



Proposal for the American Foulbrood Beekeeper Levy for 2025/26 to remain the same at \$40 (\$46 incl GST) per beekeeper and \$1.95 (\$2.24 incl GST) per honeybee colony

Context

Clause 16 of the Biosecurity (American Foulbrood – Beekeeper Levy) Order 2003 requires The Management Agency to, before the start of each levy year, consult with beekeepers on how the levy money is to be spent, by providing an opportunity for beekeepers to make submissions on the proposed budget.

The Management Agency for the American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan ('the Agency') invited submissions from beekeepers, to seek their views about a proposal for the American Foulbrood (AFB) Beekeeper 2025/26 Levy to remain the same at \$40 per beekeeper and \$1.95 per honeybee colony.

Beekeepers were invited to submit their views:

- via SurveyMonkey (online or postal),
- via Email or,
- via post.

A total of 8,188 beekeepers were contacted. 7,998 beekeepers were emailed, and 1,069 beekeepers were contacted by post (note: many of the 7,998 beekeepers with email addresses have also opted for postal communications).

The period to make submissions was for three weeks; from 09 September 2024 – 06 October 2024.

1. The Consultation Questions

The Consultation Document contained the following eight questions which were a combination of multiple choice and free text inviting comment.

1. *Please select which part of New Zealand you are located in.*

Respondents were asked to select one of the 14 regional councils as their location (Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu-Whanganui, Wellington, Marlborough, West Coast, Canterbury, Otago, and Southland).



2. *Please tick the following categories that apply to you.*

Respondents were asked to select an answer from one of two provided checkboxes for 'DECA holder' or 'Non DECA holder'.

3. *How many hives do you own?*

0 – 5; 6 – 10; 11 – 50; 51 – 250; 251 – 500; 501 – 1000; 1001 or more; More than 3000

Respondents were asked to select an answer from one of eight provided checkboxes.

4. *What are three things that The Management Agency has done well over the last 12 months and should retain?*

This was an open-ended question/free-text box inviting comment.

5. *What are three things that The Management Agency should look to improve over the next 12 months?*

This was an open-ended question/free-text box inviting comment.

6. *Do you agree that the rate of levy for 2025/26 should remain the same at \$40 pr beekeeper (\$46 including GST) and \$1.95 per bee colony (\$2.24 including GST).*

Respondents were asked to choose from one of six responses which were set on a Likert scale¹: *strongly agree; agree; neither agree or disagree; strongly disagree; disagree or Other (please specify).*

7. *Considering the forecasted decrease in colony numbers and the resulting reduction in revenue for The Management Agency, what ideas do you have for The Management Agency to best support the sector in its fight against AFB? Which specific areas would you like us to focus on?*

This was an open-ended question/free-text box inviting comment.

8. *Do you have any other thoughts about the rate of levy and its role in supporting the implementation of the AFB PMP changes for 2025/26?*

This was an open-ended question/free-text box inviting comment.

¹ The scale is known as a Likert scale. Likert scales are often used in survey research in which people express attitudes or other responses in terms of ordinal-level categories (e.g., agree, disagree, etc) that are ranked along a continuum (Neuman, W.L., 2006, 'Social Research Methods, Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches', p.207).

2. Method

Beekeepers were invited to respond to the consultation questions using the SurveyMonkey survey platform² or by emailing or posting their response.

The responses to Q1 – Q3 and Q6 were analysed using SurveyMonkey software, which calculated the number and percentage of respondents that chose each of the respective answer options. The text responses to Q4, Q5, Q7, and Q8 were analysed by the General Manager.

3. Respondents

Of the 7,998 beekeepers who were emailed about the proposal:

- 5,749 beekeepers opened the email.
- 149 beekeepers clicked on the link to the levy consultation page.
- 71 beekeepers completed the online survey.

Of the 1,069 beekeepers contacted by post with the SurveyMonkey questions, 22 responded. Therefore, the Management Agency received 93 submissions in total, as below:

- 71 completed an online version of the SurveyMonkey
- 22 completed a postal submission of the SurveyMonkey.

