

# Industry Situation Report

## Varroa Mite Response 2022

<b>From</b>	Lavinia Zirnsak – State Controller Biosecurity – Varroa
<b>To</b>	Apiarists, pollination purchasers and associated industries
<b>Situation report number</b>	8
<b>Issued at</b>	09 September 2022 at 17:00 hrs
<b>Response to</b>	Varroa Mite ( <i>Varroa destructor</i> ) Response 2022

### 1. SITUATION OVERVIEW

#### Movement requirements

The varroa mite situation is constantly evolving. The information provided in this report was correct at the time of release. It is your responsibility to ensure you are up to date with current movement requirements before moving your bees and related items. For the most up-to-date information, refer to: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/varroa](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/varroa).

- The current Victorian Control Area Order came into operation at 0000hrs on 07 September 2022 and is effective until 2359hrs on 20 September 2022.
- The Order prohibits any movement of bees, hives, bee products, pollen or used fittings into Victoria from any jurisdiction, unless under permit. Permits will not be granted for movement of NSW hives or queen bees into Victoria at this time
- All beekeepers are required to keep hive movement records in some form. Beekeepers with hives under permit in Sunraysia are required to keep records and advise [Honeybee.Permits@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:Honeybee.Permits@agriculture.vic.gov.au) of hive movements until 20 September 2022. After this time, Agriculture Victoria is encouraging all beekeepers to record their hive movements in [BeeMax](#).
- Apply for a permit online at: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/varroa](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/varroa). If you cannot apply online, please email [Honeybee.Permits@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:Honeybee.Permits@agriculture.vic.gov.au) or phone the Customer Contact Centre on 136 186.
- Industry is reminded that a [health certificate](#) must also be obtained for all movements of bees, bee products and used fittings (beekeeping equipment) into Victoria.

#### Agriculture Victoria Incident Management Team

- Victoria has reached the end of the 2022 almond pollination with no varroa mite detected. Surveillance concluded as of 04 September 2022 with all hives removed and the Local Control Centre (LCC) at Irymple now closed. From our work on the ground during almond pollination, we have gathered excellent surveillance data and along with fantastic co-operation and support from industry, we are confident of our varroa-free status at this point in time.
- As per the approved Sentinel Hive Surveillance Plan, sentinel hives and swarm catch boxes [have been](#) deployed at six locations in Sunraysia near NSW almond orchards along the Murray River. They will be monitored every four weeks.
- During this response, Braula fly (*Braula coeca*) has been detected in hives of several Victorian beekeepers. Agriculture Victoria will not be conducting further active surveillance for Braula fly or taking any destruction actions in respect of infested hives. Braula fly is not expected to cause any significant economic impacts to the apiary industry, but beekeepers are encouraged to implement good biosecurity measures to ensure hive health is maintained.
- Braula fly remains a notifiable disease under the *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994* and we encourage beekeepers to continue reporting suspected Braula fly by calling the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881. Braula fly can look similar to varroa mite on bees, so beekeepers need to look closely at any insects or mites present in their hives.
- To support a safe almond pollination event in Sunraysia, Agriculture Victoria has:
  - issued 307 permits for 84,311 hives.
  - inspected 5,518 (10.84%) of the 50,924 hives visited to date.

#### Perform a mite check and keep records

- Beekeepers should inspect their hives now for varroa mite (weather permitting and at their earliest convenience) using the drone or worker brood uncapping, sugar shake or alcohol wash method. It is important to pick a sunny day (14-15°C and above) with minimal wind. Beekeepers should also continue to inspect their hives regularly for signs of other exotic pests and diseases.
- We encourage all beekeepers to report their mite test results via [BeeMAX](#). BeeMAX is free, quick, and easy to use and is a simple way of maintaining your record keeping obligations under the Livestock Disease and Control Regulations. The electronic diary is a central place to record all your biosecurity activities and observations including pest and disease inspections and testing, swarm collection data, the movement of bees and equipment and completed biosecurity training.

- Learn more on Agriculture Victoria's website <https://go.vic.gov.au/hAVwaL> or visit BeeMAX [bees.agriculture.vic.gov.au](https://bees.agriculture.vic.gov.au)

### Report suspect varroa mite

- Varroa mite is a notifiable exotic disease of bees under the *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994*. Report any suspect varroa mite or any other exotic pest or disease immediately to the national Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.
  - In Victoria this hotline is staffed 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 6pm on weekends and public holidays. Please leave a message outside these hours.

### Recent industry engagement

- [We are seeking clarification from NSW Department of Primary Industries \(DPI\) on the details of their border closure to Victorian beehives, following the detection of Braula fly in hives moved across the border into NSW.](#)
- [Industry Liaison](#) has emailed pollination-dependent horticulture and grains industry sectors requesting information about pollination concerns and continues to collate feedback and intelligence from responses received.
- The Interstate Movement Working Group was established to facilitate discussion between the key stakeholders for the purposes of almond pollination. With the almond pollination event wrapping up for 2022, and the focus of pollination moving towards other industries, the remit for the group in its current format is completed. A list of questions raised by the group have been answered from a Victorian perspective and sent to other States for their input, before distribution to the group.
- An industry presentation was delivered to the Biosecurity Extension Community Meeting on Tuesday 06 September 2022. Positive feedback was received about the presentation and how well organised the Victorian response has been.
- Information on queen bee movements is available on the Agriculture Victoria website [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/varroa](https://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/varroa)
- Regular updates are being issued through the honey beekeeper email list, which consists of approximately 15,000 registered and unregistered beekeepers, as well as to industry stakeholders such as bee clubs and apiculture retailers.
- Industry is strongly encouraged to share social media posts from the Agriculture Victoria Facebook and Twitter accounts across their networks, as the trusted source of information on the varroa situation and response in Victoria.
- The Industry Situation Report was distributed last week to 216 industry stakeholders and groups and ~15,000 industry stakeholders on the honey beekeeper email list.
- Over 100 beekeepers supported the Victorian varroa response by joining the State Quarantine Response Team (SQRT). Forty-one were deployed and three apiculture industry leaders volunteered as Industry Liaison Officers. Agriculture Victoria is grateful for the apiary industry's assistance in responding to the varroa threat.
- We encourage anyone who wishes to join the SQRT to email [honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

## 2. PEST INFORMATION

- On 24 June 2022, NSW reported the detection of varroa mite at the Port of Newcastle. Varroa is considered the greatest threat to the apiary and pollination dependent agricultural industries. On 26 June 2022, NSW issued a state-wide emergency order prohibiting any movement of bees, hives, bee products and used beekeeping equipment within and out of the whole of NSW. On 17 August 2022, the varroa notification emergency zone was absorbed into the NSW general biosecurity zone.
- To date, varroa has not been detected in Victoria.

## 3. FURTHER INFORMATION

- For information on varroa mite visit: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/varroa](https://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/varroa).

## 4. NEXT INDUSTRY SITUATION REPORT

- The next Industry Situation Report will be issued on [Friday 16 September 2022](#).

## 5. APPROVAL

Lavinia Zirnsak

State Controller Biosecurity – Varroa

09 September 2022

Attachment 1. Locations of inspected and sentinel hives.

