

New biosecurity laws for Queensland: bees and beekeepers

The *Biosecurity Act 2014* (the Act) commenced on 1 July 2016.

The Act improves Queensland's biosecurity preparedness and response capabilities. Under the Act, we will be better placed to focus on the biosecurity risks that impact our economy, our agricultural and tourism industries, our environment and our lifestyle.

All individuals and organisations whose activities pose a biosecurity risk have a legal responsibility for managing them.



The general biosecurity obligation for beekeepers

As a beekeeper you need to take an active role in managing biosecurity risks under your control. You are not expected to know about all biosecurity risks, but you are expected to know about those associated with your day-to-day work and your hobbies.

The general biosecurity obligation means you need to ensure your activities do not spread a pest, disease or contaminant. You need to:

- take all reasonable and practical steps to prevent or minimise each biosecurity risk;
- minimise the likelihood of the risk causing a biosecurity event and limit the consequences of such an event; and
- prevent or minimise the adverse effects the risk could have and refrain from doing anything that might exacerbate the adverse effects.

A biosecurity risk exists when you deal with any pest, disease or contaminant, or with something that could carry one of these. This includes moving or keeping a pest, disease or contaminant, or animals, plants, soil and equipment that could carry a pest, disease or contaminant.

You can choose to follow the national biosecurity code of practice for beekeepers as one way to demonstrate you are meeting your general biosecurity obligation. This is available from the Australian Honeybee Industry Council at www.honeybee.org.au

If you notice changes such as scattered brood, crippled honey bees and a reduction in honey bee population, you should notify Biosecurity Queensland or the Emergency Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881) immediately. The hives should not be moved until they have been inspected.



A biosecurity event is caused by a pest, disease or contaminant that is, or is likely to become, a significant problem for your industry, human health, social amenity, the economy or the environment.

Where a specific and significant threat exists, regulations or other measures may be introduced to specify how the general biosecurity obligation is to be met.

Beekeeper registration

The system of beekeeper registration is continuing under the new legislation.

Registration is an important tool for tracing investigations in the event of a pest or disease incursion. From 1 July 2016, if you keep at least one bee hive you must register as a biosecurity entity. This replaces the previous requirement to be a registered beekeeper. The Act allows for single or multiple people or a business to be the registered biosecurity entity, depending on who owns the hives.

A biosecurity entity is allocated a Hive Identification Number (HIN) and only one HIN will relate to each registered biosecurity entity. In most cases your current brand will become your HIN.

Registration period

New registrations after 1 July 2016 will be effective for three years from the date of registration.

For existing beekeepers registered under the *Apiaries Act 1982* between March 2016 and June 2016, your registration will continue until March 2017, at which time you will be required to register under the new *Biosecurity Act 2014*. Your registration will then remain in place for three years from the date of registration.

From 1 July 2016, a registration fee of \$86.25 will apply to beekeepers who are commercial producers. You are considered a commercial producer if you claim primary producer status on your annual tax return.

Payment will be required at the time of registration.

If you keep animals only for non-commercial purposes you are exempt from the fee.

How to register

From 1 July 2016, you can obtain an application form to become a biosecurity entity and receive a HIN by:

- Visiting www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au
- Contacting your local Department of Agriculture and Fisheries office for an application form.
To find your nearest office visit www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au

Hive marking

The requirement for a hive to be marked with a brand will continue.

From 1 July 2016, you must continue to maintain the legibility of hive markings and ensure the HIN is marked on the hive as follows:

- The HIN must be marked or branded—
 - on the front of the hive; and
 - in block letters and figures at least 25mm high.
- The first HIN on a hive must be placed in the centre of the front of the hive.
- If a hive is already marked or branded, any subsequent marks or brands of the HIN on the hive must be placed in the corners of the front of the same hive in a clockwise sequence, starting from the top left hand corner of the hive.