In addition, The Management Agency received two letters from two respondents which were supplementary to their SurveyMonkey submissions.

4. Previous national consultations

Despite only 1.1% of all New Zealand beekeepers (93 out of 8,188) responding to this consultation, the number of submissions received is higher than the number received in the previous year for the 2024/25 levy rate consultation (Table 1) and significantly higher than 2022 which proposed the 2023/24 levy rate to remain the same.

The increase in the number of responses is likely due to the modification of the SurveyMonkey format to invite greater input from beekeepers, provide them the opportunity to assess The Management Agency's performance over the past 12 months, and encourage them to identify areas of improvement or ideas for the future.

² The SurveyMonkey platform helps design, send, collect, and analyse responses to surveys.

Table 1: Number of responses to national consultations

Year	Survey	number submitters
2024	Proposal for the American Foulbrood Beekeeper Levy for 2025/26 to remain the same as for 2024/25	93
2023	Proposal to set the AFB Levy for 2024/25	78
2022	Proposal for the American Foulbrood Beekeeper Levy for 2023/24 to remain the same as for 2022/23	19
2021	Proposal to set the AFB Levy for 2022/23	86
2020	Proposal to set the AFB Levy for 2021/22	104
2019	Proposal to Replace the AFB Apiary and Beekeeper Levy with a Hive and Beekeeper Levy	466
2018	Proposal to increase the AFB Apiary and Beekeeper Levy	828

Respondents' key metrics (region, DECA status, hive numbers)

Fifteen beekeepers from Waikato and 15 beekeepers from Bay of Plenty accounted for 32.6% of respondents (total of 30). Six of these 29 beekeepers were commercial beekeepers (50 hives and above). This was followed by Manawatu-Whanganui (13.5%). Auckland (8 respondents), Wellington (9 respondents), and Canterbury (9 respondents) collectively accounted for 27.9% of respondents. Four of the 26 beekeepers were commercial operators (50 hives and above).

There were no respondents from the West Coast South Island.

