

BEEKEEPING IN THE TARANAKI PROVINCE



Boxthorn hedges used for shelter on the Waimate Plains.

quick get-away, so that there is no flood hazard for beehives. The soil is mainly a light volcanic ash which is fertile, sweet, and porous. It allows a quick response in growth to sudden warmer conditions.

A network of roads which are mainly tar sealed gives good access to nearly every part of the province.

Shelter

The lack of major shelter in south and south-west Taranaki has been due mainly to the devastating effects of the salt-laden winds from the sea. About 45 years ago Taranaki experienced one of these extreme winds, which burnt up practically all exotic shelter trees. An African boxthorn hedge (*Lycium ferocissimum*) growing near the main road at Riverdale which survived this storm demonstrated the suitability of this species for the coast.

Since then it has become very popular as a low shelter and impenetrable hedge and farmers have planted hundreds of miles of these hedges, plantings of the species far exceeding those in any other district in New Zealand. The greatest concentration of these dual-purpose hedges is in the Waimate West County. From about midway between Hawera and Eltham

boxthorn hedges are replaced by barberry hedges (*Berberis vulgaris*), and these extend around the inland side of the mountain to within a few miles of the north-western coast. There are some well-established plantations of *Pinus radiata* and gum trees and some handsome clumps of native bush between Stratford and Waitara. Many shelter belts of *Pinus radiata* and macrocarpa have been planted in south-western Taranaki in recent years and the beneficial effects will be felt progressively by those keeping bees in this area.

Type of Equipment

Fortunately for Taranaki beekeepers the pioneers of the industry began with good well-made hives which were properly painted. Those who followed appear to have maintained this standard of quality. Every commercial beekeeper in the province has manufactured his own hive parts. Hives are almost universally set in pairs on two 3in. x 2in. runners which are fixed to four stout pegs driven into the ground. This set-up has much to commend it, as hives standing upright on an even foundation not only are testimony to the hand of the skilled workman but the supers are not likely to get out of alignment as do those in hives on the ground after settlement

takes place; their combs also remain in proper shape.

Although a few beekeepers have in the past dipped hives in paraffin wax, practically every commercial apiarist today is using a lead and oil paint for apiary equipment. Much of the well-painted hive equipment made by the early beekeepers is still in service. Unsightly hives covered with tar and kerosene or motor sump oil are a rarity in Taranaki.

The majority of hives are made to the dimensions of the standard 10-framed hive, but a few beekeepers in south Taranaki have used a 12-frame hive for many years and they have developed a system of management applicable to the large hive. The departure from the Dominion standard does not appear to have given any over-all advantage and returns of honey per hive do not exceed those of neighbouring beekeepers using standard equipment. It is mainly a question of adjusting the system of management to suit the large hive.

Most of the honey houses are built on the gravity principle, although a few of the latest buildings are of the level-floor type with a honey pump installed. Beekeepers have not yet built such adjuncts to the handling of honey as a warming room, drying unit, or cooling compartment.



An apiary in the shelter of a boxthorn hedge.