



Photo by Arthur Giblin

Asian honey bees

Asian honey bees (*Apis cerana*) are an introduced pest bee and are currently found in North Queensland.

The common bee seen in Australia is the European honey bee (*A. mellifera*), which is used for honey production and to pollinate crops.

Asian honey bee characteristics:

- they are smaller (10 mm) and less hairy than European honey bees
- have more prominent banding on the abdomen than European honey bees
- when swarming, they move in very tight tennis ball to basket ball sized swarms.

Asian honey bees in Australia

Asian honey bees are a known pest in Australia for a number of reasons:

- They swarm readily and tend to nest in small urban environment cavities, such as letter boxes, where there is high potential for contact with humans.
- They have the potential to compete with native insects, birds and mammals for food (nectar) and nesting cavities.
- They can carry a varroa mite that is known to cause severe losses of European honey bee colonies around the world, if not treated.



• Actual size: Approx 10 mm long

- Asian honey bees will likely aid the spread of the varroa mite (if introduced) to European honey bees. This would reduce honey production and could disrupt the pollination cycle and production of many agricultural crops.
- They are a stinging bee and will sting if disturbed. A sting from an Asian honey bee could cause an anaphylactic reaction in allergy-prone people.

Help slow the spread

Be on the look out for bees and check your vehicle/vessel/trailer before travelling long distances. This is an important step to reduce the risk of the bee being spread throughout Australia.



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Are you located in the known infested area?

Visit the Biosecurity Queensland website www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au to check if you are located outside the known infested area.

If you see Asian honey bees outside the known infested area or in ports and boat marinas throughout Queensland, notify Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23** or use our online reporting tool www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au. Beekeepers can also find information here regarding their legislative requirements and restrictions on the movement of bees in North Queensland.

What you can do if Asian honey bees are endangering you

It is often easier to remove a swarm of Asian honey bees from your property before it becomes established in a wall cavity or other location, where it may be more difficult and expensive to remove.

The safest way to remove a swarm or nest of Asian honey bees that is threatening you or your family is to call a local pest control operator, who can be found listed in the telephone directory. If it is a European honey bee swarm or nest, a local beekeeper may be able to assist you to remove the bees. Contact your local government agency for enquiries regarding swarms or nests in a public place.

Do not attempt to move the swarm or nest of Asian honey bees by yourself. Interfering with the bees will only aggravate and encourage them to sting in defence.

How you can help

To protect the Australian honey industry from exotic pests and diseases, suspect bees and mites should be reported by calling Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23**.

Biosecurity Queensland has also developed a number of tools for industry to manage nuisance bees. Visit www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au for more information.

Follow Biosecurity Queensland on Facebook and Twitter (@BiosecurityQld).



Swarm of Asian honey bees.



Nest of Asian honey bees in a letterbox.



Swarm of Asian honey bees on rubbish bin.



Nest of Asian honey bees.