



## Queensland Beekeepers' Association

### Varroa Mite Update – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024

The detection of *Varroa destructor* in Newcastle on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 and the subsequent notice the eradication program will transition to management announced on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 has created much anxiety within the Australian beekeeping industry. In an effort to streamline our communications to our members the QBA will now offer weekly updates (where possible) to our members and affiliate clubs giving insight into our current areas of focus.

### Update 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024

#### Bee 123 Data Surveillance Program 1<sup>st</sup> December to current day:

Total beekeepers reporting results	64
Total Hives checked	510
Total hives reported	1944
Total No. of Recreational Beekeeper Surveys:	48
Total No. of Commercial Beekeeper Surveys:	16
<b>Mites found or suspected</b>	<b>0</b>

### QBA Update 19 January 2024

#### Transition to Management Update:

As with our colleagues across the length and breadth of the Australia honey bee sector, the QBA continue to await the outcome of the consideration of the draft of the 4<sup>th</sup> version of the response plan (the transition to management plan) by the CCEPP and the NMG. We acknowledge the efforts of AHBIC continuing to advocate in the best interest of industry to see a plan materialise as quickly as possible paving the way for the beekeepers of Australia to move forward.

It has now been 121 days since the decision was made to transition to management and we share the disappointment and frustration of our members and broader beekeeping community that our sector and all those who rely on a strong and resilient industry still have little visibility on the transition package into the new chapter in Australian beekeeping.

Whilst we await the finalisation and agreement on a T2M plan, the QBA has focused our efforts building a business case for a multi-year, state funded transition to management plan that will endure beyond the scope and funding provisions of any agreed national T2M plan.

Although bee biosecurity is the main priority of our current efforts, the QBA continues to advocate for a refreshed whole of government approach to the legislation, regulations and policies that influence the health and wellbeing of our ability to care for strong, healthy and productive honey bee colonies.

## Bee 123 Update:

In the past 6 weeks, only **0.63%** of the state's beekeepers reported their varroa results to the Bee 123 portal. Subsequently, the data represents only **0.31%** of Queensland's hives have been checked in the past 6 weeks.

As a state, we must meet and exceed the target to test 15,000 hives every 16 weeks and report our results.

As a state of more than 10,000 beekeepers, we must do better.

The QBA is again calling on **EVERY** Beekeeper in Queensland to complete varroa surveillance and report your results to the Bee 123 portal as soon as possible.

One of the two key factors all beekeepers must understand is the data gives beekeepers greater visibility on the current level of negative surveillance across the state. The second factor to understand is data collected from the Bee 123 portal within the past 16 weeks provides decision-makers and those responding to the initial detection of varroa in Queensland with information to make educated decisions.

When the time comes that varroa is detected in Queensland, the QBA's aim is to ensure the response measures deployed to beekeepers in infested regions is more than adequate and purposeful. We're talking support officers on the ground, educational workshops of a practical nature for our beekeepers and options for treatment being accessible to ensure we have the ability to initiate and deploy intervention to infested colonies should mite levels reach treatment thresholds.

Should varroa be detected and confirmed in Queensland within our current surveillance and reporting period, the lack of data presently in the Bee 123 portal poorly places the collective ability of Biosecurity Queensland and the QBA to stand-up an effective, meaningful, and practical response and support operation in any region across the state.

We recognise changing our beekeeping behaviour to adjust to surveillance and eventually monitoring for the mite is new to every beekeeper across the country. The frustration and disappointment that a beekeeper currently experiences upon coming across a dead-out will be exacerbated once varroa mite arrives in Queensland. And to take a page from Dr Jack's summary at conference last year, if you're not looking for it now, when you eventually realise you have a mite infestation in your hives it may well be too-late to bring a colony or a load of bees back from the brink of certain mortality.

Please refrain from having a false sense of surety relying on the beekeeper managing their apiary up to the road to be looking for varroa and reporting the surveillance, because they're not. Apiarists' who learn to adapt and adjust to the new varroa surveillance and monitoring regime will live on keeping bees well beyond the initial detection in their colonies. Beekeepers who don't test will become bee-havers in addition to being a costly liability to anyone trying to manage varroa.

In the current surveillance phase and broader national transition phase many decisions will be made despite the QBA's unyielding efforts to secure practical and purposeful outcomes for our sector. Our ability to work with DAF to deliver successful project outcomes will be underpinned by the current and future engagement of every beekeeper in the state looking for varroa and reporting their results.

Our sector must also be mindful once we've moved on from the current challenges, we still have many obstacles in front of us that will require a change in legislation/regulation, a change in policy or the funding of a new support program. Every move government makes costs money, public money. Funds that must be justified to every day Queenslanders.

