

April 2026



Issue #2

Canberra Region Beekeepers Newsletter

President's Report - Mark Patterson

I hope this message finds you and your bees thriving. It's been a rewarding season across the region, with favourable summer weather and well-timed rainfall supporting strong hive activity. Many of us have enjoyed a productive honey harvest this year—something we can all take pride in. Our bees have certainly done their part, and it's encouraging to see such positive outcomes across the beekeeping community.

As we look ahead, it's important to remain vigilant. Varroa mites are continuing to spread throughout the Canberra region, and active monitoring is essential. Regular mite washes are a key tool in understanding hive health. As a reminder, the treatment threshold is more than six mites detected in a wash. If your hive reaches or exceeds this level, it's important to take action. There are a range of treatment and management options available—each with its own considerations—so I encourage you to do your research, speak with fellow beekeepers, and choose the approach that best suits your operation and philosophy.

With cooler weather approaching, our focus naturally shifts to preparing hives for winter. This is a critical time in the beekeeping calendar. Ensuring your colonies are strong, well-fed, and properly configured for the colder months will make all the difference to their survival and performance in spring. Taking the time now to assess hive strength, food stores, and overall health is an investment in the seasons ahead.

I'm also pleased to share an important development within our association. We have established a new Biosecurity Officer role to better support our members as we navigate the increasing challenges posed by pests and diseases. This role will help provide guidance, coordination, and up-to-date information to strengthen our collective response and resilience.

Additionally, a quarantine site for bees is now available, managed by the ACT Government biosecurity team. The Quarantine Site Guidelines and Application process are now open. If you have any questions or wish to apply, please contact the team at bees@act.gov.au.

Beekeeping continues to be a journey of learning, adaptation, and community. By staying informed, supporting each other, and taking proactive steps, we can continue to protect our bees and enjoy the rewards they bring.

Wishing you all the best for the season ahead and your ongoing beekeeping journey.



UN World Bee Day 2026 - Cormac Farrell

In the eight years since the first UN World Bee Day celebrations were held, the events on and around the 20th May have become a mainstay in the Canberra beekeeping calendar. While the date of the day itself falls well into autumn, it sits nicely after we have finished our last honey extraction, giving us unique flavors to share that highlight the critical role that bees play in our lives. We always aim to put on a fun series of events that cater to all varieties of bees (and beekeepers)!

These are all now being posted on the [World Bee Day Australia events page](#), providing a central hub for the events across Australia. More events will be added in the coming weeks, so it is worth checking in closer to the date.

Canberra Farmers Markets (Saturday 16th May 6-9am, EPIC)

This year we are planning a joint stall with our friends from ACT for Bees, with their focus on native bees providing the perfect complement to our honeybees. The Farmers Markets have been a fixture of World Bee Day since the beginning, and we will be sticking with the traditional start to the day, with a honey trail through the markets. This doesn't just cover the honey producers, it also includes pollination dependent crops, cut flowers, and my personal favorite honey cakes! It is pretty wonderful seeing the stallholders with honey or honey-infused products showing their bee symbols.

As with previous years, ABC radio will be doing a live cross from the markets, so you will likely hear some familiar voices over the airwaves as you head in!

Parliament House Beekeeping & Garden Tour (Saturday 23th May, tickets required)

The Parliament House hives are one of the more unusual sustainability initiatives in our national Parliament, but this tour also delves into how the management of the gardens contributes to their success. What many people do not realize is that Parliament is surrounded by nearly thirty hectares of gardens, with plants from all over Australia grown and flowering throughout the year. The shifting mix of flowers year to year creates a unique set of flavors in the honey, which you will get to try!

The Parliament hives are managed by a dedicated band of volunteers from Canberra Region Beekeepers, including Cormac, Mark, Jon, Charlie, Martina and even the odd politician lending a hand when time permits.

In addition to the hives themselves, the tour showcases the gardens that produce the nectar, pollen and propolis of the hives. One of the great advantages of this environment is that almost no pesticides are used, with an integrated pest management system centered around staged release of beneficial insects.

Member Meetings

CRB meetings take place on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm at the Harmonie German Club in Narrabundah.

Next Meeting: 15 April 2026



Guest Speaker:

Matt Mortimer has just handed in his PhD thesis in Evolutionary Biology. He brings his interest in evolution to his beekeeping at home.

His talk for the April meeting is on the Carniolan bee and his experience in keeping them. Known also as the grey or the gentle bee, Carniolans are known for their adaptation to cold climates.

7pm, Harmonie German Club in Narrabundah

Apiary Day,

Saturday 25 April 2026 – 1:00pm

Canberra Region Beekeepers Apiary,
2 Dairy Road, Fyshwick.

See all of our events on our website: <https://www.canberraregionbeekeepers.org/event-list>

New Website

Jon Darvill and Mary Sietsma have been building a new CRB website.

It's still a work in progress, but we have decided there is enough functionality there now to go live.

Please take it for a test drive and give us feedback, especially on anything that doesn't work, or doesn't look right on the device you are using. Some parts of the website are available for CRB members only - you can create an account on your first visit.

The blog, calendars and chat groups should be up and running, but we don't have a payment system linked yet, so can't do online bookings and payments. They're coming soon, as is the detailed loan equipment list.

www.canberraregionbeekeepers.org

You can give feedback via the contact form at the bottom of the site, or via email to canberra.committee1@beekeepers.asn.au (Mary) and canberra.committee3@beekeepers.asn.au (Jon)

Bee Buzz Box - Alan Wade



What's a quadrillion?