Distance between apiary sites

From 1 July 2016, you must be aware of and adhere to new minimum distances required between hives in some cases. This will support commercial beekeepers and allow them to work their hives without robbing. Extra distance between hives is now specified for queen bee breeding apiaries to provide additional assurance in maintaining the purity of queen bee lines.

It is prohibited to establish apiary sites within a radius of:

- less than 0.8km from an established apiary of more than 40 hives; and
- within a radius of less than 2km from an established apiary used for queen bee breeding, regardless of the number of hives.

Numbe of hives	Distance apart (radius)
Less than 40 hives	Not specified
More than 40 hives	0.8km
Queen bee breeding apiaries	2km

If you need to check the location of apiary sites in your area, contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

Regulated bees and pests of bees

Under the Biosecurity Act, the following pests and carriers are prescribed as prohibited matter:

- Asian honey bee (*Apis dorsata*, *A. florea*, *A. cerana* other than *A. cerana javana*)
- bumblebee (*Bombus spp.*)
- Africanised bee (*Apis mellifera scutellata*)
- tracheal mite (*Acarapis woodi*)
- tropilaelaps mite (*Tropilaelaps clareae* and *T. mercedesae*)
- varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*)
- varroa mite (*Varroa jacobsoni*)

The Act states that prohibited matter cannot be dealt with in any way. This means it is a serious offence to keep, possess, distribute or transport these pests and carriers. This extends to the movement of hives, bee products and beekeeping appliances that are potentially carrying prohibited matter. You must also report the presence of these pests and carriers to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or the Exotic Plant Pest hotline on 1800 084 881.

Asian honey bee

Under the Act, Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana javana*) is prescribed as category 1 restricted matter. Category 1 restricted matter must be reported if you become aware of its presence. You must not take any action reasonably likely to exacerbate, and must take any action reasonably likely to minimise, the biosecurity risk posed by Asian honey bee.

Asian honey bee is known to occur in an area around Cairns and while it has been determined that it is not possible to eradicate this pest there is continuing benefit in minimising the spread and managing new incursions. New incursions of Asian honey bees may result in the introduction of varroa mites, which could be a significant threat to European honey bee colonies in Australia.

Biosecurity Queensland will continue to undertake actions (including surveillance and responding to public reports) outside of the known infested area to limit the spread of the pest beyond what would occur naturally.

If you are outside of the known infested area (around Cairns) you must report all suspect Asian honey bee sightings (including any swarms or nests you have destroyed) and provide a sample of the bees where possible. This is particularly important if the swarm or nest is suspected to be a new incursion, or if it is located near an airport or seaport in Queensland.

Record the exact location of the sighting and contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or the Exotic Plant Pest hotline on 1800 084 881.

Asian honey bee known infested area map



American foulbrood disease

Under the Act, American foulbrood disease is no longer classified as a quarantine pest of bees. The disease is widespread, well established and cannot be controlled or eradicated.

As part of your general biosecurity obligation, you have a responsibility to take reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimise the biosecurity risk posed by American foulbrood disease.

Small hive beetle

Small hive beetle is widespread throughout Queensland. Small hive beetle is not regulated under the Act and there is no requirement to notify Biosecurity Queensland if your hives are infested.

Beekeepers are however encouraged to manage small hive beetle as part of their general biosecurity obligation, as far as is reasonable and practical.

Braula fly (bee louse)


Braula fly are currently only found in Tasmania and are not present on mainland Australia. It is a pest of concern to the industry. Braula fly is prohibited matter under the Act, and as such it is an offence to deal with it. The movement of associated risk materials is also considered to be high risk. As such, from 1 July 2016, if you bring carriers (queen bees and escort bees, comb honey, wax) from Tasmania or another infested place without meeting the requirements of the Queensland Biosecurity Manual you will be in breach of your general biosecurity obligation. This is similar to the previous requirement to have a health certificate for carriers brought into Queensland from Tasmania.

From 1 July 2016, the Queensland Biosecurity Manual will be available at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au

Further information

To find out more about the Act, visit www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au or call 13 25 23.

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