

Responsibilities of Beekeepers

IN countries such as New Zealand which depend on agricultural, pastoral, and horticultural products for the greater part of their exportable surplus, honey bees are important in the maintenance of a sound national economy. In addition to their production of honey for food and commercial beeswax, which is valuable in the manufacture of insulating and other compounds, honey bees are the only pollinating insects which can be controlled in sufficient measure to provide a nation-wide service of pollination and consequent regeneration of economic plants, particularly pasture species and fruiting trees and shrubs. The continued economic existence of beekeeping in this country is dependent on the effective control of destructive bee diseases, and legislation designed to this end has been in existence for many years.

IN this article D. Roberts, Apiary Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Auckland, summarises the main responsibilities of beekeepers under the Regulations embodied in the Apiaries Act 1927 and its subsequent amendments.

Valuable Pollination Service

Introduced into this country little more than a century ago, honey bees have, particularly in latter years, played an important role in the maintenance of pastures and production of essential foods. The value of their services in this connection cannot be fully defined, but investigation in overseas countries with similar agricultural economies has shown that the value of the pollination services rendered by honey bees is many times greater than the worth of the honey and beeswax produced. Following on research into this question recognition of the value of the honey bee as a pollinator is now becoming widespread, particularly in the United States of America, where a substantial business devoted to the supply of bees for this purpose only has arisen.

Best Adapted of the Insects as Pollinator

The honey bee represents the highest development as a flower pollinator attained by any member of the insect world, and of all the insects that depend on flowers for their existence they are the best adapted by bodily structure to act as carriers of pollen. The complete dependence of the honey bee on the two plant products pollen and nectar for its existence both in the larval and adult stage, together with its habit of frequenting only one species of plant at a time, makes it a much more effective pollinator than insects which visit all flowers promiscuously.

Introduction of Protective Legislation

Like other creatures, bees are subject to certain infectious and destructive diseases, and after widespread outbreaks of foul-brood disease (*Bacillus larvae*) which about 50 years ago threatened the existence of beekeeping in New Zealand, it became evident that survival of the industry could be accomplished only by the introduction of protective legislation.

Introduced in 1907, the Apiaries Act was amended in 1913 and again in 1920 and was subsequently re-enacted in 1927 in a form designed to provide the maximum of service and protection to beekeepers and to ensure as far as possible the economic production of honey and beeswax and the continuation of an adequate national pollination service. To ensure the effective continuance of this protection and service to the industry strict adherence to Regulations under the Act is necessary, and it is the duty of every beekeeper to become thoroughly familiar with these Regulations as they apply to the individual.

The Act is administered by the Department of Agriculture, which maintains a staff of Apiary Instructors, whose duties include administration of the Regulations for control of bee diseases and the giving of instruction on care and management of apiaries, honey houses, and honey-house equipment.

The existence of beekeeping in New Zealand depends on the maintenance of efficient disease control and this is possible only with the full co-operation of all beekeepers. Because the Apiaries Act, like many others on the Statute



[Rendell's Photo Service photo.]

Standard movable-frame hive, which enables manipulation and examination of bees and brood combs to be carried out.

Book, is not being continually publicised, there is a tendency for many apiarists to fail to observe its requirements fully.

Registration of Apiaries

All apiaries, whether of one hive or more, must be registered under the Apiaries Act, and it is the responsibility of individual beekeepers to make application for registration of their apiaries. Application forms may be obtained from any office of the Department of Agriculture. Application cards (forms) are already addressed and may be posted loose without stamps. There is no charge for registration.

When a change takes place in the ownership of an apiary for which a certificate of registration has been issued or where an apiary is removed or is closed for any reason the Registrar of Apiaries, Department of Agriculture, should be notified and the registration certificate returned for cancellation. Any new owner must make application for registration of the apiary in his own name immediately.

Compulsory registration is necessary for statistical purposes and so that apiaries may be found readily for periodical inspection for control of bee diseases.

To enable the apiary register to be kept up-to-date beekeepers are required to notify the Registrar of Apiaries in May (previously June) each year of any increase or decrease in the number of hives kept at each apiary if there is a change in the number of more than 5 hives.

Any person keeping unregistered hives or allowing them to be kept on his land is liable to a fine of £20.

Sale or Removal of Bees

A permit for the sale or removal of hives to a new location must be obtained from the Apiary Instructor for the district. The object of this regulation is to prevent the transfer of diseased bees or infected hive material to the