



# SOUTHERNS BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION

GAUTENG PROVINCE AND COUNTRY DISTRICTS

## NEWSLETTER

JULY 2008 - JAN 2009

Southerns Beekeeping Association

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## Editorial

Here we are in 2009! I hope you all enjoyed the festive season and that this New Year will fulfill your hopes and dreams. For beekeepers that means full supers and no problems!

I wrote the last editorial at the end of May last year. A lot of activity has taken place at Southern since then. I have included my Chairman's report for 2008 in this Newsletter, so if you unable to be at some of the events, you can read about what you missed.

At the Annual General Meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November there were some new committee members elected. Hanneke van Linge was elected as Secretary. She is new to beekeeping, but full of enthusiasm for the craft. I approached Andrew Etzinger to ask if he would serve as a committee member. He was unable to be at the meeting, but was nevertheless elected. Mike Miles said he would no longer be on the committee, but a few days later he reconsidered and agreed to remain as a committee member, specifically to continue in the role as Treasurer. He had set up a new efficient accounting system, which works very well and he wants to make sure that it carries on. Thank you Mike for changing your mind! In addition, he will continue to manage the website that he created and make sure that it continues to serve us well. Caroline Whitehead, after a number of years on the committee decided not to stand again. Thank you for your enthusiasm, always full of new ideas. We will miss you!

Dean Martin continues as membership secretary. He is the guy that greets you when arrive at our meetings and asks you to 'clock in'. Paul Edwards continues as a committee member. He organized our involvement at Wits University's annual YeboGogo exhibition at Wits at the end of September. We were able to give advice and information to members of the public and promote beekeeping and what we do.

The last item on the agenda was, were there any nominations for any member to be made a Fellow of Southern Beekeeping Association? This is an accolade, awarded in recognition of outstanding time and effort in

promoting the aims and objects of the Association. Without hesitation, the name of Mike Miles was proposed and unanimously elected to be only the sixth Fellow to be honoured with this title, at this time. Congratulations Mike!

In my Chairman's report I had already commented, that his efforts to promote our association and in recognition of the enormous amount of work into organizing BEECON 2007, had not gone unnoticed by SABIO. At BEECON 2008, in Heidelberg, Southern Cape, he was one of only four people nationwide, to be called up at the SABIO AGM and presented with a certificate in recognition of his outstanding services to beekeeping in South Africa. Mike we are proud of you!

The highlight of the year, for me, was the trip to Theunis Engelbrecht's Douglas Bee Farms, in the Northern Cape. About twenty members attended. There is a selection of photos taken printed in this Newsletter, so you can see what you missed. There was a report of our visit printed in the December 2008 issue of the South African Bee Journal.

I have included items, originating from the UK, but I believe are relevant to beekeepers everywhere. The proposed banning of agricultural spraying is controversial, but is what many will fully support. I am afraid of the amount of chemicals used at all stages of the food chain, and restrictive regulations, to my mind, are long overdue. I am sure many 'greenies' will agree.

If any member comes across any interesting bee related articles, please send keep me informed, as they may be worthy of inclusion in our Newsletters.

Lastly, a huge vote of thanks to Hans and Jean Steenpoote for the wonderful year-end function they hosted at their home in President Park. Hans built his own brick pizza oven and took great delight in expertly cooking dozens of pizzas that we all made up ourselves with a huge variety of toppings that were available. Rhoda and I were sorry that we were only able to stay for a short while.

THE EDITOR

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2008

In 2008 our levels of activities were maintained at the same pace as 2007, well not quite as hectic, as we did not have BEECON to organize. Once again we have to be grateful to Mike Miles for putting together a varied and informative programme of monthly meetings and field days. For many, the highlight of the year, certainly for me, was the visit to Douglas Bee Farms. Whether you are new to beekeeping, or a seasoned practitioner of the craft, there was something new to see. If you missed it, you missed out!