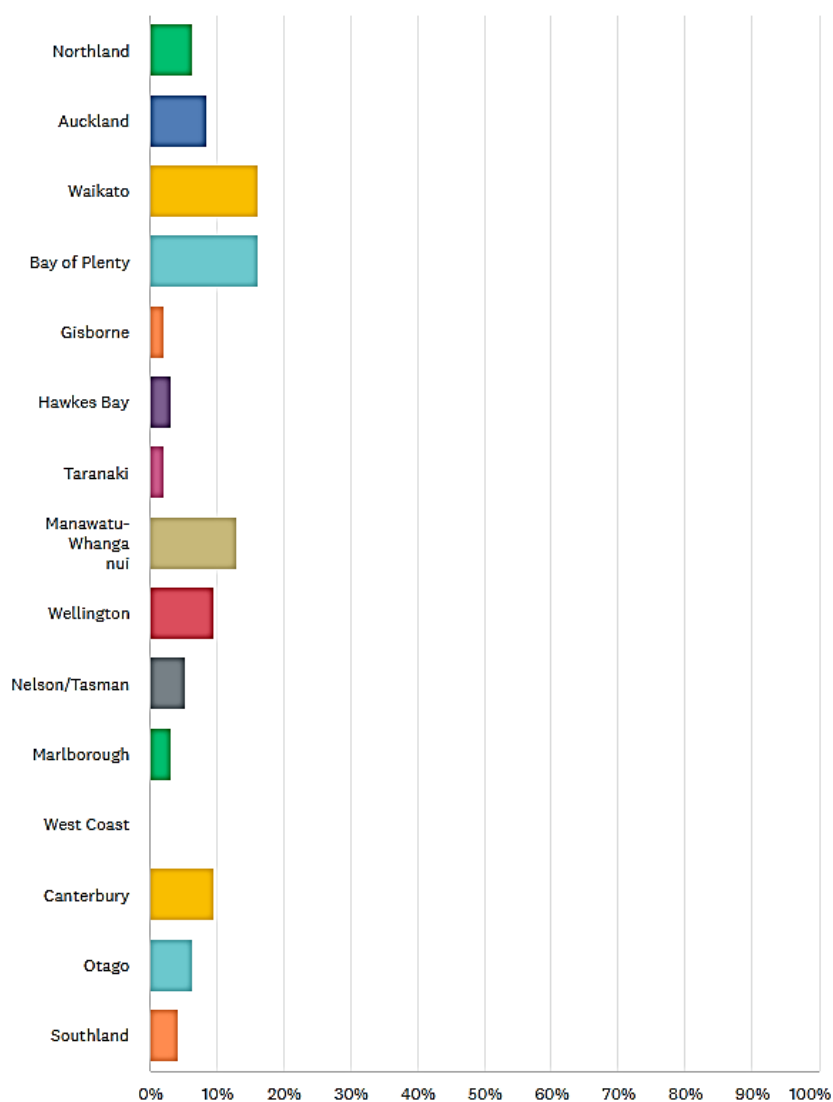


Figure 1: Regional breakdown of submitters

Eighty-nine beekeepers selected their DECA status for the survey and four beekeepers skipped the question. Over 71.9% of those who completed SurveyMonkey were DECA holders (Figure 2).

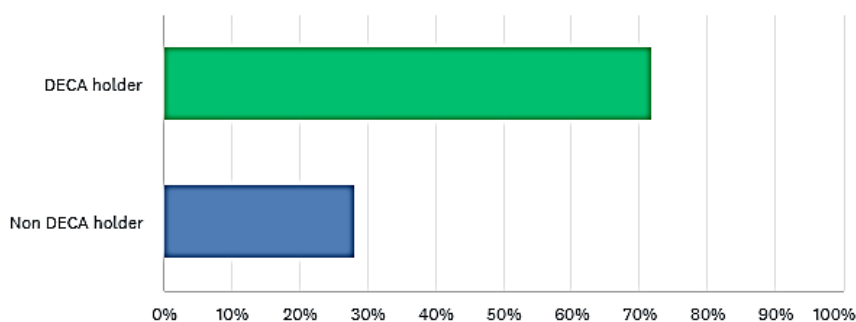


Figure 2: A breakdown of beekeeper status (DECA/non-DECA) received through submissions

All respondents selected their hive numbers for the survey, with 73.1% of respondents owning less than 10 hives (Figure 3).

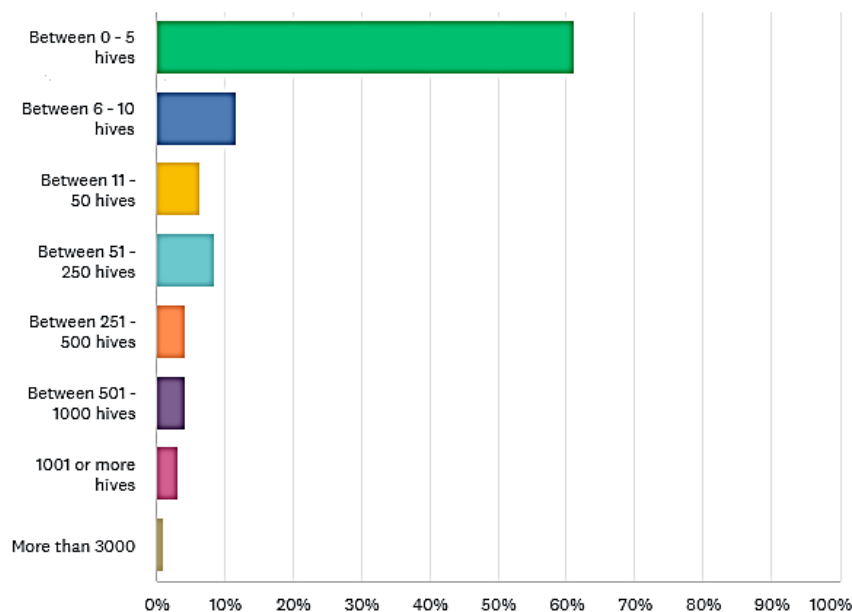


Figure 3: Percentage of submitters, by number of hives owned

5. Three things that The Management Agency has done well over the last 12 months and should retain

Sixty-two out of 93 beekeepers (66.6%) answered this question. There were five recurrent themes across the responses:

