

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References
 Answers to questions on notice
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio

Inquiry: Adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness

Question No: IQ22-000004

Hearing Date: 4 August 2022

Division/Agency: Australian Chief Plant Protection Office

Topic: Private briefing - Varroa mite

Question Date: 4 August 2022

Question Type: Written

The Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee asked:

1. Chronology for the detection and emergency response in relation to the Newcastle-Narrabri-Coffs Harbour detections
2. Information about the emergency response trigger and state/territory movement of hives

Answer:

1. Please find below a chronology for the detection and emergency response in relation to the Newcastle-Narrabri-Coffs Harbour detections.

Date	Activity/Comments
22 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspect varroa mites detected in sentinel beehives at the Port of Newcastle, and morphologically identified as <i>Varroa destructor</i>. • Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) Chair notified by NSW, and Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) triggered. • NSW activates State Control Centre at Orange Agricultural Institute and a Local Coordination Centre at Maitland.
23 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCEPP notified of detection and advised that a CCEPP 1 meeting is scheduled for 24 June 2022.
24 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCEPP 1 meeting held to discuss the detection. • An Emergency Order (no. 1) put in place by NSW establishing a 10km infested hive zone, 25km surveillance zone; and 50km buffer zone, around infested premises. • The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is notified of the detection.
25 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial beekeeper just under 10km from initial detection reports suspect <i>V. destructor</i>. NSW DPI confirms heavy infestation at site.
26 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Order (no. 2) enacted by NSW which includes a state-wide standstill for beekeepers across that state.
27 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCEPP 2 meeting held. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are 4 known Infested Premises. ○ The CCEPP agreed that the Incident of <i>Varroa destructor</i> relates to an Emergency Plant Pest (EPP) under the EPPRD; however, it is too early to determine technical feasibility of eradication.

28 – 30 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Australia, Victoria and Queensland put in movement control orders for bees/bee material coming from NSW to prevent the spread of varroa mite.
1 July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCEPP 3 meeting held. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are 9 known Infested Premises. ○ CCEPP agreed that based on the current information, this Incident of <i>Varroa destructor</i> is considered technically feasible to eradicate.
2-6 July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCEPP 4 out of session meeting - Draft Response Plan – <i>Varroa destructor</i> endorsed.
8 July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Management Group meet and endorse the Response Plan and discuss funding arrangements.
14 July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Management Group meet to agree detail of funding arrangements.
20 July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a risk-based assessment, NSW revise their movement restrictions to allow registered commercial beekeepers to move their honeybees and hives within the General Biosecurity Zone.
25 July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Infested Premise identified in Nana Glen, near Coffs Harbour. Detection linked to the movement of hives from a known Infested Premise.
2 August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCEPP 5 meeting held. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are 62 known Infested Premises. ○ CCEPP further discuss response activities being undertaken under the approved Response Plan. • Victoria Government releases Order with new regulations for the movement of bees/bee material into Victoria and the Sunraysia region.
8 August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 83 known Infested Premises. • All Infested Premises either have clear links through the movement of hives or equipment, or are geographically related..

2. Emergency Response Trigger:

The [Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed](#) (EPPRD) is a formal legally binding agreement between Plant Health Australia, the Australian Government, all state and territory governments and national plant industry body signatories. It covers the management and funding of responses to emergency plant pest (EPP) incidents, such as *Varroa destructor* (varroa mite).

For the purposes of Cost Sharing a response to an Incident under the EPPRD, a government Party must give Formal Notification to the Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer, who is the Chair of the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP), within 24 hours of becoming aware of an Incident. In this instance, NSW advised the CCEPP Chair following the suspect detection of varroa mite in sentinel hives at the Port of Newcastle on 22 June 2022, thus triggering the EPPRD.

The CCEPP provides technical and scientific advice in response to exotic plant pest and disease incursions and comprises the Australian Government, Chief Plant Health Managers from each state and territory, other specialists from government, Plant Health Australia, and representatives from affected industries. For this Incident there are 16 affected industries that are signatories to the EPPRD (see below). These represent 16 of 32 pollination dependant industries that are affected by the incursion of *Varroa destructor*.