The number of stars in the many billions of galaxies in the universe is somewhere in the range of 10^{22} – 10^{24} , rather a lot. Their number easily exceeds the estimated number of grains of sand on all the world's beaches and deserts of around eight quintillion, aka $\sim 8 \times 10^{18}$. Yet by some stroke of shared consensus the total number of viruses circulating around the globe appears to be of the order of an unimaginable quadrillion, 10^{15} . And a number 6×10^{23} – just shy of the number of grains of sand stick in the craw of old scientists like Alan. It's the number of molecules in 18 mL of water, a good slurp: 10^{24} would be a good gulp of beer. Another estimate has it that there are at least ten virus particles for every bacterium: viruses are hosted by all life forms even bacteria related archaea. All very confusing but viruses do abound.

Back to the apiary and the humble beekeeper. She (or he) can pick a viral sacbrood outbreak as easily as falling off a log. Larvae infected with sacbrood virus (SBV) come away as a virus particle pouch, pretty evident when a cell is poked with a matchstick. Queen breeders likewise know when the hive matriarchs they are trying to raise are smitten with black queen cell virus (BQCV). The affected queen larvae at first turn brown but soon become a capsule of black virus woggeries. No wonder Spanish flu, Covid and Ebola viruses have raised the flag.

However most honey bee viruses we've heard about leave no visible signature though there maybe as many as 10^{11} , a mere 100 thousand million, particles in a single bee. As Alan will outline, there are plenty of different viruses, some well known. Many are not overtly pathogenic while still others are simply shared having been picked up from flowers visited by wasps, bees, ants and butterflies. Brian Johnson posits that honey bee viruses might better termed pollinator viruses.

Individual viruses are hard to see unless you have an electron microscope handy. Best known by their acronyms: ABPV, IBPV, SBPV, LSV... it seems that the whole topic should be left to those in white lab coats. But wait there is more to be told. Gather round the camp fire and hear stories about how viruses exchange jeans, sorry genes, and avoid the unmentionable. Our story this month is just an introduction to honey bee viruses. To find out more Alan concludes this month's Bee Buzz Box by listing ten very readable reviews that cover topics such as virus detection and management. [Settle down for a quick read but a longer journey with the full article on our website.](#)

News from the Club Apiary

Peter Czeti (and Jon Darvill)



Current Apiary Manifest - we currently have the following hive types under management:

- 12 x Langstroth (includes 3 Flow hives)
- 4 x Warres
- 3 x Kenyan Top Bars (an additional KTB is undergoing repair)
- 1 x Horizontal Langstroth (acting as our ready queen bank - more on this in a moment).

Productivity for the apiary was quite paltry this season with only several colonies performing to a reasonable standard. This was most likely to poor queens as most other beekeepers around Canberra seemed to doing quite well with their harvest. I would estimate about 120kg of surplus honey across the whole apiary - which is pretty paltry considering the dozen or so langstroths in residence. We will likely need to do a major re-queening effort as there is really no reason why the apiary performed so poorly.

Varroa was detected at the Wetlands apiary last apiary day. Two hives had levels of the mite that required treatment which has begun using oxalic strips. We are doing our final biosecurity checks in the next couple of weeks to determine what our over-wintering treatment strategy will be. If the rate of mite infestation remains low then we will likely roll out OA strips across all the colonies which should see them through to the winter. As we decide what we are going to do, we will post our decisions and progress on Facebook and our website chat groups so folks can see what we are doing and decide if that works for them.

Regardless of what happens over Winter, in the coming Spring my intent is to do the obligatory mite wash and run a round of Formic Acid if mite numbers are rising beyond the threshold. After the Formic Acid treatment, we will re-queen the apiary. It will take place over a couple of months as I re-queen the poorest performers first during the September apiary day and then finish the remaining number in October.

I mentioned above that we have a horizontal langstroth acting as a queen bank. Jon constructed this beauty with seven bays of about 4 frames of bees each. These queens are for member emergencies (as the highest priority) and we aim to have these readily on hand throughout the season, but particularly in Spring and Autumn. Queens are available to members at \$45 per queen. When you consider that purchasing a queen will usually be in the order of \$60 (then postage of another \$15-20), we think these are a good deal. These queens are good quality coming from the Australian Queen Bee Breeder's Association (AQBBA) R&D Apiary near Newcastle. Hopefully in a few years time, we mite (pun intended) start seeing some varroa resistance in them as well. Arrangements for the pickup of emergency queens will need to be done separately so that we can get those queens into colonies as soon as possible. However, the aim is that the queens are ready to go within several days of request as they will be caged at pickup and have been laying across the 4 frame colonies in the bank. Depending on how long it takes to place the queen in a colony, they will be caged singly or with attendants. All queens are marked.

We can supply queens in addition to the emergency ones for members who wish to improve their own bees but you will need to order them in advance (about 3-4 weeks notice) so that we can maintain supply for emergencies and the limit is two queens per order. Generally, queens ordered this way will be available for pickup from the Jerra Apiary during apiary days.

We won't be mailing the queens. You will have to come out to Jerra apiary to pick them up. An order and payment form will be available on the CRB website soon (you will have to be logged in as a member to access it).

New equipment is being ordered to make mite checks a bit easier eg mesh screen floors for the Warre hives, plastic tubs and cup measures. A gorilla cart will also be purchased to ease the beeks back. The club has also purchased a limited number of alcohol wash containers that will be available for members at tomorrow's meeting, \$10.00 cash only.

Miriam, the Parks and Wildlife ranger, has asked that we no longer drive vehicles to the apiary shed as it compacts soil and endangers little critters that are living around the place.