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In the application of sprays and the routine examination of large numbers of household allotments after treatment, it was necessary to call upon colleagues for manual assistance. The authors are indebted to Messrs. M. M. H. Wallace, J. A. Mahon, L. Rogers, E. Holmes and R. S. McInnes of the Division of Entomology, C.S.I.R.O. and Messrs. B. A. B. Edwards, J. A. Button, V. Gates and R. S. Turton

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HOT WEATHER PRECAUTIONS IN THE APIARY

By R. S. COLEMAN, Officer-in-Charge, Apiculture Section

ON these hot summer days two things come to mind—fire and water. As beekeepers, fire is our worst enemy, and yet we must use it as an ally in the boiler and the smoker even on the hottest of days. This year, with the grass just about ready to explode has everybody anxious. Make certain that you are not the one to start a fire.

Check your boiler first. Make sure that you have a spark arrester in the stack, because sparks can be carried quite a distance on a hot wind.

Another danger point is the oil lead into the fire box. Sometimes you just can't help spilling some oil. If you do—**clean it up!** Several caravans have been burnt to the ground because the boiler blew back and caught the oil and other rubbish alight. Once this is alight, there is little hope of saving the caravan as not only is there fuel oil for the boiler, but there are petrol and oil in the engine and usually quite a lot of wax in the capping reducer. So clean up your boiler, make sure that the fuel leads are working correctly and carry a chemical fire extinguisher in the van.

The next culprit for starting fires is the smoker. The grate should be in good condition so that sparks can't blow back through the air hole on to the ground and start a fire going that way.

It is a good idea always to carry the smoker in a tin, except when you are using it. This is a great safeguard and should be used by everybody; it is so simple and yet effective.

Another little point which could stop fires and at least will stop your being burnt by the smoker is to pull the protectors on the side of the fire box well out so that while you are holding the smoker between your legs, there is no chance of your being burnt. I know just how easy it is involuntarily to drop the smoker when the hot fire box presses up against you.

Make as good a break around your bees as you can. Quite often the farmer—as much to protect himself as you—will plough a break around your bees if asked. This will stop the

fire danger from your apiary and also help to save your bees from a fire sweeping over the paddock. It is always best to prepare a site before you put your bees down, either by raking or burning. In any case, clean up from underneath the hives. I have seen an apiary where all the hives but nine were clean underneath and those nine were the only hives that were burnt, although the fire had swept right through the apiary!

So much for preventing fires. Now for stopping them once they have started. Never be without a knapsack spray and at least a 4-gallon tin of water. You never know when a fire is going to start and you just have to be ready **all** the time. "Be prepared" like the Boy Scouts.

Now for water; never forget that bees are animals and need it. They use water in the same way as we do—to keep cool and replace losses. Up to half the bees in a hive on a hot day may be just living water-bags and you will find drops of water scattered throughout the hive, in the cells and on the top bars, cooling the hive down and maintaining the correct humidity.

Remember, bees like to drink from wet surfaces, not from a pool of water. Forty-four gallon drums are the best thing, with a bag of tightly corked empty bottles floating in the water. A hive of bees will drink a pint of water a day and 50 hives will clean up a 44-gallon drum of water in a week.

Do not trust to a nectar flow to supply the water—play safe and have water for them to drink at all times.

And also—the water will always be on the spot in case of fire.