



## Issue 2 (March 2024)

### Note from the General Manager

During the first quarter of the 2024 calendar year, the Management Agency team have been laying the groundwork across key milestones to support the implementation of the new AFB NPMP.

We are continuing to make enhancements to HiveHub which will support the implementation of new AFB NPMP, improve the way we use AFB data for triaging AFB elimination efforts while ensuring beekeeper information continues to remain secure from external threats.

During this past summer, several commercial beekeepers were interviewed by Brice Horner (our veteran AFB course recognition trainer), to provide input into the requirements for a commercial beekeeper employee training package. I would like to thank those beekeepers who took the time away from a busy beekeeping season for these interviews and to Brice for devoting his time to assist the Management Agency with this crucial project.



Your responses from the interviews have highlighted a definite need for the Management Agency-led training package, AFB elimination guidelines, and scalable Standard Operating Procedures for commercial entities.

The Management Agency is committed to delivering such a training package and is currently working on defining the framework and content of this training. We will continue to provide key progress updates.

The Management Agency has also begun the DECA review project, as we believe this is one of the key areas where the sector has a chance at success. The first round of the review and amendments of existing DECA templates is complete. Thank you to our AP2s who have provided feedback based on their knowledge and expertise. The templates will undergo several more reviews before being opened for wider consultation over the course of this year. With over 5,000 DECA holders in New Zealand, a change in the sector's approach and understanding of a DECA will ensure a collaborative effort towards AFB elimination.

Operationally, AFB cases are continuing to be reported by beekeepers and AP2s alike. We would like to thank those beekeepers who have contacted us to report suspect unregistered and potential abandoned apiary sites during the summer. Your continued vigilance and cooperation are crucial in eliminating hidden areas of AFB risk.

The Management Agency's social media page has been reactivated and we have appreciated being able to engage with more beekeepers across various beekeeping groups. Over the next several months, my Operation Managers and I will be visiting beekeeping clubs and other commercial beekeepers. I am looking forward to meeting you; to hear about your ideas, suggestions, any obstacles that are getting in the way of your AFB elimination efforts and offer advice on how we can help.

## Meeting with the Minister of Biosecurity

During late February, the Management Agency team hosted the new Minister of Biosecurity, Hon. Andrew Hoggard at the Rolleston office.

The Minister appreciated learning about the complexities of AFB, current challenges for the beekeeping industry, and the Management Agency's priorities and roadmap for AFB elimination. The Minister was also given a quick tour of HiveHub and its various functions.

We are looking forward to continuing to work together with the Minister on laying the foundation for the new AFB NPMP.

As always, my team and 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 Happy Easter.

Niharika (Niha) Long

General Manager



**L to R: Minister Andrew Hoggard, Mark Dingle (Chairman, AFB Management Agency Board), Tracey Gonzalez (Apiary Coordinator), Janette Gwilliam (Training/Administrator), Marco Gonzalez (Operations Manager, Southern Region), Leonie Elliott-Mason (Apiary Coordinator), and Niha Long (General Manager). Dwayne Hill (Operations Manager, Northern Region) was unable to attend due to flight disruptions.**

## National Operations Managers Dwayne Hill and Marco Gonzalez

### What is coming your way (or already here)

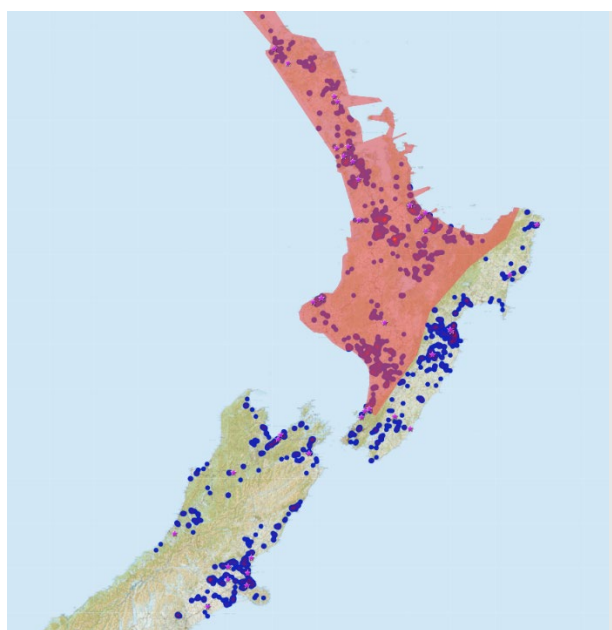
Behind the scenes we have been working on some suggestions from the industry.

#### Facebook

We have become active on Facebook again; we hope for this to be the place where you will find a single source of information on social media. Please follow us for regular posts and updates. We will also be available for contact.

