

Get all the buzz on BEEkeeping

The Yenda Group proudly supports World Bee Day, a day to celebrate our small but crucial pollinators. This day also acknowledges the critical role that bees play in ensuring food security, promoting biodiversity, and maintaining the health of our ecosystems.

Recently, Yenda Producers interviewed Narrandera Apiarists Wendy and David Mumford from King Bee Honey to find out what's been happening in their business and the industry.

WE SPOKE TO YOU ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, WHAT HAS CHANGED IN YOUR BUSINESS SINCE THEN?

We have sold our beekeeping business and are enjoying our semi-retirement. However, we are still packing King Bee Honey and are now going into our 44th year.

Unlike most agricultural crops, honey keeps indefinitely, and we are fortunate to have good honey reserves.

LAST YEAR, THE VARROA MITE WAS DETECTED IN NSW, CAN YOU GIVE US A BIT OF BACKGROUND?

The Varroa mite is an insect the size of a sesame seed. It can only move from bee to bee, for example, if two bees are going to the same flower, it will "jump" from one to the other and then go back to the hive infecting the bees within it.

It was first detected in the sentinel hives at the Port of Newcastle in June 2022, and has spread to the Central Coast, Hunter Region, Taree and Nana Glen. To our knowledge it has fortunately not spread to the Riverina.

WHAT IMPACT DOES THE VARROA MITE HAVE ON BEEKEEPERS AND AGRICULTURE IN GENERAL?

The Varroa will decimate hives, and bee colonies will be wiped out which will severely impact the availability of bee numbers and crop pollination.

Consequently, this will increase costs for beekeepers and growers as well as the consumer.

Moreover, to control the mite, beekeeper will need to use approved chemicals.

DOES IT AFFECT THE NATIVE BEE POPULATION?

Fortunately, the Varroa mite does not seem to attack or have an impact on native bees at this stage.



WHAT CAN WE ALL DO AT HOME OR OUR DAILY LIVES TO SUPPORT BEE POPULATION – NATIVE AND HONEY BEES?

The best measure is not to use unnecessary pesticides or insecticides in and around your gardens or crops as they will kill your bee population.

Additionally, only purchase 100% Australian honey which helps to keep Australian beekeepers and the Australian bee industry viable.

WHAT SHOULD CONSUMERS LOOK FOR WHEN BUYING HONEY?

Look for and buy 100% Australian honey.

Unfortunately, there are several honey brands that are either a mixture of imported honey and Australian honey or purely imported honey. Many of these honeys use labels that are very confusing to the consumer as it looks like that honey is 100% Australian, although it is imported.

FOR ANYONE THAT IS INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT BEEKEEPING OR BECOMING AN APIARIST, WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE TO START?

First, find out if you are allergic.

Then, talk to a beekeeper to see what beekeeping entails, the equipment needed, and the time required to work and look after bees.

Working with a beekeeper is a good idea to gain practical knowledge and see if beekeeping works for you and your family/partner.

If you're serious about beekeeping, start a beekeeping course to learn bee management, bee biosecurity and pest and disease control.

Another option is to join a recreational beekeeping club to gain some experience and pursue beekeeping as a hobby.

Thank you, David and Wendy, for your time sharing your insights into beekeeping with us. We wish you all the best in your retirement.

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