Essential components of bee biosecurity

A healthy population of honey bees ensures the success of the honey bee industry and the many plant industries that rely on them for pollination.

Every pest or disease that enters and becomes established in an apiary has the potential to affect colony yield and performance. Establishment of pests and diseases can also increase the cost, chemical use and labour required for beekeepers to maintain affected hives.

Six ways beekeepers can protect their honey bees

Here are six easy ways beekeepers can reduce the threat of exotic and established pests and diseases affecting their bees. Each of these practices should be embedded in the everyday management of an apiary.

1. Be aware of biosecurity threats

Beekeepers and apiary staff should be familiar with the significant risks posed by exotic and established honey bee pests. Conduct a biosecurity introduction session to educate individuals on the required hygiene practices for people, equipment and vehicles within your apiary.

2. Use pest free honey bee stock and apiary equipment

Ensure all queen bees and packaged bees are from reliable sources, and are disease and pest-free. Keep good records of the apiary inputs.

3. Keep it clean

Practicing good sanitation and hygiene will help prevent the entry, establishment and movement of pests within and between apiaries.

- Park vehicles away from hive(s) and limit the movement of the vehicle within your apiary to avoid contamination and disturbance.
- Ensure your beekeeping kit, hive tools, smoker and other equipment are clean and free of debris or materials before and after use. Make sure you use clean hive tools when working between hives.

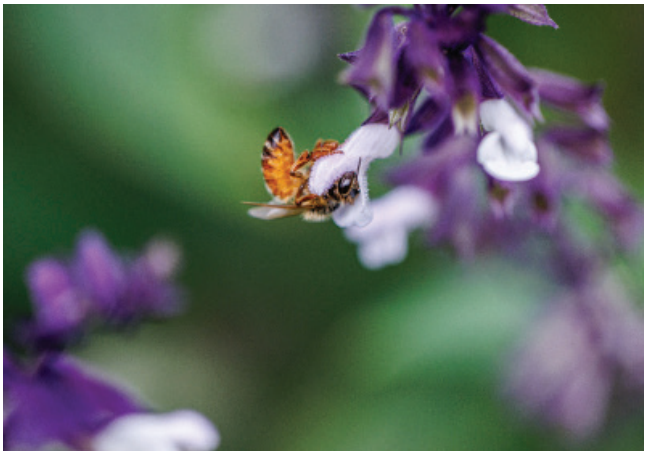
Clean hive tools and equipment away from hives using a weak bleach solution (1:100 solution of normal household bleach:water) or hot soapy water to scrub tools to remove any excess wax, honey or debris.

- Make sure colonies that have suddenly died or showed signs of pest/disease infestation are never left out for neighbouring bees to rob.
- Be cautious when opening hives in robbing conditions (e.g. when floral resources are low), bees may rob hives and infect colonies with pests or diseases they may be carrying.

4. Check your apiary

Monitor hives and the health of the honey bee brood frequently. Knowing the usual performance of the hives and honey bees will help you recognise new or unusual events and threats.

Keep written and photographic records of all unusual observations. As pest numbers can increase rapidly, constant vigilance is essential for early detection.



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It is important that beekeepers undertake regular inspections of their hives. Hive inspections are key to the early detection of exotic bee threats and reporting of high priority established pests and diseases. The alcohol washing technique is a quick and effective method for detecting the presence and monitoring the level of varroa and tropilaelaps mites within a honey bee colony.

Factsheets and a training video that provides information on alcohol washing are available on the Bee Pest Blitz website.

5. Abide by the law

Respect and be aware of laws and regulations established to protect the honey bee industry, Australian agriculture and the local region.

6. Report anything unusual

If you see anything unusual, keep the sample and report the finding immediately to the relevant state/territory agriculture agency through the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881.**

Biosecurity is everyone's responsibility, play your part and check your hives.

It's time to bee aware

If you see anything unusual, call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline

EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
1800 084 881

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