

TIMELINE

Varroa mite detected in Newcastle Port beehives

NSW beekeepers have been called on to safeguard their industry after an early warning system found varroa mite, the most serious pest of honey bees worldwide, in biosecurity surveillance hives at the Port of Newcastle.

NSW Chief Plant Protection Officer, Satendra Kumar, said the hives were immediately contained and the bees were euthanised.

“NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) plans to protect the NSW honey industry by eradicating the parasite, which was confirmed as *Varroa destructor*,” Dr Kumar said.

“Australia is the only major honey producing country free from varroa mite. If varroa mite establishes here it could cost Australia’s honey industry more than \$70 million a year and adversely impact multibillion-dollar plant industries, which rely on bee pollination.”

The eradication plan is supported by a varroa mite biosecurity zone covering an area within a 50 km radius of the Port of Newcastle infestation.

Within this biosecurity zone, no hive can be moved and beekeepers must notify NSW DPI of the location of all hives by calling the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline, 1800 084 881 or completing this [form](#).

Eradication plans include treatment of beehives within a 10 km emergency zone around the infestation and inspection of managed and feral honey bee colonies within a 25 km surveillance zone.

Beyond the 50 km biosecurity zone, beekeepers should continue to inspect their hives for [signs of varroa mite](#) and report mites or anything suspicious to 1800 084 881.

The mites are tiny reddish-brown parasites and individual mites are easily identifiable to the naked eye.

Samples of the mites were confirmed as *Varroa destructor* by molecular diagnosis at Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute.

Beekeepers work side-by-side with government as part of Australia’s early warning system to detect exotic honey bee pests, the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program, which includes surveillance hives and catch boxes at strategic locations around our ports and airports.

More information is available from NSW DPI:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/seasonal-pests-and-diseases/spring/varroa-mite>

Hive inspection techniques: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees/pests-diseases/sugar-shake-month>

Varroa mite detection form: <https://forms.bfs.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forms/9247>

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