

## MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER NOTICE – VARROA MITE AND ITS CARRIERS

Pursuant to Sections 124 and 125 of the *Biosecurity Act 2014* (the **Act**), I make the following Movement Control Order:

### 1. Why this Movement Control Order is being made and what it is intended to achieve

This Movement Control Order (**MCO**) is being made to assist in preventing the entry of *V. destructor* (**varroa mite**) into Queensland.

In September 2024, varroa mite was detected on a property at Royalla, New South Wales, three kilometres from the border with the Australian Capital Territory (**ACT**). There has been no positive confirmation of varroa mite within the ACT.

On 20 December 2024, the ACT formally lifted all movement restrictions on importing European Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) and apiary equipment from New South Wales. The decision was made following an assessment that these restrictions are no longer deemed necessary or effective in safeguarding the ACT against the natural spread of varroa mite. Consequently, hives infested with varroa mite are now permitted to enter the ACT.

Beehives are currently permitted into the State of Queensland without a biosecurity instrument permit from a State or Territory where varroa mite has not been detected.

Given its proximity to the infested premises at Royalla, New South Wales, and the anticipated movement of carriers harbouring infested varroa mites into the ACT, there exists a significant risk and increased likelihood that varroa mite carriers intended for transit from the ACT to Queensland will transmit varroa mite. Consequently, it is imperative to restrict these carriers' movement to mitigate the potential spread of varroa mites into Queensland.

This MCO aims to manage that risk and prevent the potential spread of varroa mite into Queensland by prohibiting the movement of varroa mite and its carriers into Queensland from the ACT.

There have been no detections of varroa mite in Queensland. *As of 16 January 2025*, the closest detection is 50 km from the Queensland/New South Wales border.

As Queensland is a large state involving frequent hive movement, these movement control measures provide a mechanism to reduce and delay any potential spread of varroa mite from states or territories that have either had positive detections within or very close (less than 5 km) to the border.

The establishment of this pest, and viruses it may carry, in Queensland is highly likely to significantly impact the \$75 million honey industry and the broader \$2.4 billion pollination-reliant industries. For the reasons outlined above, I consider it necessary to make this MCO to prohibit the movement of varroa mite and its carriers from the ACT into Queensland as I am satisfied on reasonable grounds that varroa mite poses a biosecurity risk of enough seriousness, and the risk of spread and establishment is high enough to justify the making of the order.

### 2. Details of the controlled biosecurity matter and carriers to which the Movement Control Order relates

The MCO applies to varroa mite and all known carriers, as detailed below.

### *Controlled biosecurity matter (varroa mite)*

The varroa mite is an external parasite of all life stages of the European honey bee. Varroa mite feeds and reproduces on larvae and pupae, causing malformation and weakening of honey bees as well as transmitting numerous viruses. Heavy varroa mite infestations can build up in 3 – 4 years and cause scattered brood, crippled and crawling honeybees, a reduction in honey bee population, supersedure of queen bees and ultimately colony breakdown and death of the hive.

Adult female varroa mites are oval, flat, red-brown and around 1.1 mm long and 1.5 mm wide. They can be seen with the naked eye. Varroa mites complete their life cycle in honey bee brood and can be observed in both drone and worker bee brood. Examining the brood involves uncapping brood to check for the dark mites in the cell and against the pearly white bodies of the developing brood. They can also be observed between the sclerites and between the head and thorax on adult worker bees and drones.

Varroa mite is considered one of the most serious pests of honey bees worldwide. No effective natural enemies of varroa mite are reported in the scientific or technical literature from anywhere in the world, limiting the potential for biological control. Eradication from infested hives is not possible, though chemical, biotechnical and biological control methods mitigate the impacts.

Establishing this pest in Queensland is highly likely to significantly impact the honey bee industry and plant industries dependent on honey bee pollination.

### *Carriers (varroa mite carriers)*

Varroa mite can be spread on any of the following carriers: a bee; a swarm, nest or hive of bees; an apiary appliance; or an apiary product, which are defined as follows for the purpose of this MCO:

- (a) **Bee** means European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) or Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana*) of any life stage, including a dead bee.
- (b) **Swarm** means a group of bees that has left a hive or a nest with a queen bee to start a new colony.
- (c) **Nest** means a natural shelter for bees and includes the bees i.e. a feral nest, including abandoned nests.
- (d) **Hive** means a used receptacle for housing living bees.
- (e) **Apiary appliance** means any apparatus or equipment, fitting, implement or utensil that has been used for beekeeping or processing, handling, or storing an apiary product, including (without limitation) used beekeeping personal protective equipment.
- (f) **Apiary product** means bee collected pollen, bee comb, comb sections, cut comb, honey dew, propolis, queen candy, beeswax, royal jelly and honey.

This MCO applies to all the above carriers.

### 3. The area to which the Movement Control Order relates

This MCO relates to the entire area of the State of Queensland.

### 4. The prohibitions and restrictions that must be complied with by persons to whom this Movement Control Order applies

- (a) A person who owns, controls or manages one or more hives within the area to which the MCO relates must notify an inspector appointed under the Act without undue delay, about:
- (i) the presence of varroa mite;
  - (ii) if the person reasonably suspects the presence of varroa mite, the suspected presence of varroa mite;
  - (iii) any hive movements into Queensland from the ACT since 1 September 2024;
  - (iv) any bees bought from the ACT since 1 September 2024.
- (b) A person must not move any of the carriers listed in section 2 of this MCO from the ACT into Queensland unless:
- (i) the carrier is *processed honey* or *processed beeswax*; or
  - (ii) the carrier is a *new and unused Apiary appliance*; or
  - (iii) the movement of specific carriers of Varroa mites is permitted through the Biosecurity Instrument Permit system, which includes the following items:
    - a. Queen bees
    - b. Varroa mite carriers designated for irradiation
    - c. Empty supers and equipment.

(Note: definitions below include important information around when these exceptions apply).

- (c) A person within the area to which the MCO relates must allow an inspector appointed under the Act or a person under the direction of an inspector appointed under the Act to:
- (i) inspect, examine, film or test any carrier listed in section 2 of this MCO; or
  - (ii) treat or destroy any carrier listed in section 2 of this MCO; or
  - (iii) clean or disinfect any place, including any structure or thing at a place; or
  - (iv) take any carrier listed in section 2 of this MCO for inspection, testing, treatment, or destruction.

For the purposes of Section 4 of this MCO:

- (a) **processed honey** means honey that has been extracted, filtered, or strained or settled to remove wax cappings and dead bees, and decanted into a *clean container movement system* in a facility and in a manner that excludes bees;

- (b) a **clean container movement system** means there is no external contamination with an apiary product (including honey and beeswax) to the outside of the container, or any outer protective framing, or pallets and the containers are transported in a manner that excludes bees;
- (c) **processed beeswax** means beeswax that has undergone melting, filtering (to remove bees, brood and debris) and rendering treatment and is packed into clean containers and packaged in a facility and in a manner that excludes bees;
- (d) a **new and unused Apiary appliance** means any apparatus or equipment, fitting, implement or utensil that remain in original packaging and have not been in contact with bees, or in contact with apiary products and packaged in a facility and in a manner that excludes bees.

**5. Period of the Order**

The MCO is effective immediately from when it is published and will stay in effect for 3 months unless earlier revoked.

**6. Revocation of previous movement control order**

Nil.

**7. Authorisation**



28/01/2025

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Signed

Date of Authorisation

Graeme Bolton

Director-General

Department of Primary Industries