

Dear Committee,

Current Picture

I do think that beekeeping has a bright future in Australia, but it is not as bright or vibrant as it should be.

The decision to cease eradication efforts of the Asian honey bee was stupid for a number of reasons.

Those reasons being:

- Immediate loss of the US market for nucleus swarms. This market was valued between \$5m and \$10m a year. The profit margins were large, with end stage sales approaching or exceeding \$200 per nucleus swam, or which costs were no more than \$50, consisting of caged Queen, \$15 the major costs component. The worker bees, shipped essentially being by-products of swarm harvesting from established apiary sites. The USA, with the recent extreme weather now likely has a chronic shortage of bees as extreme cold coupled with colony collapse disorder would almost be the death knee of the entire US honey industry. At the time our US friends need help the most for this industry we are unable to provide it.
- Lowered Australia's reputation for disease control and eradication in its food products industry and as such lowered the reputation of brand Australia;
- Loss of employment to those directly involved, as I understand it, from media reports, some thirty people lost fulltime employment.
- Loss of opportunity to develop insect control and eradication skills, so that when the NEXT invasive pest arrives Australia already has a proven method of exterminating it. Cases in point, fire ant and argentine ant eradication programs. These are two examples were eradication took years and considerable effort, but the programs have worked to the best of knowledge of this writer.
- Monitoring and containment can never be effective in the long run, as the management paradigm is that the effort has no real prospects of success resulting in the investable acceptance of loss; and

- It exposed future generations of Australians to aggressive bees that sting more, produce less honey and inbreed with already established relatively passive strains of bees.

Proposed Future

The Commonwealth Government should resume the Asian bee eradication program and the honey industry must not shirk from its responsibilities in helping to pay for the program. The nucleus hive export industry must be levied \$25, this give \$937,500 per year based on last known conservative estimates of initial budget. Combined with that would tax revenues based on supplier costs of \$100, sale price of \$200 giving a gross margin of \$75 per hive after the levy. Based on same numbers that would, in theory, give a rough profit of \$2,812,500 per year, yielding additional taxation of \$940,000 per year This gives, in round figures a projected an annual eradication Budget of \$1.9m before any additional Commonwealth funding is drawn. This is a small amount to pay for the restoration of a market.

Costs of the program can be contained by using work for the dole labour, Queensland State free in aid Apiary staff and also consideration for the use of low security risk prisoners seeking credits for parole, or even a new law abiding career. The use of sniffer dogs in winter season would be the perfect time hunt and destroy the Asian bee colonies.

With the resumption of the eradication program, representations must be immediately made the US Department of Agriculture informing of the change of policy direction.

Thank-you for the opportunity to contribute to the important public debate. I am available for in person questioning.

Roland S. Inman