



***APIS FLOREA* IN PORT MELBOURNE**

AHBIC has been advised by the Office of the Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer that a nest of *Apis florea*, the dwarf honey bee, was found on the underside of a vehicle on 6 April 2022 that was shipped from Thailand. They have been destroyed and a queen bee along with 120 workers were on the nest. There were no eggs, larvae or brood. The vehicle was at an Approved Arrangement Site in Port Melbourne.

Upon examination, no *Tropilaelaps* mites were detected; however, two of the worker bees had *Euvarroa c.f. sinhai* mites on them.

Prior to this on 31 March 2022 a bag of dead *Apis florea* bees were handed to authorities by the ship's crew. These bees had been collected whilst the ship was at sea. The bag contained 1,500 dead bees. There were no external mites detected on these bees. These bees were starting to decompose and were covered with something that was thought to be insecticide.

On 6 April 2022, sweep netting was conducted at two sites with vegetation nearby, with no *A. florea* detected.

On 7 April 2022, a further 420 dead (419 workers and 1 drone), desiccated *Apis florea* bees were found in the trays of utes parked near the one with the nest. Examination showed no mites on these bees. Eight dead *Apis mellifera* were also found and examination showed no external or internal mites. It is thought that these were local bees.

The cargo that was discharged from the vessel that was still remaining on the wharf was subjected to heightened verification (surveillance), with no further bees detected. A follow up is being made to determine if any cargo has left the port area.

In the past we have had *Apis florea* turn up on vehicles imported from Thailand.

This interception strengthens the argument that AHBIC has been putting forward that there needs to be greater emphasis put on inspection of freight at the port of embarkation to stop these bees coming to Australia and relying on us picking them up at the port when they arrive. This was one of the issues raised in our submission to the draft *National Hitchhiker (Contaminating) Plant Pest Action Plan 2022–2033*.

As more information comes to hand I will let you know.

Trevor Weatherhead AM
Chair
11 April 2022