

National Bee Pest Surveillance Program Steering Committee - Meeting 3

National Bee Biosecurity Program Steering Committee - Meeting 10

Communiqué

The 3rd meeting of the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (NBPSP) and the 10th meeting of the National Bee Biosecurity Program (NBBP) Steering Committees were held on Thursday the 21st November 2019 in Canberra. The Committees includes representatives from the Australian, State and Territory governments agricultural agencies, Australian Honey Bee Industry Council, Plant Health Australia (PHA) and Hort Innovation (NBPSP only).

Below is a brief description of the items discussed and the major outcomes of the meetings.

National Bee Pest Surveillance Program

Update on surveillance activities and projects

Nationally there are now 166 active beehives and 158 catchboxes positioned across 33 ports for early detection of exotic pests, with the numbers increasing as the program progresses. Surveillance staff are working to ensure beehives at ports are equipped to survive the harsh weather and environmental conditions experienced throughout Australia.

The projects funded by the Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Competitiveness White Paper are due for completion in February 2020. These include the roll out of new and updated catchboxes with remote sensing and bee detection capabilities, a review of Asian honey bee surveillance methods and the development of procedures to improve early detection of exotic bee pests and diseases.

PHA, through the assistance of Plant and Food NZ, have received preserved varroa mite specimens to provide reference material to aid in training and identification of this high priority pest. They will be distributed to surveillance operators and diagnostic laboratories nationally.

Miticide permit update

PHA manages and holds permits that allow the supply of miticides for use in the surveillance program and response situations on behalf of industry and governments. PHA is progressing to obtain two new permits (Formic Pro Plus and Amitraz). PHA provided an update on future planning processes to improve permits and product stock management.

New pest threats

The committee discussed an emerging threat, the Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*), after its discovery on Vancouver Island (BC) Canada in 2019. The NBPSP and Australian Government border surveillance staff tested trapping devices for Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*) in 2018-2019. The committee will continue to monitor the situation in Canada and discuss possible preparedness tracking devices that may have the potential to be used should these hornets be detected in Australia.

Review of the program

With the NBPSP concluding in December 2021, a review by an independent consultant will take place before the framework and design for a new program is set. An update was provided on the elements that will be addressed in the review such as management, surveillance operations and resourcing requirements. The committee put forward suggested consultants which PHA will approach early in 2020.

For more information on the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program visit:

planthealthaustralia.com.au/national-programs/national-bee-pest-surveillance-program/

National Bee Biosecurity Program

Biosecurity for Beekeepers online training course

The committee supported a proposal to provide the *Biosecurity for Beekeepers* online training course free to all Australian beekeepers if funding arrangements can be agreed upon. Potential funding arrangements will be considered by Plant Health Committee in the upcoming year.

For more information about the *Biosecurity for Beekeepers* course visit: beeaware.org.au/training/

Varroa incursion scenario workshop

The committee discussed outcomes from Exercise Bee Prepared, a Varroa mite incursion simulation exercise delivered by PHA. Various activities were assigned to the committee within the [final report](#), which if implemented would improve national capacity to respond to a Varroa mite detection in a peri-urban setting. The committee agreed to oversee the progress of these activities.

For more information on Exercise Bee Prepared visit:

planthealthaustralia.com.au/resources/training/simulation-exercises/

National Bee Biosecurity Program Review

The committee were updated on the review of the National Bee Biosecurity Program. The first meeting of the review working group was held in November 2019. Funding arrangements, management and governance structure, program aims and objectives and program delivery were discussed. The committee noted the initial recommendations from the working group, with the review outcomes to be finalised in the upcoming months.

For more information on the National Bee Biosecurity Program visit:

planthealthaustralia.com.au/national-programs/national-bee-biosecurity-program/

Harmonisation of import requirements

A technical working group consisting of industry and state government representatives are working towards the harmonisation of import requirements for the movement of bees between the state/territory jurisdictions. The working group met *via* teleconference in June 2019 to discuss the current legislation underpinning import requirements within each state/territory jurisdiction. The committee agreed that harmonisation of import requirements should be considered further by the Subcommittee on Domestic Quarantine and Market Access in the upcoming year.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program and National Bee Biosecurity Program steering committees will be held in May 2020 in Melbourne.