Affected Industry Parties under the EPPRD

Almond Board of Australia	Avocados Australia
Apple and Pear Australia	Canned Fruit Industry Council of Australia
Australian Honey Bee Industry Council	Cherry Growers of Australia
Australian Lychee Growers Association	Grain Producers Australia
Australian Macadamia Society	Passionfruit Australia
Australian Mango Industry Association	Raspberries and Blackberries Australia
Australian Melon Association	Strawberries Australia
AUSVEG	Summerfruit Australia

The National Management Group (NMG) consists of Chief Executive Officers from government agencies responsible for agriculture and affected industry organisations. It is chaired by the Secretary of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Plant Health Australia is a non-voting member.

NMG makes decisions on whether to support funding national eradication programs for pest or disease incursions under the EPPRD. NMG considers recommendations provided by the CCEPP before making decisions on technical feasibility and cost benefit of eradication.

State and territory movement of hives

NSW DPI has four types of emergency zones in place across the state. Different restrictions apply depending on where honeybees and hives are located in NSW. The zones include a 10 km eradication zone; a 25 km surveillance zone; a 50 km notification zone and all of NSW falls under a General Biosecurity Zone. Please see Figure 1 below for a map of the current varroa mite emergency zones (as of 5 August 2022).

10km eradication zone (Red Zone)	<p>Beekeepers are allowed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harvest honey or honeycomb within 48 hours of being told by an authorised officer that their bees will be euthanised. Place empty supers on hives to manage swarming if not infected or suspect premises. Take action to manage American Foul Brood, small hive beetle, dead out hives and queenless hives. <p>All these actions are subject to strict conditions.</p> <p>Beekeepers must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move hives or honeybees away from their current site Move apiary equipment outside the zone Euthanise hives, burn or otherwise dispose of equipment (unless directed by an authorised biosecurity officer) Tamper with bees and hives, except as permitted above
25km surveillance zone (Purple Zone) and 50km notification zone (Yellow Zone)	<p>Beekeepers are allowed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove honey from hives (subject to certain requirements). Place empty supers on hives (subject to certain requirements). Feed bees using permitted bee feeders. Move food grade (processed) honey between zones.

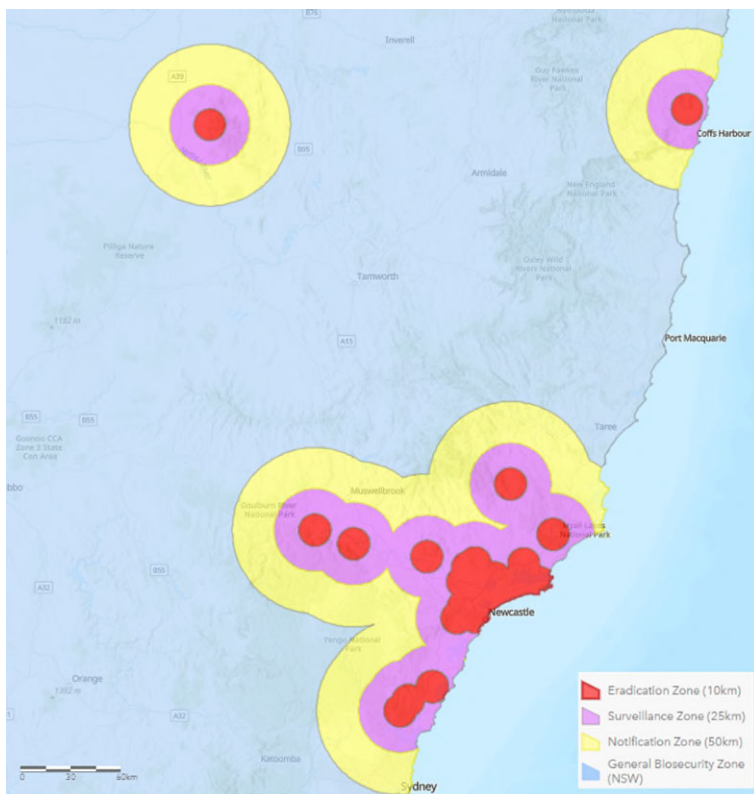
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct alcohol washes or sugar shake tests on hives to check for varroa mite. • Remove honey from a flow hive via a tap <p>Beekeepers must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move hives, brood boxes, nucleus hives, packaged bees or queen bees anywhere, including within the same zone.
--	---

To minimise impacts in NSW, hive movement plans have been developed to allow registered and approved commercial beekeepers to move hives within low-risk areas of NSW and to support apiarists and plant industries that rely on critical pollination services. The movement plan has been carefully developed by an expert working group through a risk-based approach with requirements in place to ensure that hives are moved safely.

