

APIARY

NOTES



*Contributed by Officers
of the
Horticulture Division*

Moving Bees to New Sites

WHILE the subject of apiary legislation has been dealt with on a number of occasions, the following explanation of legislation governing the removal of bees from one location to another is well worth repeating for the benefit of beekeepers who may find it necessary to move their bees during the coming season.

The beekeeper who gives proper attention to his bees is a benefactor to his neighbours, as he fills gardens, orchards, and fields with willing workers, but he has no control over the flight of his bees. Therefore, he must run the risk of their contracting infectious disease unless all other beekeepers in the neighbourhood co-operate. He cannot take precautions against his neighbours' carelessness, and consequently he wages a losing battle where disease exists in neighbouring apiaries unless the State gives him legal protection.

Section 7 of the Apiaries Act deals with the moving of bees and appliances from one location to another. No colonies may be moved without the written consent of an Inspector. This precaution is taken to prevent the transfer of diseased bees to the neighbourhood of clean apiaries, as much harm has been done in the past by such practices. Any beekeeper who moves colonies more than 10 chains without a permit, or fails to observe the conditions imposed by an Inspector, is liable to a fine of £25. The allowance of a range of 10 chains is mainly to facilitate local readjustments of apiary sites.

Moving Bees

As indicated in last month's notes, the best time to move bees in New Zealand is in the early spring, when the bees have begun to take interest in the new season's activities and there is little brood in the hives to be injured. Shifting bees long distances may be carried out with perfect safety during the next three months, provided

adequate ventilation is allowed and certain precautions are taken.

It is not necessary to use both top and bottom screens to shift hives of bees short distances. The supers, lids, and floorboards should be secured with either crate staples or wooden slats sufficient to hold a complete hive firmly together and not allow the escape of bees. Finally, the entrance of each hive may be closed with a piece of wire gauze which can be conveniently removed when the hives have been placed on their permanent stands at the new location. The removal of the crate staples or wooden slats should not be attempted immediately the bees are released, as they are in no mood for further disturbance, and should be allowed to settle down as quickly as possible.

Where medium-strength hives are to be moved only a few miles, the entrance to each hive may be closed with a wad of green grass or sacking, which is easily and quickly pulled away after all hives have been placed in position.

At this time of the year, when the colonies are not very strong, there is usually sufficient ventilation through the cracks and joints of the hive without the use of top screens.

Long-distance Removals

To rail and ship hives long distances, when the bees must be confined for weeks, requires a great deal more care, and special precautions must be taken.

The combs selected should be built with full sheets of foundation securely wired and completely fastened to every part of the frames, including the bottom bar. Partly fastened combs built on unwired foundation will break down and crush or smother the queen and bees.

Self-spacing frames (Hoffman type) wedged tightly together to prevent movement are best.

Where the combs are narrow and inclined to wobble at the bottom when the hives are tilted, it is advisable to place suitable wedges in position between the bottom bars. Loose, swinging frames irritate the bees, and very often crush large numbers of them during transit.

It is important to provide the bees with the very best stores, and the honey should be mostly capped over. Any combs containing freshly-stored nectar should be removed, as this would shake out of the combs in the first few hours and smother the bees.

Old Field Bees

To get rid of the old flying bees as far as possible, the hives should be moved from their original stands two or three days before finally closing them up. Old field bees worry a great deal and die off quickly when they are confined. Where there are large numbers they block the bottom ventilation screen.

Screens

A wooden frame 7-8in. x 2in. the same dimensions as a ten-frame hive should be made and covered with close-mesh wire gauze. To place in position, remove the mat covering the bees and screw the screen down on top of the hives. The screen should fit flush with the outside edge. Close the entrance to each hive with wire gauze held in place by two slats of wood—one across the lower edge of the hive front and the other across the bottom board. If these precautions are taken it is possible to ship bees long distances over a period of weeks, provided the hives are placed where there is a circulation of fresh air at all times.

Another very serviceable type of screen for use where constant removals take place, is constructed similar to a flat hive lid with wire gauze running the full length down the centre and about 9 inches wide. Nail a piece of wood 2in. x 1in. on the top of the screen across each end. These pieces allow a one-inch air space, and act as standing blocks when the screen is in