

Come clean, go clean: For the beekeeper



Being a beekeeper, whether commercial or hobbyist, you may move your hives from one location to another to provide adequate food and water for your bees. You may also have another beekeeper's hives on your property. Whether you move your hives around regularly or maintain your hives in your own backyard all year round, it's important you look after the health of your hives and minimise the risk of spreading pests and diseases to new locations.

All beekeepers in Queensland have a general biosecurity obligation to ensure your activities do not spread a pest, disease or contaminant throughout your apiary or to other hives or apiaries.

As a beekeeper in Queensland, you must take an active role in managing biosecurity risks that are 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 hobbies.

All Queensland beekeepers whether commercial or hobbyist **must**:

- 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
- prevent or minimise the adverse effects the risk could have and refrain from doing anything that might exacerbate the adverse effects

- Report unexpected losses (ie fall in production), changes in behaviour (such as scattered brood), crippled honey bees, and reduced bee populations to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

To assist in minimising the risk of spreading bee pests and diseases to new locations, its important you have access to and use the right decontamination equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE).

**The aim is to come clean and go clean,
especially between apiaries.**

What you will need

Below is a list of decontamination equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) you will need to assist in reducing pest and disease spread:

- disposable gloves and overalls or beekeeping suit and gloves
- closed in footwear
- methylated spirits
- 70% ethanol and a hand-held spray bottle
- metal scourer
- water
- foil trays
- matches /lighter
- sealable plastic bags
- handwash
- dustpan brush
- paper towels or wipes
- garbage bag.



Decontamination and personal protective equipment for beekeepers.

Decontamination processes

The best way to reduce the risk of spreading pests and diseases is to (1) keep your beekeeping equipment clean and (2) practice coming clean and leaving clean. Any equipment or clothing that has come in contact with your hives or bees, has the potential to spread pests and diseases.

Beekeeping tools and equipment

To remove contaminants from your beekeeping hive tools and equipment, clean with a metal scourer and 70% ethanol. Set alight approximately 50 mL of methylated spirits in an aluminium tray, containing the hive tools and scourer. Observe safety and fire management precautions.

Smoker

First allow the smoker to cool or wash with water. Wipe the external surface clean using a 70% ethanol mix. The hot metal parts of the smoker are self-sterilising provided it is kept clean. Extra care should be taken to avoid contamination of the smoker bellows that may be difficult to clean.

Personal protective equipment and clothing

PPE and clothing should be kept clean using disposable gloves and overalls or full beekeeping suits and gloves. Beekeeper suits or gloves should be washed regularly using hot water.



Beekeeper veils and suits made from fabric and netting should be washed regularly using hot water.

Footwear

Footwear can be decontaminated by wiping off any contaminants using a 70% ethanol mix.

Decontamination by sterilisation

For sterilising beekeeping equipment using flame, only heat resistant tools (all metal hive tools, knife and uncapping fork) should be used. For drone uncapping, consider using disposable tools such as a wood skewer instead of an uncapping fork.

Implement good biosecurity practices

There are a range of biosecurity measures that assist in minimising the risk of spreading bee pests and diseases between hives and apiary sites.

Entering an apiary site

1. Only take essential equipment into the immediate vicinity of each hive or wild nest.
2. Use clean and sterile hive tools and equipment.
3. Wear new or clean PPE for each apiary, or an appropriately decontaminated bee suit and gloves.
4. Sterilise all hive tools between hives.
5. If a portable bench is used, you may cover it with fresh grease-proof paper for each hive or wipe down with an appropriate disinfectant or cleaning solution. Dispose of the used paper with other disposable items such as gloves.

Exiting an apiary site

1. Sterilise all hive tools and equipment using one of the methods listed above.
2. Spray your bee suit with a 70% ethanol mix. Remove the bee suit, veil, gloves and any other PPE used. Thoroughly inspect the PPE for any passenger bees or bee products (honey, wax). Spray all PPE items with 70% ethanol.
3. If disposable PPE /equipment /materials are used, place these into a garbage bag and seal.
4. Inspect footwear and remove all dirt from soles of boots using a dustpan brush. Clean footwear (including the soles) with 70% ethanol.
5. Inspect each person's hair and clothing to remove any passenger bees.
6. Place all bagged equipment /material /PPE in the vehicle.
7. Before leaving the site, inspect vehicle for passenger bees and remove any live bees that may be present.

NOTE: Heavily contaminated equipment should be disposed of if effective cleaning is not possible.

Decontamination of vehicle on-site (if required)

If you suspect contamination of the vehicle's interior or exterior with honey bee, honey, wax, or pest or disease:

- Kill any bee /insect present
- Remove the honey and wax
- Spray all interior surfaces with methylated spirits or 70% ethanol
- Any cleaning cloths used in clean down and any other material collected during the decontamination process are to be bagged and disposed of appropriately.

Disposal of waste

Seal any waste items (including gloves, overalls, wipes) onsite by double sealing in durable rubbish bags. Dispose of bag into waste bin.

Record keeping

Record keeping is a vital component of good beekeeping. All beekeepers in Queensland are required to keep records of:

- hive movements (except if you are moving bees within your premises)
- bees bought and sold
- surveillance activities (hive health checks) and results.

It's also recommended to keep records of:

- beekeeper visits, who was present and the activities conducted
- decontamination procedures undertaken.



Beekeepers must keep records of their activities.

Records can be kept in hard copy or electronic forms.

Hive movement records

Beekeepers who wish to move bees outside their premises must create a movement record prior to the movement. This requirement applies to all beekeepers (registered, unregistered, commercial and recreational) when buying or selling bees, or moving colonised beehives.

All movement records must be legible and kept readily accessible for two years after the movement starts and produced upon request by a biosecurity officer. Penalties apply if movement records are not maintained or produced when requested by Biosecurity Queensland.

Top tips for decontamination

- Ensure second hand tools and equipment, whether borrowed or purchased, have been decontaminated before they are moved onto your property.
- Ensure all clothing, hats, water bottles and eskies are clean on arrival.
- Always clean large items from the top down.
- Use strong plastic bags for collecting and sealing any items for disposal. Bags should then be placed directly into the waste bin.
- Always use chemicals in accordance with the label, Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) permit, and Safety Data Sheet (SDS) instructions.