

Media Release

Friday, 10 August 2018 | Media contact: Sarah Hetherington, 0409 405 639

Victoria concludes precautionary surveillance for varroa mite detection

Agriculture Victoria's varroa mite surveillance has concluded six weeks after the bee parasite was detected in cargo at the Port of Melbourne that had been unloaded from a ship.

The State Quarantine Response Team, comprising of members of the beekeeping community, worked alongside Agriculture Victoria's Incident Management Team (IMT) to conduct bee hive surveillance following the detection.

The team conducted four rounds of surveillance in every known hive within a two-kilometre radius of the Port of Melbourne detection.

With no further detections of varroa mite, Agriculture Victoria has today stood down its IMT.

Victoria's Chief Plant Health Officer Dr Rosa Crnov thanked industry and the public for their support during the response.

"The support from industry and hobby beekeepers contributed greatly to the success of this response," Dr Crnov said.

"The varroa destructor mite is a very real threat to Australia. We are the only beekeeping country in the world without this destructive pest."

Additional sentinel hives were established around the Port as a result of the response and will continue to be regularly monitored over the next six months. Long-term sentinel hives will also continue to be monitored as part of the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program.

Dr Crnov said the varroa detection highlights the importance of good biosecurity including good preparedness planning.

"This detection is a timely reminder that everyone has a role to play in protecting Victoria's bee and pollination industries.

"Having good biosecurity measures in place will enable the early detection of pests and diseases and prevent their spread.

"Beekeepers are reminded to be vigilant for unusual signs in their hives, to regularly test hives using the sugar shake method, and to follow the Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice," she said.

"Well done to all involved in this successful collaborative effort between Agriculture Victoria, industry and hobby beekeepers."

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If you suspect a pest or disease in your bee hives, take photos for identification, note the location, isolate the hive where possible, and report concerns to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (which includes bees) on 1800 675 888.

For more information about varroa mite, bees in Victoria and best biosecurity practices, visit the Agriculture Victoria website at agriculture.vic.gov.au