



## Issue 1 (December 2023)

### Note from the General Manager

Since starting as the new General Manager in September 2023, I have been a busy bee getting up –to speed with my role. I have inherited a team who have warmly welcomed me and provided the right support for a smooth transition. I have attended a few beekeeping club meetings and met several of you face-to-face. Thank you to the clubs who welcomed me and my Operation Managers and allowed us to present on our AFB work. It is a privilege to support you in your fight against AFB. The depth of knowledge and passion for beekeeping was very evident at these meetings, even as the industry continues to face challenging times. Hearing about your experiences and challenges on the ground is important. I will continue meeting beekeepers around the country next year.

It has been a busy year at The Management Agency. Operationally, we have witnessed an uptake of good bee husbandry practices in several large commercial operations to manage their AFB levels, based on the advice of our two Operation Managers. Our AP2s (Authorised Persons) have been working hard on surveillance to detect unknown sources of AFB and protect neighbouring beekeepers. AFB cases from unknown sources (potentially from unregistered apiaries) continue to get in the way of the sector's AFB elimination efforts. Please be observant this summer and bring any unregistered apiaries to our attention using HiveHub.

Knowing what AFB looks like is the first step toward managing the disease. Our AFB recognition trainers are committed to empowering you with the knowledge of what to look for. Contact us in the new year if you are overdue for an AFB refresher course. This includes DECA holders.

In 2024, The Management Agency will be progressing with the pre-implementation phase of the proposed changes to the AFB NPMP. Key areas of focus are to leverage HiveHub functionality to predict levels of AFB risk, the DECA review project, efficient use of resources, and ensuring that up-to-date information is available in the right format, when and where beekeepers need it.



I would like to thank you for your ongoing efforts toward AFB elimination and for your commitment to the AFB NPMP. We wish you and your family a joyful festive season and we

look forward to continuing to support you in your fight against AFB next year.

Niharika (Niha) Long  
General Manager

## National Operations Managers Dwayne Hill and Marco Gonzalez

We have seen improvements in AFB management and effective elimination strategies over the past 12 months. While some regions have reported increased AFB, we have also observed reductions in total AFB reports from Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Wellington, Nelson/Tasman, and Otago for the first half of 2023-24, compared to the same period in 2022-23 (Figure 1).

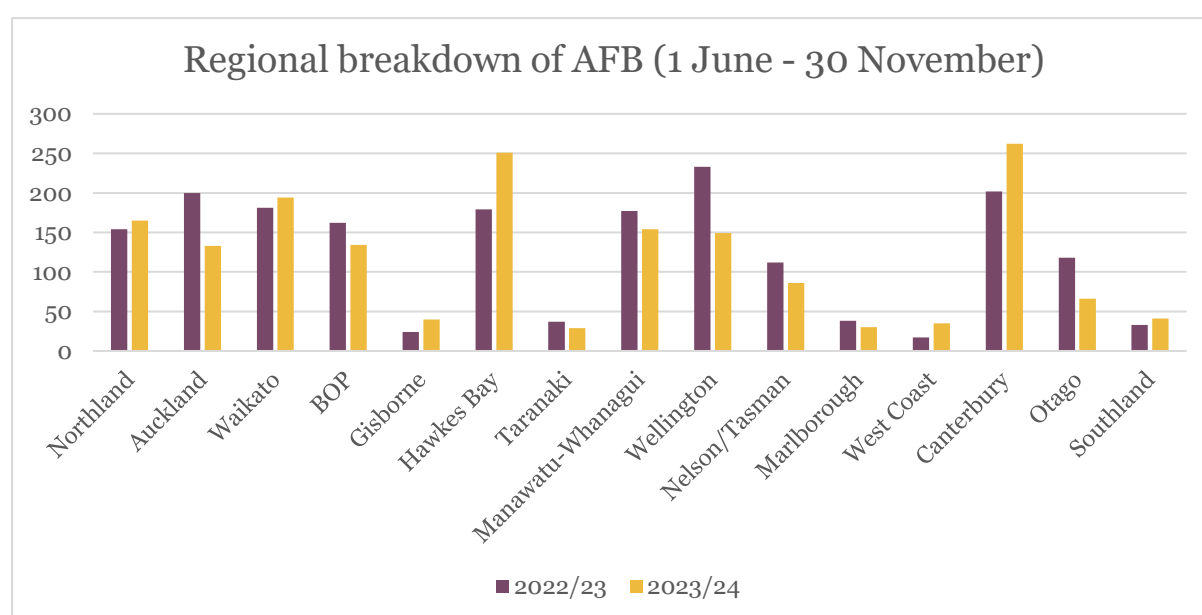


Figure 1: Regional breakdown of AFB cases reported for the first two quarters of 22/23 and 23/24

## Key Highlights for AFB Surveillance

Our delimiting surveillance and targeted apiary inspections this year has led to:

- identification of several AFB reports of unknown origin in the Hawkes Bay;
- a 98% reduction in AFB cases for a beekeeping company in the Wairarapa;
- a 68% reduction in AFB cases for a beekeeper in Canterbury, with the highest historical self-reported incidence.
- identification of a high-risk beekeeper in Southland contributing to ongoing AFB infection for another commercial enterprise.

## Key Highlights of the AFB Elimination Effort

### Northland

A large commercial beekeeper in Northland have drastically reduced their AFB levels from 107 cases to just five cases this year. The beekeeper made notable changes, especially to quarantine processes and destruction of old hive ware to eliminate the risk of contamination. No AFB – either through visual inspections or PCR swabs – has been detected in over four months from any quarantine sites. We are confident that through ongoing best practices, this company is on track for elimination.

