

Frequently asked questions: Varroa mite

Varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*, *V. jacobsoni*) is a tiny parasite that affects Asian and European honeybees. It is considered the greatest threat to Australia's honey and honeybee-pollinated plant industries. One species of varroa mite, *Varroa destructor*, has been detected in New South Wales.

Queensland is currently free of varroa mite. Both species are listed as prohibited matter under Queensland's *Biosecurity Act 2014* and the [Varroa mite biosecurity zone](#) remains in place.

What do varroa mite look like?

[Varroa mite](#) are external parasites of adult honeybees, drone and worker brood. Identification characteristics include:

- curved, pinhead-sized mite
- adult females are reddish-brown, flattened, oval-shaped, with body 1–1.7 mm long and 1.5–1.99 mm wide
- adult males are yellowish, spherical, with body 0.75–0.98 mm long and 0.70–0.88 mm wide.

Varroa mite may be seen on the thorax or nestled into abdominal folds of adult bees. Adult female varroa mite may be seen on larvae, pupae and adult honeybees. Juvenile and adult male varroa mite can usually be seen on larvae and pupae.

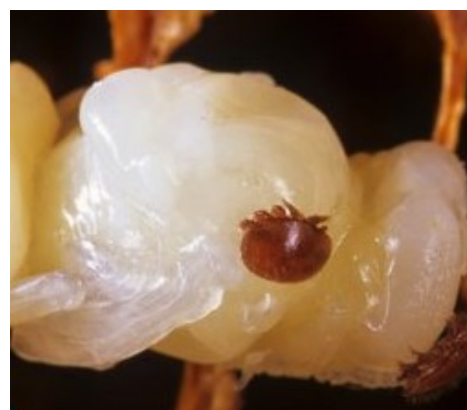


Image: Varroa mite on bee pupae. Photo courtesy of CSIRO.

What will I see if my hive has varroa mite?

Varroa mite can cause scattered brood, crippled and crawling honeybees, impaired flight performance, a lower rate of return to the colony after foraging, a reduced lifespan, and a significantly reduced weight of worker bees.

Colony symptoms, commonly called parasitic mite syndrome, include an abnormal brood pattern, sunken and chewed cappings, and larvae slumped in the bottom or side of the cell. This ultimately causes a reduction in the honeybee population, superseding of queen bees, and eventual colony breakdown and death.

Do varroa mite affect native bees?

No, varroa mite affect Asian and European honeybees. They do not affect native bees. For more information on the impact of varroa mite on native bees, head to [Native Bees and Varroa Mites \(aussiebee.com.au\)](http://aussiebee.com.au).

Can I move bees and hives within Queensland?

Yes, currently there are no restrictions on the movement of hives within Queensland. However, the varroa mite situation is reviewed regularly to assess what restrictions may be needed to protect Queensland industries. The [manage varroa mite](#) website contains the latest information about Queensland's situation and how it impacts beekeepers.



How is Queensland managing varroa mite?

In September 2023, the National Management Group (peak decision body for the National Varroa mite Emergency Response) announced the transition from eradication to management for varroa mite. Queensland joins all other Australian states and territories in aligning to this national approach. The aim in Queensland is to transition to a situation where varroa mite is manageable and its impact on industry is greatly reduced. The latest information on Queensland approach can be found on the [managing varroa mite](#) website.

While Queensland continues to be free of varroa mite, the focus remains on minimising the risk of it entering the state. If you are wanting to [move beehives and bee-related material](#) into Queensland from a state or territory where varroa mite has been found, you must hold a [biosecurity instrument permit](#) issued by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Government-led surveillance in partnership with beekeepers will also be rolled out, and industry will be engaged and educated on implementing integrated pest management (IPM) practices into their business models.

Once varroa mite is detected in Queensland, the initial focus will be on control and containment for infested premises. Delimiting surveillance will be conducted to establish the extent of infestation and mite loading, and it's anticipated that mandatory euthanasia will not be used to control infestations. The use of IPM approaches will be promoted to minimise the potential of varroa mite gaining chemical resistance.

For long-term management of varroa mite, the rotational use of acaricides will be available and its use will be dependent on mite loading. Education and training for industry will continue.

What can beekeepers do to help?

Queensland beekeepers should regularly check their hives for varroa mite and other pests and diseases. Use the alcohol wash method at least every 16 weeks to monitor hives for varroa mite.

Report the results using the [Bee 123 form](#) or by calling Biosecurity Queensland's customer service centre on 13 25 23. You can also scan this QR code using your mobile device to take you directly to the [Bee 123 form](#).

It's important you report your results to Biosecurity Queensland even if no varroa mite are found. The more checks and reports made by commercial and recreational beekeepers, the more conclusive our information can accurately represent the extent of varroa mite populations throughout the state. Early detection is key to containment and tracking of this pest.

Keep your [biosecurity entity registration](#) contact details and apiary sites up to date.



Renew your [biosecurity entity registration](#) when needed, as this will help us contact you quickly in the event of a bee pest or disease outbreak. Native beehives do not need to be registered.

Keep up to date with the relevant state authority for movement requirements before entering or leaving the state.

Stay up to date with the latest varroa mite situation by heading to [managing varroa mite](#) and [subscribing to our e-alerts](#).