Registered commercial beekeepers within the General Biosecurity Zone (Blue Zone in Figure 1 below) can complete a Hive Movement Declaration to move honeybees and hives, to allow for their business continuity and to provide pollination services. There are explicit requirements on beekeepers before moving, which are detailed on the [NSW DPI website](#).

NSW, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory have restrictions in place which prohibits the entry of bees, hives and equipment from NSW without a permit. Hives moving into the Sunraysia region of Victoria for almond pollination need a permit, and Biosecurity officers are on-the-ground checking compliance. Permits are also required for entry of hives into South Australia from Victoria and Queensland. Information on jurisdiction movement requirements can be found in the table below.

Figure 1: Varroa mite emergency zones @ 5 August 2022



Jurisdiction movement requirements:

Queensland	<p>The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) Director-General issued a Movement Control Order (MCO) on 30 June 2022.</p> <p>A permit system has been established to move bees, hives, used beekeeping equipment and bee products (including honey) into Queensland from NSW under certain circumstances.</p> <p>Bees, hives and other carriers will continue to be allowed to enter Queensland from other states that are deemed to be free from varroa. Bees, hives and other carriers cannot be transited through New South Wales (NSW) unless the person is a registered beekeeper and has a copy of the biosecurity emergency permit issued by NSW.</p> <p>Used bee hives, honey supers, unprocessed bee products (including honey and beeswax) and used bee keeping equipment originating from NSW cannot be moved into Queensland until further notice.</p>
South Australia	<p>Moving bees and bee products - PIRSA</p> <p>Moving bees and bee products from NSW into SA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to varroa mite, bees, hives, and associated apiary products and beekeeping property cannot be brought into South Australia from NSW. • You need to apply for permission to bring apiary products, beekeeping equipment and appliances, hive components, and certain other products from NSW into SA. <p>Movement of bees into SA from Victoria and Queensland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to apply for a permit to move bees, bee colonies, hive components, apiary products and appliances, and beekeeping plant, into SA from Victoria or Queensland. • Conditions of entry into SA include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ your bees, bee colonies, hive components (except new hive components), apiary products (except processed honey), apiary appliances (except new apiary appliances), and beekeeping plant have not been in NSW in the past 12 months ○ you follow approved transit routes and transit safeguards ○ you test 10% of your hives for Varroa mite prior to entry into South Australia (as per SA testing specifications).
Victoria	<p>Victoria Movement Control requirements</p> <p>Victoria Control Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The movement of bees, hives, used beekeeping equipment and bee products, including pollen and honeycomb, from NSW, or any state or territory that has declared the presence of Varroa mite, is prohibited without a permit. • This also applies to any bees, hives, used beekeeping equipment and bee products in other states and territories that have been in NSW at any time after 1 January 2022. • This does not include processed honey and wax or new beekeeping tools and equipment which can be transported as normal.

Sunraysia region restrictions

- In addition, anyone seeking to move bees, beehives, beekeeping equipment and bee products into Victoria's Sunraysia region, from within Victoria or from another state, must obtain a permit. This measure has been put in place ahead of Victoria's almond pollination season. This applies to all Victorian and interstate beekeepers.
- Permits are also being issued to beekeepers from South Australia (SA) and Queensland (Qld) to help ensure bees can be sourced for Victoria's valuable almond pollination.
- Permits will only be granted if strict conditions are met, including testing hives for Varroa mite 14 days before consignment using sugar shake test (VIC and SA only – not accepted from QLD), alcohol wash test, drone uncapping or brood uncapping inspection, making records, marking inspected hives to name a few.
- A permit is required if you already have bees in the Victorian Sunraysia region. The permit system is about traceability. If Varroa mite is detected in the Victorian Sunraysia region, VIC will need to contact you. Having a permit on display at your site will ensure you will receive any important communication.

No permits will be granted for movements from NSW at this time. The situation in New South Wales is being monitored, and as the risk eases Victoria will reconsider permit applications from beekeepers there.