#### Open maps for beekeepers

We are currently working on an interactive map which will assist beekeepers to visualise the AFB trends in any area of the country. Beekeepers will also be able to use the map to see the operational split of the country between the Operations Managers and the general location of our AP2s. This functionality will be made available on our website soon. Please keep an eye on our Facebook for an update regarding this



**DECA 101:** A Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement (DECA) is a powerful tool designed to help beekeepers eliminate AFB from their operations.

The only valid reason to apply for a Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement is that you are competent to identify AFB, that you are fully committed to eliminate AFB in your hives, and to show ongoing compliance with all AFB PMP requirements.

We are still finding DECA holders that shouldn't have been granted a DECA as they are neither capable nor willing or committed to AFB elimination. As a result, we have been cancelling the DECA of these beekeepers are.

#### Crucial facts about DECAS:

- It is a privilege to be a DECA holder.
- You don't have to have a DECA holder to comply with the AFB NPMP.
- Being a DECA holder does not grant immunity against inspections by the Management Agency.  
You don't have to have a DECA to produce honey eligible for export to China.  
Your DECA is a living document, you must revisit it regularly and especially when finding AFB or when the AFB incidence in your hives is not decreasing. You may need to amend it, if it is not working as intended.
- You can always surrender your DECA if for some reason you prefer having another beekeeper who is a DECA holder overseeing your AFB elimination success, once a year through the COI process.

## Other Operational matters

The Northern region enjoyed a longer flowering period and some calm days to keep the bees flying. Reports of above-average crops are being heard. This has meant that the summer has seen fewer AFB reports than in previous years. Although this is a good thing, please be aware that as honey is harvested and hives are shut down for the winter, this could be the time where we see AFB reports increase.

Default COI inspections are well underway for those who did not submit their 2023 COIs in a timely manner. Beekeepers with the greatest number of colonies will be inspected first as they can pose the greatest risk to others. While these inspections have been and still are a compliance measure, the Management Agency also uses these inspections as an educational opportunity for those beekeepers who may need assistance with AFB identification and tips on best practices. If you have questions about AFB, please use the default inspections as your opportunity to get clarification from our AP2s who are experienced and passionate about AFB elimination.

If you are a beekeeper who is contacted by our AP2s for a COI default inspection, please ensure you cooperate with the AP2 for the timely completion of these inspections.

Note that these inspections are **cost-recoverable**, as it is not fair for other levy payers to be shouldering the responsibility of this cost associated with non-compliance of COI obligations.

## AFB Honey test results

More beekeepers are regularly testing their batches of honey for AFB.

We are passionate about helping beekeepers eliminate AFB from their operations. If your honey has tested positive for the presence of AFB spores, please contact us and we will help you to identify the likely source of this AFB contamination.

Remember that the presence of AFB spores doesn't necessarily mean you missed a case of AFB in your apiary, but it can indicate that neighbouring apiaries have an AFB problem.

Therefore, nothing you do in this apiary will prevent your bees from robbing AFB contaminated honey around this apiary. This is where we can help you through targeted inspections on these identified areas. We will be able to identify the AFB source and work with the affected beekeeper to ensure that AFB is eliminated from those apiaries before the next honey season.



## Training Coordinator Janette Gwilliam



The ability to identify AFB and its symptoms is vital for all beekeepers. Completing an AFB Recognition Course is something every beekeeper should do once they become familiar with their hive/s. This can be done via our online portal or by visiting our website to check locations around the country for a date near you. If you are a DECA holder and need a refresher course, we offer a free online refresher course, or you can attend a full classroom course in your region as a refresher. We encourage all DECA holders to attend an AFB Recognition refresher course every two years.

***The Easter break is a great time to either complete the online training or check our calendar and book in for a classroom course.***

Our training calendar for 2024 has classroom courses available throughout most of the country, check it out [here](#). This is a one-day course and costs \$100 per person to attend.