The membership of Southern is now over one hundred. I have never known there be so many members since I first attended meetings in 1980. We do not have records of the early days, so we do not know if we now have more members than ever, in the one hundred and one years since Southern was founded as Southern Transvaal Beekeeping Association.

Effective communication, not only with existing members, but attracting new members has been the main reason, I believe for this success. I have said so before, but to his embarrassment, I will repeat that the award presented to Mike Miles at BEECON, in Heidelberg, in July, reflected the time and effort he has put into beekeeping, not only for us, but for all South African beekeepers. Mike was instrumental in setting up and maintaining our web site. It has been recognized as being very informative. As Chairman, I am often the first person people contact, and very often receive complimentary comments about the professional standard of the site. It is important that the new committee give priority to keep up the standards we have set.

We have had exposure on radio at least three times. I am sure that this would not have occurred, if we did not have our web site. I was involved with the making of a TV programme, scheduled for screening sometime in 2009 on SABC 2, involving nature and the environment. The problems with Colony Collapse Disorder, has given beekeeping public exposure that it has not had for generations, so we have and should continue to use these opportunities to promote beekeeping.

The rapid increase in the price of fuel highlighted the need to consider whether Saronde Valley was the most suitable venue, bearing in mind where the majority of members live. The change to this venue took place from August. Since we have been using Bryanston Sports Club, the numbers attending has increased and we have seen some members who have not attended for years, as it is now more convenient for them. Change does not always suit everyone; the committee recognize this, and will keep the various options under review.

To remind you of what we did in 2008, we opened our programme with a return visit by Tracey Gill from the SA Weather Bureau. I was amazed as to how well they are equipped with sophisticated equipment which, not only records what has happened, but can provide far more accurate forecasts than hitherto.

Our beef farmer, and honey bottler member, Eddie van Zyl, kept us in the picture so far as the health and food regulations are concerned. Many of us, including me, are using equipment for handling honey which no longer complies with health regulations. We need to consider circulating members with information about what materials are no longer approved for handling and the storage of honey.

Winter returned, with a vengeance on 16<sup>th</sup> March. It was only eight degrees on my thermometer as we drove through the driving rain to Kevin and Glynis Armitage's farm near Standerton. It was impossible to open any hives, but we did drive out to see where some of his hives are situated. As we could not look at any bees, we spent time extracting honey for him using his extracting plant, which is housed in a cargo container. This was followed by a tasteful lunch in the wonderful, century old family farmhouse, complete with antique furniture. A living museum!

Clement Pitso spoke briefly of his visit to Japan, and the same evening in April, we viewed a video that Keegan Blignaut had made about moving hives.

In May, Nick and Natalie told us about the honey related cosmetics business they operate. Later in the year they opened their shop in Muldersdrift. Go and visit them and buy your Christmas gifts. They demonstrate what enterprise can achieve!

Crispen Jackson never fails to keep your attention. His description of the time he spent living in Norway gave us an insight of life there, not so much about beekeeping, but about ice fishing and ducking into the freezing waters through a hole cut into the ice. We did also see some summer time photos, including quite a number of lovely trout that he caught fly fishing.

*Continued on next page...*



*Three beekeepers with over 100 years of experience; Tom Cain, Manfred Leitner & Theunis Engelbrecht*



*At Hans Steenpoorte's year end pizza party*

*Members at Douglas Bee Farms*



In July we were very fortunate to have Dr. Peter Neumann, from the Federal Swiss Bee Research Institute and visiting Researcher at the University of Pretoria, department of Zoology and Entomology. He also is Co-ordinator of a Global Research Programme (involving 34 countries and 78 Institutions). He addressed us about the Colony Collapse disorder. We were privileged to have such a competent speaker address us. He was also able to show us pictures of how bees are transported on HUGE trucks through out the length and breadth of the United States. This is one of the possible causes of this huge problem for beekeepers there and also in Europe. His collection of bee photos on his lap top were the most I had ever seen! If I hadn't stopped him talking, we would have been there until midnight!