- 1) Improved communication/awareness of The Management Agency's processes through:
 - i. flowcharts,
 - ii. the quarterly newsletters, and
 - iii. information on the website.
- 2) Increased visibility of The Management Agency's staff through:
 - i. in-person engagement with beekeepers,
 - ii. listening to concerns,
 - iii. asking for beekeepers' opinions, and
 - iv. overall approachability.
- 3) Helping/supporting beekeepers by:
 - i. acting promptly to non-compliance,
 - ii. follow-ups and increased responsiveness for investigating AFB outbreaks, and
 - iii. value gained from AP2 inspections.

- 4) The value from AFB Recognition Courses and free AFB Recognition refresher courses.
- 5) Recognition of The Agency's decision to reduce expenses and keeping levies as status quo.

Three submitters made comments specific to the appointment of the General Manager and felt the AFB NPMP is moving in the right direction due to an increased willingness of the organisation to listen to beekeepers' concerns.

6. Three areas of improvement that The Management Agency should implement over the next 12 months

Sixty-two out of 93 beekeepers (66.6%) responded to this question. The following comments were made for The Management Agency's consideration:

- 1) Continue cutting costs.
- 2) Increase the levy by hiring AP2s as permanent staff and increase AP2 inspections for AFB-infected hives that are not being dealt with promptly.
- 3) Communicate policies regarding surveillance, auditing, complaints, and new tools (e.g. AFB spore testing).
- 4) AP2s to refrain commenting on bee diseases other than AFB, refrain from hive inspections under 15deg C, and carry out sterilisation procedures.
- 5) Making AFB metrics more accessible, including:
 - i. better information on location of AFB outbreaks,
 - ii. up-to-date statistics on healthy/infected colonies and number of inspections carried out per region, and
 - iii. an online chat room (e.g. a chat bot) on the new website which most users would be comfortable using instead of ringing The Management Agency.
- 6) Compliance with the regulations, showing accountability, and communicating honestly to beekeepers.
- 7) Increase avenues of education through:
 - i. seminars about AFB elimination to newcomers,
 - ii. providing an overview of other non-AFB diseases and bee health,
 - iii. addressing misinformation and increased awareness of bee health to the general public,
 - iv. greater presence on social media and,
 - v. providing timely responses when AFB is in the news, without holding back on information.
- 8) Increase effort to ensure all beekeepers are registered (especially newcomers) and audited/managed accordingly.
- 9) Continually work on changing beekeepers' behaviour towards AFB, promote sense of ownership of AFB elimination within beekeepers, and regularly audit beekeepers' and DECA holders' compliance.
- 10) Investigate new technologies and capabilities (i.e. AFB detector dogs) and use of drones to find unregistered apiaries.

7. Findings and future focus areas for The Management Agency

7.1 Do you agree that the rate of levy for 2025/26 should remain the same at \$40 per beekeeper (\$46 including GST) and \$1.95 (\$2.24 including GST) per bee colony?

7.2 Considering the forecasted decrease in colony numbers and the resulting reduction in revenue for The Management Agency, what ideas do you have for The Management Agency to best support the sector in its fight against AFB? Which specific areas would you like us to focus on?

