, before deciding to either approve, register or refuse the application. The risk assessments determine how toxic the product is (to humans, as well as plants and animals in the environment) and the extent to which people, plants or animals are likely to be exposed to the chemical when it is used according to the proposed label. For food producing animals, this includes the risk of chemical residues remaining in products consumed by humans – in the case of bees this means the honey and beeswax. Potential risks to trade are also considered during the assessment process. Information from other countries regarding the performance, efficacy and safety of a veterinary product can play a significant role in the registration process. If a product is already approved and has been used safely and effectively in other countries, the data can be very useful. The APVMA often considers overseas data and assessments to help inform their decision-making process. While efficacy, safety and environmental impact data from other countries is valuable, it is important to note that the conditions in Australia – such as our unique wildlife, climate conditions, and farming practices – may be different from those in other countries. The APVMA will therefore also consider whether the overseas data is relevant and applicable to the Australian context. The assessment period can take up to 18 months but may be longer if additional information or data is requested. More complex products may also require a more detailed assessment and therefore take longer to review.

Fortunately, the APVMA may issue Emergency Use Permits when needed to allow the use of a chemical product in a manner that is not currently approved. This is a vital tool for managing unexpected and urgent threats to agriculture and animal health in Australia. We are all familiar with this approach as Emergency Use Permits were issued when Varroa was first detected in NSW. However, as the assessment process for Emergency Use Permits is significantly reduced, they are only issued for a limited period and may contain specific conditions to manage any potential risks. This can include requirements for monitoring and reporting, restrictions on who can use the product, and measures to protect human health and the environment. Products are not relabelled to include the conditions listed on the permit. It is therefore important to follow the instructions on the label and the permit when using these products.

Post-registration stewardship is another critical aspect of the APVMA's regulatory framework. One key expectation in this stewardship relates to adverse event reporting. Registration holders are required to monitor and report any adverse experiences associated with the use of their products. This can include unexpected side effects in animals, lack of efficacy, residues in food, or harm to people and the environment. Adverse Event reporting is important for several reasons: it helps to identify potential safety issues that may not have been apparent during the product's development and testing stages; it provides real-world experience about the product's performance and safety, including the development of resistance; and it can lead to updates in product labelling, additional warnings, or in some cases, withdrawal of the product from the market.

A label claim is a statement on the packaging or label of a product that tells you what the product can do. For example, the Bayvarol Strips label

tells us that it is “For the diagnosis and control of Varroa mites in beehives”. The label also provides important information about the active ingredient, how to use the product including the appropriate dose to apply, and safety precautions to follow when handling the product.

The incorrect use of a veterinary product can lead to health issues and harm pets, livestock, crops and the environment. In addition, incorrect use can lead to the development of resistance. Overusing, under-dosing and not following the instructions on the label allows the parasites we are targeting to adapt and become resistant to the active ingredient. Resistance means that the product will no longer work as we expect it to and our options for controlling pests and diseases are reduced. Furthermore, some of the approved safety and use directions on the label are legally binding – incorrect use can lead to fines, litigation and in some circumstances criminal prosecution.

Finally, I would like to circle back to the issue of data quality, integrity and reliability, and in particular the difference between anecdotal accounts and scientific data.

Anecdotal accounts are personal stories. These accounts are subjective and based on an individual’s own experiences, which can vary widely from person to person. While they can provide valuable insights and may indicate areas worth further investigation, they should not be considered reliable evidence. Anecdotes are also prone to confirmation bias, which is when people tend to pay more attention to information that agrees with what they already believe and ignore the information that doesn’t. This can sometimes stop us from seeing the whole picture because we’re only focusing on the parts we agree with or expect.

On the other hand, scientific data is collected systematically through controlled, objective, and repeatable experiments or observations designed to minimise bias. The data is then analysed using statistical methods to draw conclusions.

With the widespread use of social media, anecdotal accounts are becoming embedded in our culture and it is easy to forget that the results reported may be flawed or may not apply to you. Social media reinforces confirmation bias: when you follow, like or share posts that align with your beliefs, social media algorithms pick up on this and start showing you more content that you agree with. This can create a “bubble” where it seems like everyone shares your views.