For our August meeting Clive Cockerell went to a lot of trouble to prepare a comprehensive talk about trees attractive to bees, complete with photos of all the trees he described. Thanks Clive!

On 4<sup>th</sup> September we had a general discussion on spring management. Some commented we had the meeting too late, as our spring management should have been completed a month or more before. Plenty of debate took place. This is important as newer members can benefit from general discussions that take place at our monthly meetings. I want anyone with a question, to ask for advice at our meetings, so that everybody can learn. One of the reasons for being a member is to be guided by experienced beekeepers. They will freely give you the benefit of their wisdom.

Tina Lear spoke to us about beeswax. She gave us a lot of history about early beekeepers believing that the wax was collected by the bees, before it was realized that the bees produce the wax themselves. Eddie Lear also commented that the severe aggression of bee colonies experienced by many beekeepers during the early summer could not be easily explained, but the day he had a problem with his bees, it was quite a windy day, so this may have been the cause of the bad temper experienced.

## FIELD DAYS

There is nothing like seeing how other beekeepers manage their hives. Our Field Days provide members with those opportunities. In 2008 we have had five such days plus a three nights stay at Broadwater Resort, close to Douglas in the Northern Cape.

Theunis Englebrecht, owner of Douglas Bee Farms, put together a comprehensive programme, which included viewing his beeyard, to use an American expression, where we saw how he positions his hives on pallets, for ease of handling, with a fork lift truck, Queen rearing hives, and we had the opportunity of grafting larvae into queen cups. He also showed us queen cages used for transporting bees through the post!

We visited bees pollinating three hectares of spring onions, and also to the apiary where fifty small hives, with newly reared queens, had been introduced. The hives were being fed to stimulate the queen to lay, so that the colonies would quickly establish themselves onto eight frames. At this size they can then be used for pollination. Almost fifty percent of his income is earned from pollination fees, a fact that comes as a surprise to many people, even some new beekeepers.

We also visited a wine co-operative. The wines we sampled were of good quality and quite a few bottles were purchased. We nearly left without Manny, as he climbed into one of the huge tanks to take a closer look. It was empty at the time! The river cruise on the Friday evening was a perfect relaxing way to spend four hours on the river, enjoy a good meal and company and watch the sun set.

The first Field Day was held at Joe & Jenny's place at Saronde Valley. Joe has always plenty of knowledge and tips to pass on, so don't miss any opportunity of going there. Hans Steenpoorte opened his workshop for a Field day in May.

In June we ventured north to Swiss Herb Farms near Mooi Nooi. Mike Miles has a number of hives there. It was mid winter, so we did not open any hives, it was more of a field day to learn about herbs plants and of their various medicinal properties.

As Beecon took place in Heidelberg in the southern Cape in July, there were no field days, but we had good representation of our members there. There is coverage of the event in the latest Bee Journal.

Finally, I must thank the committee. Again I must single out Mike Miles for the enormous amount of time he has spent on Southern's affairs. He has transferred our account on to a pastel system, which is working well and planned the whole years programme in advance. Dean Martin is the guy who collars you at the door. We keep record of who attends, and Dean keeps those records up to date, and adds new members on to the system.

Paul Edwards joined the committee in 2007 and it was through his insistence, that we put up an observation hive at Wits University, for the four day Yebo Gogo event, held at the end of September. Particular thanks to Clive Cockerell, who attended every day, Liddy Born, Caroline Whitehead, and Joe & Jenny Hugill, who also helped to promote beekeeping.

It was a busy 2008 and we plan to continue with a full programme in 2009. Please contact any committee member with your suggestions of what you would like us to organize.

