



'Hivemind' monitor tracks bee yield

Rebecca Stevenson • 11:54, Oct 07 2013



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TIME SAVER: Hoyt brothers, Berwyn, left, Bryan and Ben have devised Hivemind, a remote weighing system for beehives, an example of which they have installed on a hive atop C1 Cafe in central Christchurch.

A chat on a plane led the Hoyt brothers to design and build their first branded product – Hivemind, a remote monitoring system for beekeepers.

Berwyn Hoyt, along with brothers Ben and Bryan, run a

Christchurch consultancy, Brush Technology, which designs and builds smart technology and websites with a distinct engineering bent.

The company's main focus is on remote monitoring systems used in wineries, vending machines and milk vats, and electronics, including for the medical sector.

It was a conversation that Springfree trampoline inventor Dr Keith Alexander had which led the brothers to adapt their remote monitoring systems to the bee industry.

Alexander was on a flight when the passenger next to him said the beekeeping industry would benefit from some kind of monitoring system. He raised the idea with the brothers, who ran with it.

Commercial hives are often located in the "wop-wops", as Ben Hoyt puts it. Keeping track of how full they are involves driving from hive to hive, much like a bee travels from flower to flower.

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Hivemind did the monitoring for the beekeeper, weighing how much honey was in the hives, Hoyt said.

A Hivemind hub is installed on top of a hive, with wires to scales slid under surrounding hives. Data are directed back to Hivemind's Christchurch servers via satellite and the information is graphed for beekeepers.

Hoyt said the data equals dollars for beekeepers as it allows them to draw out visits to their hives, saving time and fuel. It also means they're visiting when the hives are full so they get maximum honey, and it keeps the bees productive as they stop making honey when hives are full.

Hivemind tested the market with a stand at a bee conference about nine months ago after a year of research and development, received some initial orders, and went into production. Twenty-five 25 hub and scale units are currently in use in New Zealand and Australia.

Hivemind isn't cheap – or for the hobbyist – at \$2000 for the base satellite and solar unit, \$250 per scale, and a small monthly fee for satellite data, Hoyt said.

They're working on a cut-price version with fewer scales but Hoyt said that with one scale "you're hoping all the hives are the same".

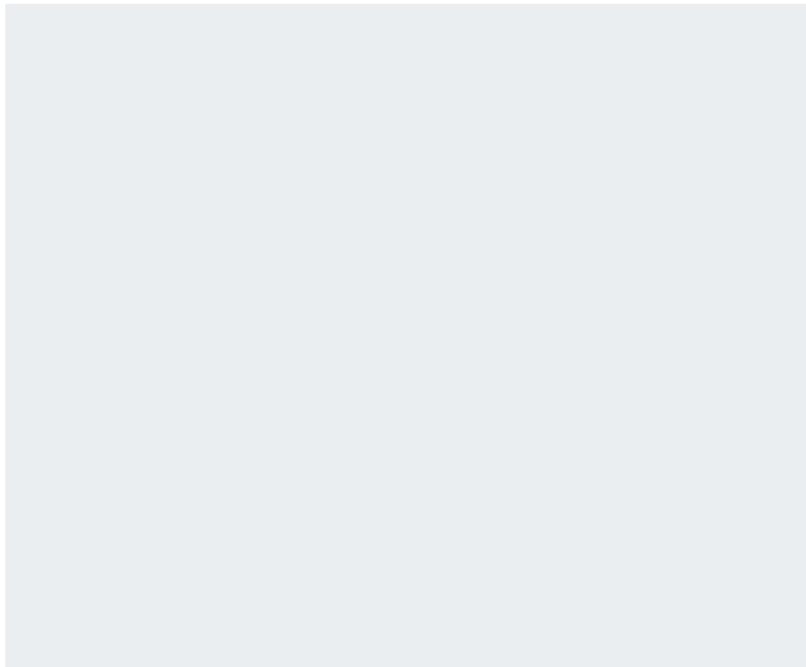
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