

March 2024

Paying for the Varroa Mite Response and Proposed Levy Increase

As the national peak industry body, the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) is responsible for overseeing the honey levies including the emergency plant pest response (EPPR) levy. Now that an agreement has been reached on the transition to management plan for the NSW varroa destructor response we have the much-needed certainty around the final cost of the response effort.

The total expenditure for the Varroa response, including the transition to management plan, has been capped at \$100 million. The honey bee industry's share of this cost under the deed is \$1.1 million, this has been significantly reduced after AHBIC's efforts to have varroa recategorised. Our industry does not carry reserve funds in the EPPR to cover this expense, so we have secured Commonwealth underwriting over a 10-year period.

To ensure we as an industry, can meet our financial obligation it was agreed by member bodies on the 26th of February 2024 that AHBIC propose an increase in the Emergency Plant Pest Response (EPPR) levy to the honey bee industry.

What does this mean for beekeepers?

The AHBIC member bodies have proposed raising the existing honey levy from 4.6 cents/kg to 5.6 cents/kg. The additional 1 cent/kg, based on historical production data (20,000 tonnes of leviabie honey), will ensure the debt is repaid well within the 10-year window allowing for any production anomalies. It was also agreed that once the debt is repaid the levy will be reduced.

What's next?

AHBIC will work closely with the Department of Agriculture to prepare consultation papers for industry feedback. This process adheres to strict guidelines for EPPR levy increases:

1. Consultation with the Department regarding the increase.
2. Notification to industry, followed by an objection period.
3. Submission of a formal application to the Minister with another objection period.
4. Ministerial decision on the proposed levy increase.

AHBIC will initiate these steps in the coming weeks and keep you informed through our regular communication channels. To stay informed, subscribe to the AHBIC newsletter to receive the latest updates and information about the levy consultation.

By working together, we can ensure a secure future for the Australian honey bee industry.