**Tom Cain.**  
Chairman.



*Grafting larvae into queen cups*

*"One of the reasons for being a member is to be guided by experienced beekeepers. They will freely give you the benefit of their years of experience."*



*At Swiss Herb farm, near Mooi Nooi.*





## MASSIVE CRACKDOWN ON THE USE OF SCORES OF TOXIC PESTICIDES

**New EU rules, opposed by Gordon Brown, will phase out use of cancer-causing compounds in Britain**  
by **Geoffrey Lean** The Independent/UK

Britain is to get its toughest crackdown on toxic substances in food and the environment, despite determined resistance to the safety measures from Gordon Brown.

The pesticide regulations will provide better protection for bees, whose numbers have fallen alarmingly across Europe. Scores of pesticides suspected of causing cancer, DNA damage and "gender-bender" effects are to be phased out under new EU rules, which are being hailed as a revolution in the way the public is protected against poisonous chemicals.

The use of all pesticides in public places is to be dramatically reduced, with aerial spraying banned anywhere in the country.

Yesterday environmentalists hailed the measures – to be adopted following long negotiations between the European Parliament and individual governments – as a "landmark", while the National Farmers' Union called them "devastating". The agrochemical industry has bitterly resisted them, backed by the Prime Minister, who has voiced his concern that they would damage agriculture and food production without significantly benefiting health or the environment.

Almost half of all food eaten throughout Europe has been discovered to be contaminated by pesticides, with six of the most dangerous substances among the 10 most frequently found.

The European Parliament has long been pressing, with strong cross-party support, for radical controls, despite opposition from some governments, especially Britain. The new measures are the result of a compromise between the two sides, hammered out last week.

Under the deal, a list of 22 particularly hazardous chemicals used in scores of herbicides, fungicides and insecticides will gradually be phased out to avoid abrupt withdrawal from the market. The chemicals will be given a further five years' grace if banning them would put crops in serious danger. Pesticide use is to be kept to "a

minimum" in parks, playgrounds, schools and near hospitals. Aerial spraying will be banned unless given exceptional approval by safety authorities.

Industry will have to release the results of any studies that show harmful effects, and there is to be better protection for bees, whose numbers have been falling alarmingly across Europe.

The National Farmers' Union said that the measures – which will have to be finally confirmed by the Parliament and EU leaders early in the new year – "will have a devastating effect on the horticultural industry and will see a reduction in crop yield and quality", and would also force up prices.

But environmentalists dismissed this as "scaremongering", pointing out that only a small minority of the 507 substances in pesticides would be banned. Though they would have liked even tougher controls, they still hailed the agreement as a breakthrough. Hiltrud Breyer, the German Green MEP who steered the proposals through the parliament, called them a "milestone for the environment, health and consumer protection". "The EU is setting a global precedent by phasing out highly toxic pesticides," she said.

Yesterday, Nick Mole, of the Pesticides Action Network, said: "This is a landmark, the biggest ever crackdown on poisonous chemicals... It says that anything hazardous to health or the environment will have to go, rather than taking the position... that if it is used properly it can be tolerated."

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The Independent/UK

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/massive-crackdown-on-the-use-of-scores-of-toxic-pesticides-1206399.html>

*"The pesticide regulations will provide better protection for bees, whose numbers have fallen alarmingly across Europe"*



## **FUTURE EVENTS:**

### **Apimondia**

*This year the bi annual gathering of beekeepers from all over the world takes place from 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> September in Montpellier in France. For further details go to [www.apimondia2009.com](http://www.apimondia2009.com). Expect to meet up with thousands of beekeepers from all over the world!*

#### **Next Meeting:**

*Thursday 05 Feb 2009, John Moodie, Chairman of SABIO will be asking if the national body is providing the service beekeepers expect*

#### **First Field Day:**

*Kevin & Glynis Armitage have invited us to visit their farm near Standerton again on 29 March 2009*

*Don't forget to look at our web site. Please let us have any constructive comments to improve it. [www.beekeepers.co.za](http://www.beekeepers.co.za).*

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## **Thoughts about pesticides and the effect on bee populations... dissent in British Bee Keeping Circles**

Dear Beekeeper,

At their Annual Delegates Meeting on January 10th 2009, the British Bee Keepers Association executive learned just how divisive their pesticide endorsement policy really is: they got their way, but with only a 60/40 majority - hardly a resounding success. Despite their arrogant censorship, both on their web site and in their newsletter, and full-bore propaganda from the current president and others, they have won a Pyrrhic victory: they are left with the knowledge that nearly half of their branches contain a majority of members who disagree with their flagship policy.

