



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

COMMUNIQUE

DAFF

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Response to Asian Honeybees

The Asian Honeybee National Management Group (NMG) met on 3 September 2010 to consider the current program to contain and eradicate the Asian honeybee (*Apis cerana*) http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_13530.htm in Queensland.

The first Asian honeybee nest was detected in the mast of a fishing boat in Portsmith, Cairns in May 2007. Since that time, 188 swarms or nests have been found and destroyed.

Most of the Asian honeybee detections have been found in the city and port areas of Cairns, immediately to the south of Cairns including Mareeba and Lake Eacham and in the Gordonvale and Aloomba districts. The strain of Asian honeybees found in the Cairns region is the Java strain, which is common in Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

The Asian honeybee is an invasive species which adversely impacts populations of European honeybees by competing for floral resources, robbing managed hives and transmitting disease. It can become a pest in urban areas through establishing nests in houses and by its aggressive stinging behaviour.

The Asian honeybee is slightly smaller than the European honeybee and its abdomen has more distinctive brown and yellow stripes. Unlike the European Honeybee, Asian honeybees do not adapt to domestication and are not suitable for commercial honey production or commercial pollination services.

Asian honeybees are a natural host for varroa mite – a parasite that attacks developing bee larvae or adult bees. Laboratory tests on the bees and comb from nests indicates that none of the nests destroyed to date carry any exotic varroa, tropilaelaps or tracheal mites.

Information and reports from the public have been vital in locating swarms and nest sites. Anyone in the north of Queensland who sees a swarm of bees or foraging bees that resemble Asian Honeybees should report it to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

Activities to eradicate Asian honeybees in the Cairns region are funded by the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) on behalf of their members. Industries reliant on bees and bee pollination services have been approached at peak representative level to assess whether they would be beneficiaries if the Asian honeybees were eradicated and so may wish to contribute resources. No industry body other than AHBIC, has agreed.

The NMG reaffirmed its commitment to the current program, aimed at gathering surveillance and other data to assist further decisions on the feasibility of eradicating Asian honeybees. The NMG also noted that the current program will be reviewed prior to the end of 2010.

The NMG is comprised of the chief executive officers of the national and state/territory departments of agriculture and primary industries across Australia, representatives of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council and Plant Health Australia. The group is chaired by the Secretary of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Dr Conall O'Connell.

Further advice on Asian honeybees and actions to suppress the pest can be found on Biosecurity Queensland's website. http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_13530.htm