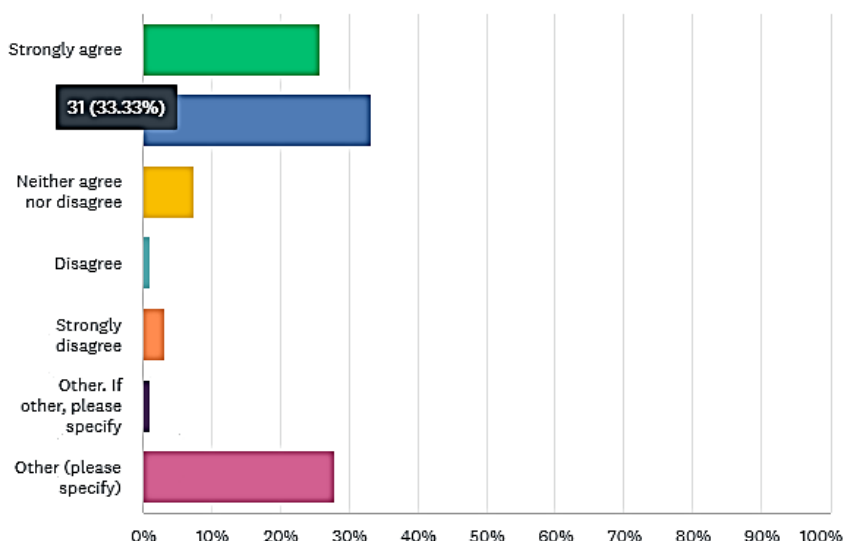


Figure 4: A breakdown of submitters' preferences in response to Q7

Table 2: Breakdown down of survey responses by hive numbers

Hive numbers	Agree or strongly agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Other (comment required)
3000 or more (n=1)	0	0	0	1
1001 or more (n=3)	2	0	0	1
501 – 1000 (n=4)	2	0	1	1
251 – 500 (n=4)	2	0	2	0
51 – 250 (n=8)	5	0	0	3
11 – 50 (n=6)	3	1	0	2
6 – 10 (n=10)	9	-	0	1
0 – 5 (n=57)	34	3	4	16
Total = 93	57	4	7	25

Views of submitters who agreed/strongly agreed

Fifty-seven submitters (61.2%) agreed with the proposal and were in support of the levy rate for 2025/26 remaining the same. 34 of these submitters owned between 0 and 5 hives.

Commercial operators

- Two beekeepers owning between 251 and 1,000 colonies:
 - i. offered to help The Management Agency;
 - ii. felt The Management Agency should continue to concentrate on training, education;
 - iii. talk to local beekeepers for intel on problem areas;
 - iv. re-start Disease-a-thons and,
 - v. take necessary actions on those who are unable or unwilling to meet the AFB NPMP rules.
- One beekeeper owning between 251 and 500 colonies felt the Southern North Island beekeeping group and New Zealand Beekeeping Inc should combine to become The Management Agency.
- One beekeeper owning between 1,000 and 3,000 colonies expressed a return to registered apiary levy (rather than colony numbers), and a continued focus on AFB hotspots.

Hobbyists and small – mid commercials

Other beekeepers made comments on the below themes:

- a) Continue to cut costs by looking at staff numbers due to decline in colony numbers.
- b) Continuing to focus on training and education through increased availability of AFB Recognition courses and refreshers, education on beekeepers' statutory obligations, instilling the importance of honeybees, and promoting beekeeping as a career.
- c) Developing other revenue streams, including fundraising and requesting Crown funding.
- d) Closely monitoring quarantine sites of larger commercial operators who are dealing with AFB.

Views of submitters who disagreed/strongly disagreed

Four submitters (4.3%) disagreed with the proposal.

- Two submitters (one owning between 11 and 50 colonies) felt the levy should be increased for The Management Agency to continue providing services and resources to support the industry in future.
- The remaining two submitters either wanted the levy rate to be reduced further or be removed in its entirety for hobbyist beekeepers.

Views of submitters who neither agreed nor disagreed

Seven submitters (7.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal; three of whom were commercial operators owning either 250 – 500 colonies or 501 – 1000.

