

## BIOSECURITY

# APIWELLBEING PROJECT REPLACES BEE PATHOGEN PROGRAMME

Biosecurity New Zealand's Bee Pathogen Programme is moving into a new stage and has a new name to reflect this. It is now called the ApiWellbeing project. It remains funded by the Ministry for Primary Industries and is supported by the Management Agency of the National American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan (AFB PMP).

Following two and a half years of data collection from beekeepers across New Zealand, the team at Biosecurity New Zealand is busy analysing and publishing this work. The team now has more than 130,000 bees archived in its freezer and performed more than 4,000 diagnostic tests during the collection phase. The team hopes to release results of the Bee Pathogen Programme very soon.

Currently, as part of the new project, they are hard at work developing new molecular (DNA) tests for exotic organisms like Israeli acute paralysis virus, and deeper testing for those already present in New Zealand such as sacbrood virus and chalkbrood fungus. They are also doing a more detailed study of the deformed wing virus genotypes.

Also under way is sequencing of the genomes of *Paenibacillus larvae* (American foulbrood) to allow New Zealand to better understand the genetic diversity and disease-types of the bacteria and how clusters of disease may be linked.

The ApiWellbeing project aims to establish a national collection of bees and data to verify scientific findings from the Bee Pathogen Programme, to demonstrate the 'presence or absence' of new or emerging bee pathogens, and to create opportunities for new bee health research.

Importantly for beekeepers, the project has a practical focus, with plans to create an array of resources and guidelines for beekeepers to enhance bee biosecurity in New Zealand. The first of these is a bee biosecurity guide which can be downloaded onto phones for quick



*Apiwellbeing project team members Hayley Pragert and Richard Hall. Photo supplied by Biosecurity New Zealand.*

access in the field. You can download the ID guide at <https://bit.ly/2Twtb0y>

The guide is intended for use for both hobbyists and commercial beekeepers and contains the most common apiculture pests and diseases, as well as organisms that the team are working to keep out of New Zealand.

All beekeepers play a vital role in protecting New Zealand from biosecurity threats. To report suspected exotic bee pests or disease, or large-scale hive losses call: 0800 80 96 96.