

Once insulated from bee health crisis, Australia invaded by honeybee-killing Varroa mites. How have other countries adapted?

Just three short weeks ago the bee parasite *Varroa destructor* was detected in Newcastle, NSW. Beekeepers and government bodies have sprung into action to establish eradication, surveillance, and notification zones for areas surrounding colonies with identified mites.

At the time of writing, more than 38 premises had been identified, bee hives in large areas of the state have been locked down, and hundreds of colonies comprised of millions of bees have been destroyed.

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Varroa mites feed on the fat stores of developing larvae and pupae of the honey bees. In doing so they rob the developing bee of energy stores, while also serving as a vector for damaging viruses such as deformed wing virus and acute bee paralysis virus.

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The experience of beekeepers in New Zealand gives an indication of what the introduction of varroa can do to the honey bee population. Losses of feral colonies were estimated at 90% in the first few years of the incursion, and 2021 figures compiled for the Ministry of Primary Industries showed annual managed colony losses at around 13%, with the losses directly attributed to varroa growing annually. And beekeepers have to do a lot of work to keep losses this low.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)