In the future our collective engagement in the Bee 123 program will be either measured as a gold tick for the industry or a black mark against us. As a sector whose fate will be influenced on the investment of public funds and resources both now and well into the future, we all have a role to play to ensure our needs and priorities aren't pushed to the bottom of the inbox to remain collecting dust until some new woke advisor comes in and puts our project in the bin because of our past report card.

Please, the word report is mentioned 15 times within this document. Test for varroa and report.

## Bee 123 QLD Surveillance Dashboard Map 18 December 2023

The maps below illustrate the current distribution of varroa mite surveillance activities reported to the Bee 123 portal. The QBA and DAF urge all beekeepers across Queensland to complete varroa mite surveillance activities immediately and report their results (including negative results) to the portal.

The blue dots on the map represent negative surveillance results from 64 varroa mite surveillance activities reported to the Bee 123 portal since the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2023

Please see the page below to review the current distribution of varroa mite surveillance reports as collated from data collected from the Bee 123 portal.

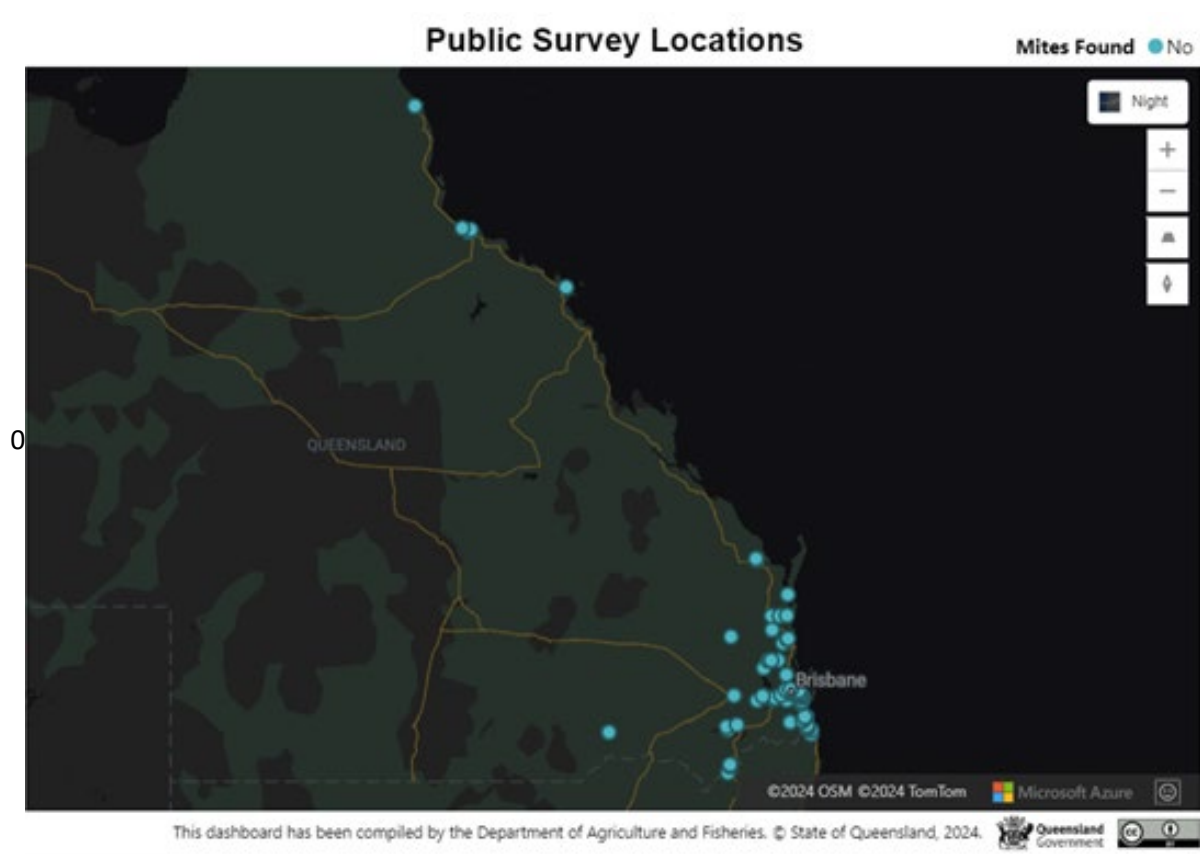


Figure 1 - Bee 123 Surveillance Reports – 1 December 2023 to 19 January 2024

### Miticide Surveillance Expressions of Interest:

The QBA has long advocated for a dedicated and targeted program to increase the accuracy of varroa mite surveillance across the state. In late November Biosecurity Queensland agreed to undertake a miticide and sticky mat surveillance program mainly targeted at migratory hives.