### Waikato/Bay of Plenty (BOP)

Since August 2022, The Management Agency has been working alongside a large commercial beekeeper in Waikato/BOP to manage an increase in AFB cases. Following a year of staff re-education and improved management practices, the beekeeper has reduced their AFB levels by 36%; from 99 cases in 21-22 to 63 cases in 22-23. For the current 23-24 season, the company has reported 19 cases.

### Feilding

A commercial beekeeper in Feilding was approached in November 2021 after an increase in AFB was reported by AP2s. This beekeeper has also seen a 58% reduction in AFB through changes in management techniques from 62 cases in 21-22, to 28 cases in 22-23. The beekeeper has reported four cases for this financial year.

### Small changes, big impact

The three companies were provided the following advice by The Management Agency:

- Ensure all staff have read and understood the DECA agreement.
- Sterilise hive tools by fire between sites and destroy (by fire) any gear suspected to have AFB.
- Treat any apiary which has had AFB as quarantine. Gear can be introduced into the apiary but not be removed and taken to other apiary sites.
- Implement a rotation policy for staff checking individual hives and apiaries, so that AFB missed by one staff member or team can be found by the next. This is also a great opportunity to identify staff who need more training.
- Clearly mark all beekeeping gear in the shed or storage areas with apiary or regional information for easy identification and traceability.
- Encourage staff to attend AFB recognition and AFB refresher courses regularly.

### Beekeeper Surveys for AP2s (continuous improvement)

In September 2023, The Management Agency introduced a new survey to capture feedback on the quality of inspections from beekeepers who have been visited by an AP2 in the month prior. Thanks to all who have provided feedback already. We want to make sure, as beekeepers, you have your say on what we are doing right and what needs improvement. Your feedback will be incorporated into ongoing training and performance development for AP2s. If you get the chance to fill in a survey over the coming months, please do so

## Training Coordinator Janette Gwilliam

The ability to identify AFB and its symptoms is vital for all beekeepers. 231 beekeepers have successfully completed the **Online** AFB Recognition Course and Assessments since it went live in November 2022. Our free online refresher has also proven popular, with 265 beekeepers completing this course since its inception in December 2022.

In 2023, 652 beekeepers attended 51 AFB Recognition courses throughout New Zealand.

Our training calendar for classroom courses in 2024 is still being finalised and we will continue to have locations across the country for you to attend. Book yourself on a full course or refresher using the links below:

Online full course & refresher training – [book here](#)

Classroom full courses – [book here](#)

Classroom refresher courses – [book here](#)



## Apiary Coordinators Leonie Elliott-Mason & Tracey Gonzalez

We're proud to have enabled 30% more beekeepers and DECA holders to work together to complete their Certificate of Inspections (COI) electronically on HiveHub in 2023. DECA holders completing their COI's online will have noticed the ease of visually identifying the accuracy of the apiary location and verifying the GPS coordinates using the satellite map.

HiveHub cuts down on processing time, allowing us to focus our time on helping to resolve beekeeper queries. We know computers aren't for everyone, so we have added a range of support options, including downloadable paper forms, and changing beekeeper communication preferences to post when the internet options are unsuitable.

Taking the time to listen and understand what the right support is for you is important to us. We have enjoyed making your compliance journey smoother.

We can see that spring has been very busy for some of our DECA holders who have been doing a lot of COI's in their community. We appreciate their commitment to the AFB



NPMP. We also enjoy the many positive comments in our inbox from beekeepers commending their chosen DECA holder for the suggestions and guidance they offered them when

conducting their COI's. We wish you a wonderful festive season and look forward to helping and supporting you next year.



## Key Reminders

### AFB checks and honey harvests

Please remember to check for AFB, prior to removing honey from your hives. Contaminated honey supers are one of the pathways for AFB spread and is almost invisible without clear tracing procedures. DECA holders are advised to check Clauses (2.2 – 2.4) which states that you are to check, prior to removing items from a hive.

### What to do if AFB has been found in a hive during honey harvest

If you have found AFB in your hives, unsure about how to manage AFB within your hives or what to do once you have found AFB, please refer to:

[afb.org.nz/i-think-i-have-afb/](https://afb.org.nz/i-think-i-have-afb/)

[afb.org.nz/dos-and-donts-of-afb-control/](https://afb.org.nz/dos-and-donts-of-afb-control/)

Stop feeding honey to your bees and feed them sugar syrup instead.

Extracting honey from your quarantine apiaries is an important tool for removing potentially AFB contaminated honey from hives before these are fed to bees and produce another AFB infection.

## Fire Ban Recommendations during the summer

If you need to burn an AFB infected hive in the summer but your area has a complete fire ban, we recommend you check the fire permit status for your area at [www.checkitsalright.nz](https://www.checkitsalright.nz) and request a fire permit. You may like to approach your local fire station for advice also.



## The Management Agency Christmas – New Year Hours

The Management Agency's office will be closed from midday Friday 22 December 2023 and will reopen at 8:00am on Monday 8 January 2024.

If any urgent AFB issues arise during this period, please call **0800 AFB PMP (0800 232 767)** and leave a voice message for us to contact you.

## Key upcoming dates for 2024 and beekeeper legal obligations

Description	Start Date	Due Date
Default COI inspections		Begin Autumn 2024
Annual Disease Returns	1 April 2024	1 June 2024
Levy invoices generated using your colony information as at 31 March	1 April 2024 – invoices are available in HiveHub	Payment is due by 1 June 2024

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