In closing, here are some take-home messages:

- Extensive testing in the development of a product or formulation provides high quality, reliable data to demonstrate a product’s efficacy and safety.
- Unregistered products have not been assessed by the APVMA for safety and efficacy. Therefore, their use can pose significant risks to animals, humans, and the environment.
- Using unregistered products is illegal in Australia under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994. Violations can lead to penalties including fines, imprisonment, or both.
- The APVMA controls the narrative of how the label looks and how it is applied in Australia. The way a product is used in Australia may be different to other countries
- Always follow the directions on the label – this ensures that the product will work as expected.
- Overusing a product, or not following the directions on the label, can lead to the development of resistance. Creating a population of parasites that are resistant to an active ingredient means the products will no longer work as we expect and our options for controlling pests and diseases are reduced.
- Registered veterinary products have been formulated and tested to work in a specific and consistent manner. Simply using the active ingredient, or using a different formulation designed for another purpose, may save money in the short term but will not produce the same results.
- Don’t rely on the internet and social media for advice on ‘home remedies’ and off-label use. Anecdotal accounts are definitely not the same as scientific evidence and can lead to serious efficacy and safety issues (for you, your bees and the environment).
- If you experience any adverse events when using a registered product – including unexpected side effects (to your bees, or yourself) and lack of efficacy – report it. Either directly to the APVMA or to the contact details listed on the label

# CANBERRA REGION BEEKEEPERS
## THEN TO NOW

*Cormac Farrell, President Canberra Region Beekeepers (2016 - 2017)*

The origins of the club *(then known as the ACT Beekeepers Association)* seems to be lost in the mists of time. Some of the original members that I have talked to think that it started sometime in the 1980's. Certainly there was no formal membership list that has survived into the internet age. When I first started going to meetings in around 2012 it was a well-established club under President John Grubb, with regular meetings, a formal training course for beginners and also ran beekeeping awards for the Canberra Royal Show.

There were a few major evolutions in the club in the following years – firstly in the form of a formal agreement with the ACT Government to establish a club training apiary at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Centre in 2014. This paved the way for what has become the major program of 'hands on' events that the club runs, including multi-day beginners courses, field days and club honey harvests. At one of the latter events, some very enthusiastic uncapping of frames left honey sprayed across the roof of the training rooms – made for some interesting explanations to the site rangers!

Engagement with both the local and federal governments deepened in 2017, when the club started to support the Sentinel Hive Program of biosecurity checks for hives around Canberra airport. The field component of the hive checks and floral sweeps was conducted entirely by club members. This had the effect of significantly raising the awareness of bee biosecurity within the club, and even after the Canberra part of the program finished in 2020.

Canberra is known as a city of gardeners, and beekeeping was always a popular part of this, but things really started to take off in 2018, where the club reached the milestone of 500 members under the then President Dermot Asls Sha'Non. Despite being a Collingwood supporter, he proved popular with a wide range of new beekeepers, as well as the establishment of a native bee special interest group.

The Association also played a major role in the inaugural events for World Bee Day in 2018, supporting events at several embassies in their events. The club had purchased a beautiful,

handcrafted display hive, and this was used to great effect to showcase bees to the wider public. The involvement of the club in World Bee Day events continues to this day, centred around support for the many embassies that maintain both native bee habitat and honeybee hives.

With the presidential torch now passed to Ian Hawke, the Canberra Region Beekeepers continues to support recreational beekeepers, with a friendly atmosphere, regular training courses and the re-establishment of club field days post-covid ■

## Why should you become a swarm collector

You have probably heard recently how the Varroa numbers in your hive are going to be quite dynamic for the next few years and how that will complicate treatment plans. The main reason for this variability is feral and other untreated bee colonies absconding or just collapsing and the resulting bloom of varroa looking for a new host colony.

If for the next few years you help by catching a few swarms in your area then you will be helping to push the wave of varroa down which will help everybody. Another important thing to remember is that beekeeping is not a right it's a privilege and the less impact you can have on neighbours the better your beekeeping environment will be, so catch those swarms before they move into your neighbours walls and require an expensive pest controller visit.

I have always found catching swarms to be a fun highly rewarding activity, you meet lots of people who are fascinated in what you do as a beekeeper. It's a great way of getting other people interested in bees and beekeeping, perhaps you can also encourage putting down the pesticide container and picking up a box of seeds instead.

Originally I was going to write a full article on how to collect a bee swarm but a quick search on google showed so many videos and articles that I felt there was no point in duplicating what was already out there.

I do however have a few points to remember.

