Honey bee biosecurity arrangements

For the past 3 years, the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) and Plant Health Australia (PHA) have been working to implement effective biosecurity arrangements for beekeepers around Australia.

Ensuring the honey bee industry has the capacity to better manage established pests, and to have surveillance in place for early detection of exotic pests such as Varroa mite is critical to the future sustainability and viability of the Australian honey bee and pollination industry.

Honey bee industry biosecurity vision

To maintain a profitable and sustainable honey bee and pollination industry in Australia supported by an effective biosecurity system to help prevent exotic pest incursions, as well as improving the management of established pests

Unfortunately, established pests are causing ongoing and significant economic and social harm and an industry/government partnership needs to be put in place to limit the impact to individual beekeepers and the broader industry and economy.

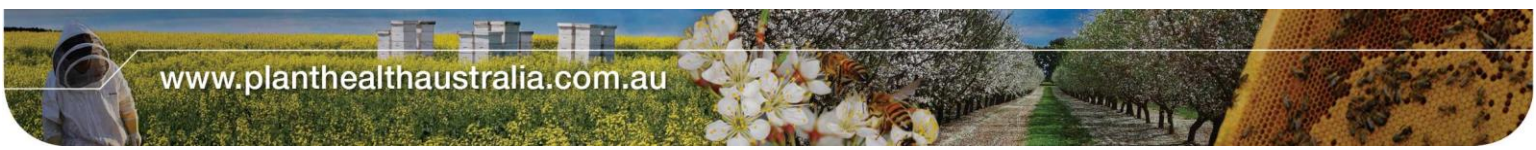
Exotic pests such as Varroa mite, Tropilaelaps mite or Tracheal mite are also a constant threat. If an incursion occurred, the reduction in the number of hives and increased management costs for beekeepers would be very damaging to Australia.

Overseas experience suggests that if major established pests are not properly controlled when a pest such as Varroa mite arrives, the dual effect is worse. For these reasons, greater national coordination and industry leadership is urgently needed to manage established bee pests, as well as prepare for the possible establishment of any of these exotic pests.

The recently successful honey levy process, which increases the honey bee industry's biosecurity investment, allows for an effective and coordinated national biosecurity strategy for the honey bee industry to be put in place from 2015. It is expected that the new honey levy will commence 1 July 2015.

The increase in industry funding will enable the delivery of two national biosecurity programs, one focusing on surveillance of exotic pests and the other to better manage established pests and prepare for exotic pests. These two programs will work together, not only fulfilling the honey bee industry's biosecurity vision but also helping to put in place a word-class biosecurity arrangement for the Australian honey bee industry.

Both Programs will effectively create a government and industry biosecurity partnership to better manage established pests, and to better prepare and survey for exotic pests. More information about each of these specific programs is contained below.



National Bee Pest Surveillance PROGRAM

The National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (NBPSP) is an early warning system to detect new incursions of exotic bee pests and pest bees.

The Program was established in 2012 and involves a range of surveillance methods conducted at locations considered to be of most likely entry of bee pests throughout Australia.

The NBPSP supports two objectives:

1. **Exotic bee pest and pest bee early warning:** This greatly increases the possibility of eradicating an incursion, and limits the scale and cost of an eradication program.
2. **Trade support:** to facilitate the export of queen bees and packaged bees to countries sensitive to a range of bee pests and pest bees. This Program provides technical, evidence based, information to support Australia's pest free status claims during export negotiations.

The National Bee Pest Surveillance Program is comprised of a range of surveillance techniques, such as sentinel hives, catchboxes, hobby beekeeper involvement, floral sweep netting and swarm and nest capture in ports to allow for the early detection of exotic bee pests.

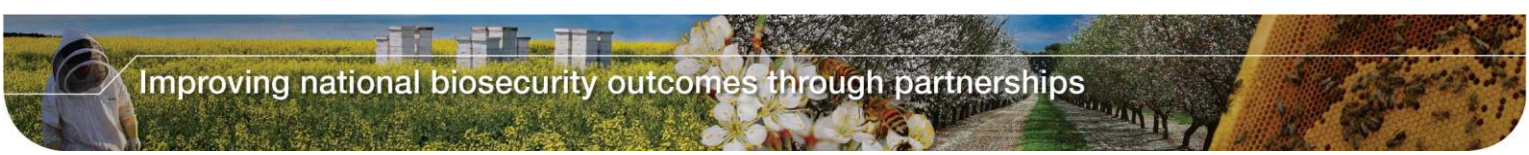
Exotic pests targeted for in the NBPSP include Varroa mites (*Varroa destructor, V. jacobsoni*), Tropilaelaps mites (*Tropilaelaps clareae, T. mercedesae*) and Tracheal mite (*Acarapis woodi*).

Other exotic pests targeted include the Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana*), Giant honey bee (*Apis dorsata*), Red dwarf honey bee (*Apis florea*) and exotic strains of the European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*), including Africanized honey bees (*A. m. scutellata*) and Cape honey bees (*A. m. capensis*). The presence of regionalised established pests such as Braula fly (*Braula coeca*), Small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) and Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana Java genotype*) are also monitored in specific states and territories.

The Program is jointly funded by the honey bee industry ($75,000 per year), pollinator-reliant industries ($75,000 per year) and the Australian Government ($60,000 per year). Extensive in-kind contributions for the implementation of the program are provided through the Department of Agriculture, as well as through each State and Territory Primary Industries Departments. At a national level, PHA coordinates and administers the program.

The recently successful honey levy process secures the honey bee industry’s contribution to this program into the future.

AHBIC and PHA are working with all stakeholders, to secure a long term funding agreement to not only continue, but to expand the NBPSP from 2015/16.



NATIONAL BEE BIOSECURITY PROGRAM

In an effort to improve the management of established pests and diseases, as well as increase the preparedness and surveillance of exotic pest threats in the honey bee industry, AHBIC is working with PHA and state governments to establish the National Bee Biosecurity Program (NBBP) from 2015/16.

The recently successful honey levy process secures the honey bee industry's contribution of $400,000 per year to proposed program.

The purpose of the NBBP is to promote best management practices for beekeepers in Australia through the establishment of a mandatory Biosecurity Code of Practice.

The Biosecurity Code of Practice is based on the principles of good biosecurity and aims to provide a clear framework for Australian beekeepers to engage in best-practice biosecurity. The objectives of the Code are to:

- Increase productivity in the Australian honey bee industry by improving the general level of pest and disease control by Australian beekeepers.
- Assist beekeepers in recognising established and exotic pests and diseases and help in preparation for an exotic or emerging disease response.
- Assist in the management of significant established diseases of bees
- Ensure beekeepers maintain vigilance for the presence of exotic pests and diseases.
- To ensure the future viability and sustainability of the Australian honey bee industry.

To ensure that Australian commercial beekeepers are following appropriate biosecurity practices, the Program would employ a specific Bee Biosecurity Officer (BBO) in all six states. It is proposed that this position would be within each State DPI, and would be funded through a combination of beekeeper levies and state government contributions.

The role of the BBO is to provide extension services for industry, as well as training, education and to monitor industry's compliance with the Code. The work plans and milestones of the BBO would be determined in consultation between industry and relevant State DPI's.

The standards expected in the Code and Program are not onerous; they are only things that all beekeepers should be doing anyway to manage and / or minimise the impact of pests and diseases on their hives.

In the event of an incursion of an exotic pest, such as Varroa mite, the Bee Biosecurity Officer would be on hand to provide expert support to industry, help with the design and implementation of response measures and also help provide training and education for beekeepers.

A phase in period of two years is expected for the NBBP.