

ApiNZ Science and Research Focus Group Meeting Notes Summary **Tuesday 8 October 2019**

The ApiNZ Science and Research Focus Group met in Wellington on 8 October to receive updates and prepare actions going forward.

Apimondia

The Group were updated on the various presentations from those who attended this year's Apimondia.

- Linda Newstrom-Lloyd's work is world-leading and the tools she is developing, eg planting guides, are well advanced compared to other international work.
- Honey adulteration featured strongly and its impact on honey globally.
- It was noted that economists were saying the prices should be going up for honey, but that the scale of adulteration has sky-rocketed and was impacting prices. This information to be shared with ApiNZ members.
- In discussing potential solutions, the Group felt that all labs need to work together if realistic solutions were to be found.
- The European COLOSS results for last winter were summarised, noting their low beekeeper participation (ie the median is 2% of beekeepers reporting in the survey) compared with New Zealand at 40% participation. Work being undertaken with Europeans to get results in international Apiculture Journals.
- Canada is doing a lot of work on honey-bee breeding (Shelley Hoover – who is a speaker at the 2020 ApiNZ Conference) and has an interesting project around AFB resistance and a really good discussion about quality of imported versus domestic queen bees.

Giant Willow Aphid

Stephanie Sopow, Scion has put a very detailed proposal for the release of the GWA parasitoid *Pauesia nigrovaria* to the EPA.

- It was noted that most of the submissions are in favour of the release, bar two opponents.
- That the proposal has been thoroughly tested against our native aphids
- Has been a problem particularly for multifloral manuka honey because of the presence of melezitose component of the honey
- The public session with EPA is being held on 24 October – ApiNZ will be presenting via Barry Foster, Chair of this Group.
- There is a concern that if we get approval we will be unable to rear mass *Pauesia* outside of containment and we need to start talking to EPA now to change the status of this.

The role of Science & Research Focus Group in providing scientific advice to other ApiNZ groups

The Group discussed how we can find better ways to share knowledge and information between the different Focus Groups, examples given where there are technology transfers, for example, in the Education & Skills Focus Group and the Manuka Honey Science Definition in the Standards, Compliance and Regulatory Group. The Management team are to discuss how we ensure this occurs with the Focus Group meetings in 2020.

Myrtle Rust

- Don MacCleod represented ApiNZ members at the recent MR Symposium where presenters described MR as a super pathogen and not positive for New Zealand given some of the new international strains coming through and which have had a big economic effect in those countries.
- Concern that we are still at the early start of MR and so the affect has not really been seen yet.
- MPI has stopped the eradication effort.
- There is some resistance to MR according to Landcare and that resistance genes are widespread in manuka/kanuka but that all the six species are susceptible and more research is needed.
- Conclusions – MR is here to stay, still has a lot of spreading to do and will have some species affected e.g. Ramarama and Rahoutu; Manuka will be affected but too early quantify the total effect.
- So what can we do to support beekeepers?
 - Learn how to identify it correctly – trained Maori observers and that course is available via Alby Marsh from Plant & Food
 - What do you do when you see it – don't touch it, take photos and submit to www.inaturalist.org where experts can verify it or not
 - You can call MPI hotline but it's not recorded
 - Beekeepers arrive clean, leave clean – ensure equipment clean and arrive clean and wash them before

Wasp Biocontrol

- Landcare is looking at an application to release two bio controls. These are *Volucella inanis* (fly) and *Metoecus paradoxus* (beetle). The Group will be kept up to date with the application and its support will be sought by Landcare.

Future of Varroa Research

- The Group were advised of a Skype call with a small group and Lincoln University looking to collaborate around varroa research to have a better chance of succeeding re-funding.
- Varroa remains the number one issue, would another Varroa Summit 2 be a useful next step?

EPA and surfactants submission

- EPA does not seem to want to take action on surfactants and their well-documented impact on bee health
- We need to work on how to raise awareness and get action with EPA, looking at government approach as well.

Colony Loss Survey

- Pike Brown advised that to date there been 2650 responses so far (1000 less than this time last year).
- The results were expected before the end of the year and we need to continue to promote .
- An update was provided on looking at how technology/tracker tools could work with the Colony Loss Survey, e.g.to streamline and shorten time it took to fill the COLOSS survey.

Update on wasp bio control programme/Gene Editing – Phil Lester, Victoria University Wellington

- Phil highlighted significant economic and other effects of wasps across all our primary sectors including apiculture.
- Moving to look at novel pest control technologies, e.g biological controls – introducing a predator or a parasitoid that will kill the wasp – or gene drive/gene silencing – can we make wasps sterile?

- The Group acknowledged that there would be valid industry debate on gene drives, and that we need to look at facilitating that debate, eg possible speaking panel on this topic at the 2020 Conference.
- It was noted that gene silencing is not seen as genetic modification (GE Free) and this has been advised by EPA so would not affect our GM/GE Free status.

Conference 2020 Science Forum

- There was a wide discussion on the make up of the Science Forum/sessions for 2020, topics and suggested speakers
- It was noted there is a conference in Australasian Honeybee 2021 Research Conference in Perth, Australia 2021 29 June – 1 July. Organisers have asked if we could incorporate speakers to coincide with ApiNZ's conference dates.

Zero carbon bill and Freshwater government proposals – impacts on apiculture

- The Freshwater One Billion Trees, Zero Carbon proposal raises concerns that forestry will reduce available land for bees foraging. Losing areas for wintering and building up hives for pollination and honey production.
- The One Billion Trees programme targets two thirds native and one third exotics. The early programme has seen planting of exotics as fast growing to offset carbons. Natives planting will follow.
- Group needs to ensure our industry is aware of this potential issue and will write to the Board including suggesting the use of Trees for Bees to educate on the right trees for the right place for the right purpose.