1. Always wear your PPE it only takes one sting to an eyeball for you to have a very bad day
2. Be wary of ladders use a bucket on a stick rather than climb a ladder
3. No need to smoke the bees as they have nothing to defend and smoke will just confuse them.
4. Make sure the box is big enough as a 5 frame coreflute box and a large swarm usually means the bees will over heat and die, or just leave.
5. Wait until dark when all the bees are home before relocating the swarm, swarms also can be moved without the usual distance constraints.
6. Make sure there is ventilation at the top of the box when relocating the swarm, I use a lid of fly wire as heat rises and a ventilated bottom board does not provide good ventilation
7. Don't lock the bees in too long, move the swarm to its new location and open the door ASAP
8. Bees can't see red light so use a red torch at night time to see what you are doing.
9. Swarms are fun

Below I have included the user manual on how to maintain your swarm collector records, please update and register now as swarming is not that far away ■

Amateur Beekeepers Australia

*Better apiculture through knowledge*

# ABA Swarm System and Insurance Portal (ABA Portal)

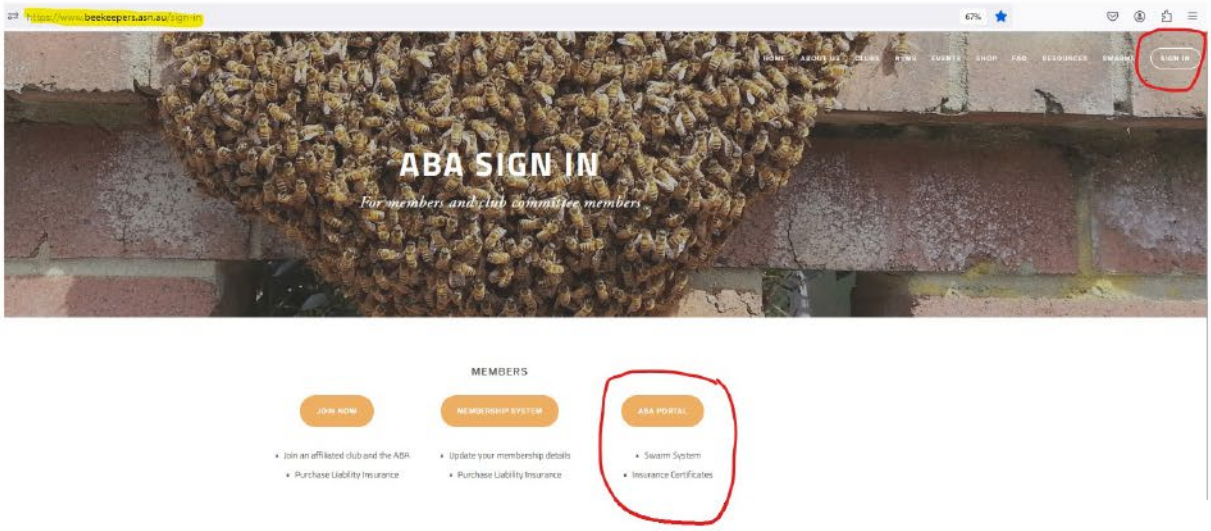
This user manual provides an overview on how members can:

- list themselves on the ABA Swarm Collector inventory www.beekeepers.asn.au/swarms
- access their Certificate of Currency for the Optional Public and Product Liability Insurance
- request bespoke insurance certificates (Business Name / Interested Parties)

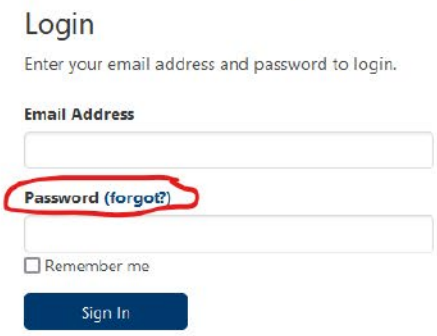
All members are automatically set up in the ABA Portal once their membership has been approved by their club.

## Access

The Membership System and the Swarm System and Insurance Portal (ABA Portal) can be accessed via the ABA webpage www.beekeepers.asn.au/sign-in (top right hand side on ABA webpage).