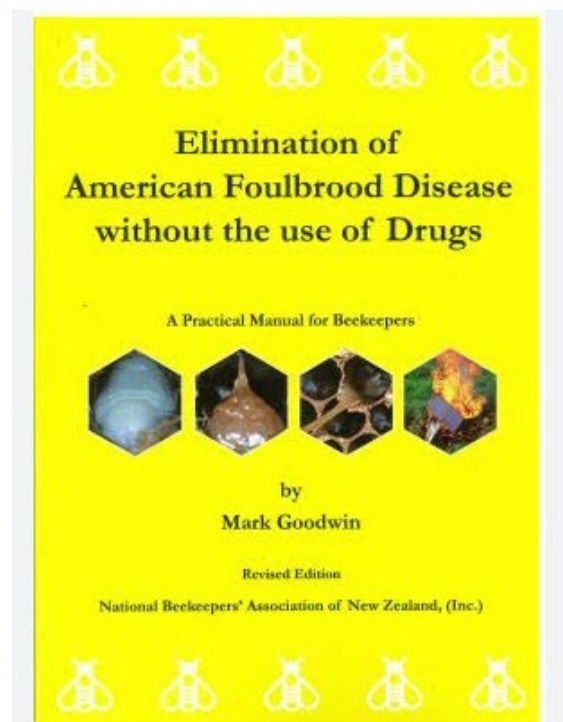
Online full course & refresher training – [book here](#)

Classroom full courses – [book here](#)

Classroom refresher courses – [book here](#)

Please contact Janette if you have any queries regarding the training courses.

**From 1 April 2024, every beekeeper who registers to attend a classroom full course or online full course will receive a FREE “yellow book”! *The book will be posted to you once your payment has been processed.***



## Apiary Coordinators Leonie Elliott-Mason & Tracey Gonzale

MARCH is Marching along .....

It's almost time to ensure your HiveHub colony numbers are fully up to date ahead of the Annual Disease Return (ADR) and Levy period.

We ask that you review your HiveHub account to ensure that your colony numbers and apiary details match what you currently have running, ahead of 31<sup>st</sup> March. This is when the levy invoice is generated, based on the number of colonies you own at that date.

Please be sure to check (or enter) your hive sales or purchases made during the last 12 months too. This data is captured directly from HiveHub to populate your ADR when submitting electronically from HiveHub (if you have already added this during the year). If you are completing the paper version of the ADR, simply write the details on the panel provided.

After Easter, we will email you again advising you that the ADR has been enabled/activated for the 2024 return and from then you will be able to submit your ADR from your HiveHub account (or the paper version of the form and either email or post to us for processing).

The Colony Return is used for requesting a change to your colony numbers – this will only be required if you haven't managed to adjust your colony numbers ahead of the levy being produced, and only if you need a change to your levy invoice.



We start to email weekly reminders for submitting ADR's all through May, but as soon as you submit your ADR (and its fully processed), you then come off the reminder schedule.

Please note that the reminder schedule is prescribed in the Pest Management Plan, we are required to do this to assist beekeepers so they have every opportunity to submit their returns on time and maintain an excellent compliance record. So please don't be offended by the regularity of the reminders you receive.

We are here to help: if you have any questions or need assistance, please email us: [apiary@afb.org.nz](mailto:apiary@afb.org.nz) and we will respond back to you via email, or phone us during office hours Monday-Friday 8am-4.30pm).



## Key Reminders

### What to do if AFB has been found during honey Testing

If your honey has tested positive for AFB you may be unsure about what to do or what the numbers mean.

- Please give us a call and one of the Operation Managers can help interpret the numbers.
- Trace the gear associated with the positive testing batches.
- Stop feeding honey to your bees and feed them sugar syrup instead.
- Extracting honey that tests positive should be earmarked for potential sale into products that are less likely to be attractive to bees such as soaps and body products.

### Storing Dead out equipment

Any gear returning to the sheds should be checked for disease. You should have a clear idea why the colony died. This equipment should be marked in a way it can be traced back to an apiary, where each group of gear should be separated on pallets or by wrapping in plastic.

### Fire Ban Recommendations

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](http://www.checkitsalright.nz) and request a fire permit.

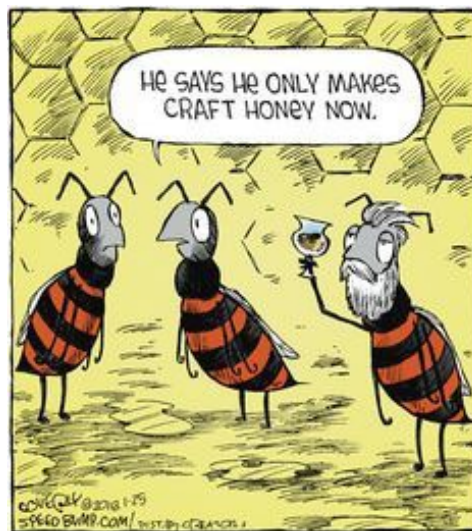
The Fire and Emergency Department will issue a fire permit to burn AFB hives even under total fire ban if you can meet the conditions of the permit.



You may like to contact us for advice too.

## 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



***What would you like to see in our next newsletter? Please get in touch on [info@afb.org.nz](mailto:info@afb.org.nz) with any topics you would find helpful and would like us to cover.***