Biosecurity Queensland initially contacted a large number of beekeepers to ascertain their interest in having their hives surveyed using miticide strips and sticky mats. To date only a small number of beekeepers have provided offered their hives to this important program.

The QBA is now calling all beekeepers interested in having their hives tested for varroa using strips and mats to make contact with the VMPPP team as soon as physically possible.

Beekeepers who offer their hives to be tested (50 hives in a load) will have a greater level of confidence their hives are presently free from varroa whilst also contributing critical information to our state surveillance program that may translate to resources being in prepositioned in readiness to rapidly respond in an effective operation once varroa finally hits the ground.

On the plus side, strip and mat surveillance alleviates the number of alcohol washes one needs to undertake.

If you're interested in offering your hives to this program, please contact the varroa mite prevention and preparedness team via email [varroa@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:varroa@daf.qld.gov.au) or call 13 25 23.

## **Future Events:**

### **QBA Varroa mite Management Workshops:**

Under the guidance of our management team, the QBA State Secretary is currently in the process of co-ordinating 4 regional varroa mite workshops for our members and broader industry colleagues. With more than 65% of the beekeepers of Queensland caring for 85% of the state's beehives located between Bundaberg and the QLD/NSW border we intend to hold 2 workshops in the South east corner, 1 workshop in the Wide Bay and 1 Workshop in the far north of the state.

We are planning to host the workshops across the 4 locations during the week between Monday 4<sup>th</sup> and Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Speakers will provide updates from the QBA and Biosecurity Queensland along with two international guest speakers who will utilise most of the time allocated for the workshop providing practical information Integrated Pest Management and varroa treatment options.

The QBA will need the support of our branches to fund this exercise. Warwick Branch initially floated this concept and are willing to put forward branch funds to subsidise the costs associated with running a workshop in their area. We'd love to see all 4 workshops take place and hope our other branches may consider contributing to this initiative.

It is our intention to offer these workshops free to all current financial members of the QBA or for a small fee for non-members of the QBA to assist in covering the costs associated with speaker travel and venue hire.

More information about the location and date of workshop in your region will be posted to the QBA's event calendar ([click here for more information](#)).

### **QBA Toolbox Talk's Return Next Week – Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024 @ 4PM**

Be sure to dial in for episode 7 of the QBA's Toolbox talk.

You can find the link to dial live on the QBA events calendar ([click here](#)) or watch the recording of the talk on [YouTube](#).

## **Past Events**

### **AHBIC Industry Briefing – 19 October 2023**

As previously communicated, AHBIC held another Industry Briefing detailing the latest information with regards to the current varroa mite situation, providing some clarity for industry members on the transition to management phase.

If you missed watching the webinar, we strongly urge all beekeepers to watch the recording at their earliest convenience. Please click [here](#) to access the recording.

Below is a list of some of the websites referred to in the webinar.

[NSW Department of Primary Industries – Varroa Response](#)

[Agriculture Victoria – Varroa Situation](#)

For information related to the response in QLD, please visit:

[Biosecurity Queensland - Manage Varroa Mite](#)

### **Video Resources:**

The QBA now have a dedicated YouTube channels with multiple playlists offering a dynamic range of subject matter relevant to beekeeping in Queensland. We encourage all members to explore our online video library and recommend members regularly visit our YouTube channel to discover new content from time to time.

If you'd like to visit our YouTube channel, click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/@queenslandbeekeepersassoc>

### **QBA Membership:**

The Queensland Beekeepers' Association warmly welcome new members to our organisation. To complete an application for membership please visit <https://members.qbabees.org.au/join-us/>

When completing your application, please nominate your preferred branch of the QBA.

### **Useful Information Links:**

QBA Varroa mite portal - <https://members.qbabees.org.au/QBA-Varroa-Mite-Portal>

DAF Varroa Mite Management Hub: <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/industries/bees/varroa-mite/manage>

NSW DPI - <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/emergencies/biosecurity/current-situation/varroa-mite-emergency-response>

Subscribe to Biosecurity E-Alerts – [Click here.](#)

### **Need more information about varroa mite in Queensland?**

**Call DAF:** 13 25 23

**Email your inquiry straight to the VMPPP team:** [varroa@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:varroa@daf.qld.gov.au)

**Or check the Varroa Management Website from DAF:** [Biosecurity Queensland - Manage Varroa Mite](#)