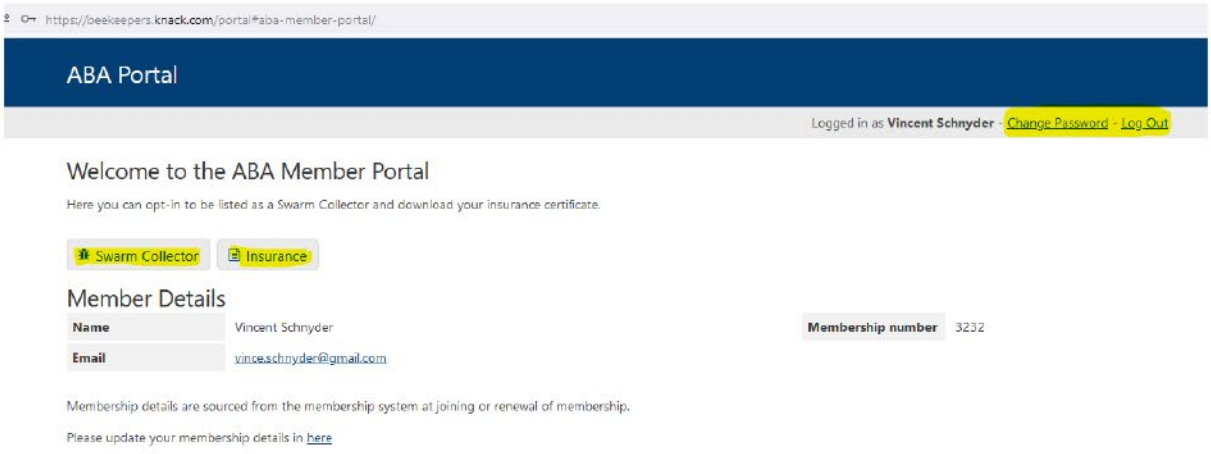



The ABA Portal is hosted on a different platform than the membership system and the two platforms don't share the passwords. As a result, you will need to set your own password when you login for the first time (or whenever you need a new password) via the "Password (forgot?)" link.




From the Welcome page you can access the

- **Swarm Collector** tab
    - where you can elect to be included in the Swarm Collector database
- **Insurance** tab
    - where members who purchased the optional Public Liability Insurance can download their Certificate of Currency once issued by our insurance broker
    - request a bespoke certificates if you need your business name or an interested party listed