Of course, they may yet appreciate the damage they have done and recant, but I won't be holding my breath.

So where does this leave British beekeepers who do not wish to be represented by an association whose governing clique seem to care more about their own agenda than either the welfare of bees or the views of their members? Disappointed, disheartened and disenfranchised.

We all have to go with our consciences on this issue. For myself, I cannot belong to any organization that wishes to associate itself with the likes of Bayer or Syngenta - companies that spend millions on lies and propaganda to persuade people that their toxic rubbish is somehow 'good for you' - and in the case of Bayer, frequently caught out and prosecuted for killing and maiming its victims. If the BBKA want to be mentioned in the same sentence as that form of pond slime, then they too become tainted, as far as I am concerned.

I will not be renewing my membership of BBKA, as I believe they have shown themselves to be unworthy to represent British beekeeping. Their refusal to support the German beekeepers after the disastrous Bayer poisoning incident last May; their inability to admit that ANY pesticides may be a problem for bees; their arrogant censorship of comments from their website and refusal of any executive member to join in discussion of the subject on their forum; the utter lack of any

response from president Tim Lovett to questions and comments from many people; enough is enough. Until I see serious reforms I will have nothing to do with them.

Bees are under threat - we all know that - and if we use our common sense to look at what has changed in the world between 1850 and today that could be contributing to their decline, two principal factors are clear: big changes in the way bees are 'managed', and the more recent but pervasive spread of chemical agriculture.

Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is a key indicator of madness. It's time to take off the blinkers and re-think the way we do things.

With best wishes for the coming season, Phil Chandler  
[www.biobees.com](http://www.biobees.com)

See also:

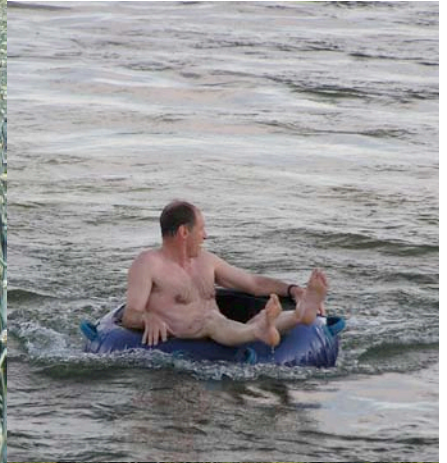
Yorkshire Post  
<http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/Bee-keepers-abuzz-over-pesticides.4862872.jp>

Pesticides in beehives  
<http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/blogs/bees/honey-bee-pesticides-55081801>

GM Crops Implicated in CCD  
<http://www.naturalnews.com/025287.html>

<http://www.biobees.com/>





## DOUGLAS BEE FARMS GALLERY

*From top left clockwise: Perfect Queen cells, Mike Milles in a perfect pose, Chris Russell being a kid again, Natalie, Liddy, Glynis & Jeanette, a commercial extractor in action, examining beehives strapped to a pallet, Our host Theunis Engelbrecht.*



### **SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER**

Your subs for 2009 are due NOW.

If you do not pay within 3 months you will be deleted from our membership list and no longer be informed of our activities.

**We don't want to lose you, so please arrange to pay your R200.00.**

**PENSIONERS only pay R150.00**

#### **BANKING DETAILS:**

Southerns Beekeeping Association, ABSA Cresta

Branch code: 63200500 (internet payments)

or 516805 (bank deposits)

Account number: 906 194 0886

*Please use your*

*full name as reference on deposit slips*