- The commercial operators presented the following ideas in support for choosing this option:
 - a) Wanting to see increased use of technology instead of relying solely on Authorised Persons.
 - b) Changing the current operating model.
 - c) Upgrading HiveHub to acquire lab results post-honey testing; thus, leaving The Management Agency with resources to focus on high-risk beekeepers/defaulters.
 - d) Not seeing value for money/no accountability on finances.

One of the hobbyist submitters felt The Management Agency needed to review its current operational approach with a future goal to “lead the world, not follow”.

Views of submitters who chose ‘Other’ and the ideas The Management should focus on

Twenty-five submitters (26.9%) chose ‘Other’ when expressing their agreement/disagreement with the proposal. Sixteen out of these 25 beekeepers (64%) were hobbyists (0 to 5 colonies).

Three of the beekeepers were larger commercial operators owning between 500 and over 3,000 colonies.

Three beekeepers owning between 51 and 250 colonies made the following comments:

- a) Retain levy based on colony numbers (not apiaries).
- b) Broaden the levy base asking other groups represented by Apiculture NZ to help with the cost of AFB control, including a per kilogram levy on all packed honey.
- c) Undertake strategic planning to identify at-risk areas and triage AP2s resources accordingly.
- d) The Management Agency to consider whether its aims are still relevant by taking into account larger commercial businesses who are unable to control AFB.
- e) A return to apiary levy to make it administratively easier for levy payers and The Management Agency.
- f) Reducing the number of training providers and overall expenditure by half.

Three beekeepers owning between 500 and over 30,00 colonies felt:

- a) While AFB control is important, paying any levy was going to be challenging for most beekeeping businesses who aren’t financially profitable.
- b) The levy should return to being based on apiaries, a greater focus on surveillance to find the source of AFB, re-instating disease-a-thons for commercials and hobbyists, and investigating areas of duplication.
- c) One fee should cover AFB NPMP and other beekeeping matters (including pollination and biosecurity), allowing levy payers to decide how the levy gets spent, stopping spore testing on stored gear, reducing administrative overheads, and using AP2 resources wisely.

The hobbyists and smaller commercials expressed the following views:

- a) Appreciated the cost-cutting initiatives implemented by The Management Agency.
- b) Retaining the levy for hobbyists but increasing it for beekeepers who have made profits.
- c) Appreciated the straightforward communication within the consultation brochure and encouraged the use of email to educate beekeepers about key AFB statistics.
- d) Investigating other avenues for communications (e.g. country Calendar series), advertisements, a GiveaLittle page for keeping NZ honeybees healthy, and a promotional video on AFB as an educational reminder.

- e) Agreeable to paying more levies in the form of a gradual year-on-year increase; to support The Management Agency's services and its communications for beekeepers exiting the industry and leaving abandoned apiaries.
- f) Suggestions of a staged levy with offsetting of costs through innovative thinking; a reduced levy rate for the first five years of a DECA holder and making it cheaper for smaller beekeepers to manage their hives.

Supplementary submissions

Two submitters sent additional feedback through emails, supplementary to their submission on SurveyMonkey, with the following views:

1. Appreciative of recognising the financial burdens on beekeepers and taking appropriate steps to keep expenditure down.
2. A requirement to continue engaging with beekeepers through education at a time when AFB control/elimination will be demanding for many.
3. A need for sector-wide debate on:
 - a) The use of new technologies.
 - b) The AFB NPMP's goals and objectives.
 - c) The Governance and management of the AFB NPMP.
4. A need for The Management Agency to show accountability to the sector in how the levies are used, how the NPMP is operated, by sharing the annual work program, and by providing comparison of proposed future budgets with actuals from previous years.
5. Reluctance of The Management Agency to assess its own performance and those of beekeepers, and an Operational Plan that is inconsistent with the Biosecurity Act 1993.
6. Developing direct lines of communication with levy payers and re-considering the number of Board meetings, and whether the AFB Recognition Courses truly delivers value.
7. A need for a nation-wide surveillance programme for AFB.

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