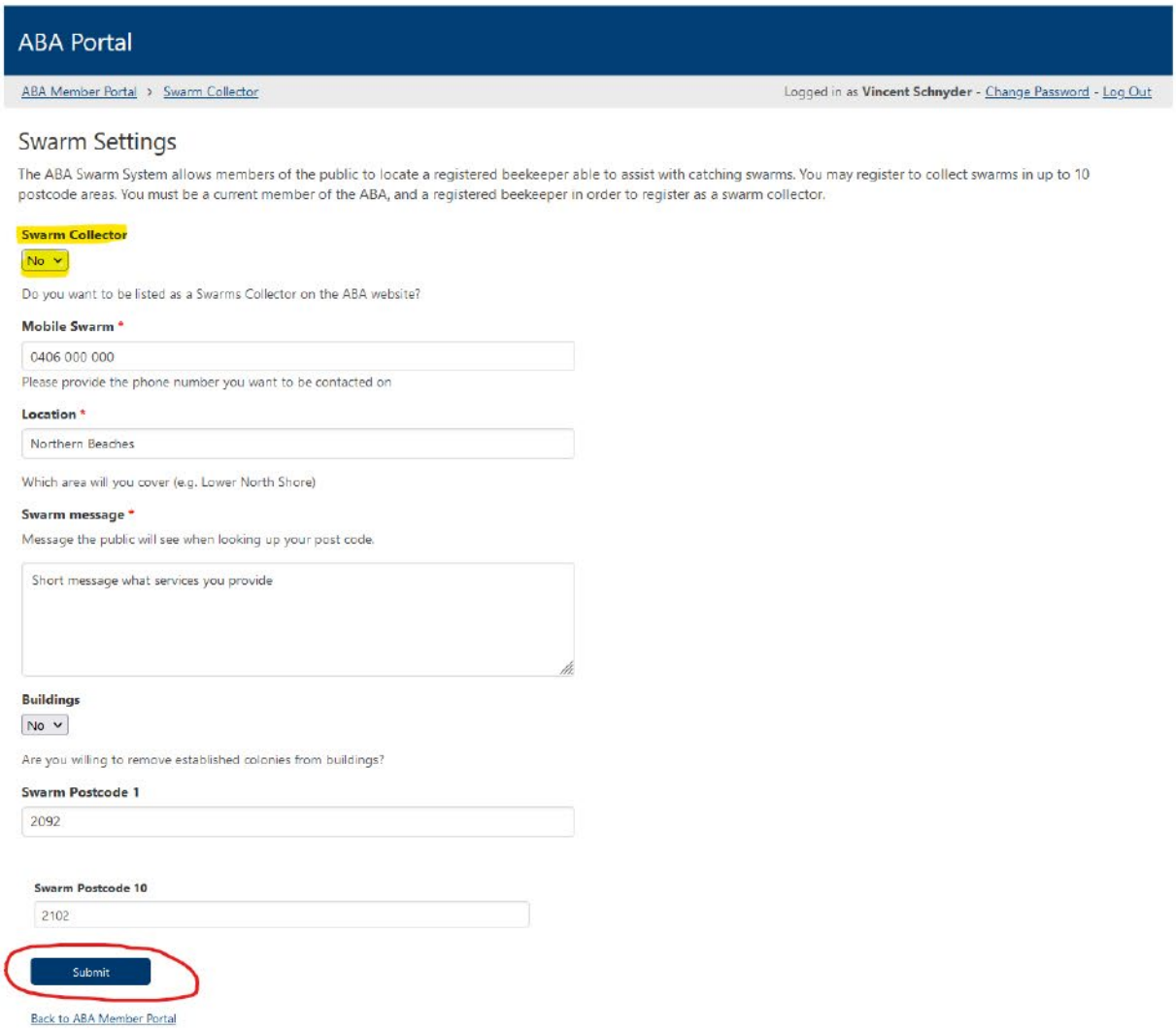

On the top right hand side you can change your password and log-out.

## Swarm Collector

By default, the Swarm Collector status is set to "no".

To be listed on the Swarm Collector Register, change the setting to "yes", complete the details below and click "submit" on the bottom of the page which will update the public Swarm Collector Register instantly.

To remove yourself from the Swarm Collector Register, change the "Swarm Collector" status to "no" and click on submit.



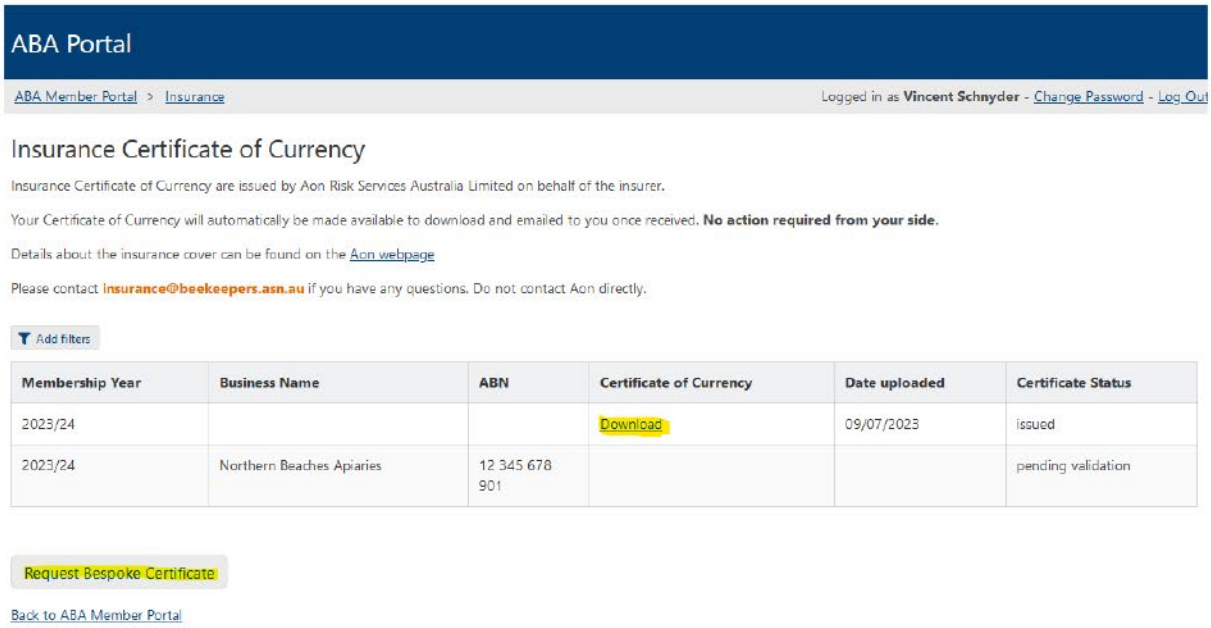

Please contact support@beekeepers.freshdesk.com for any Swarm System related queries.

## Insurance Certificates

Members who purchased the optional Public and Product Liability Insurance can access their Certificate of Currency from the Insurance tab on the portal.

Once the membership application has been approved and a membership number allocated, we will request an insurance certificate of currency to be issued and will automatically email it and make it available on the portal. This can take between one to four weeks depending on the cut-off date for each batch.

Members DO NOT need to take any action to get their certificate issued.




## Bespoke Certificates

Some members require a certificate with their Business Name or an Interested Party listed.

**Interested Parties** can be market operators, Local Land Services, Councils, etc. However, NSW DPI or DAF Qld are most likely not interested parties.

**Business Name:** Certificates with a business name listed can only be issued if the business name is registered with ASIC in the name of the member.

Requests for certificates with business names where the business name is registered by a trust, company, etc. will be rejected.

Please contact insurance@beekeepers.asn.au for any insurance related queries.