



Exotic bees - Asian honey bee

At a glance

Features: Striped abdomens, 10-13mm in size, smaller and less hairy than the European honey bee

Origin: Varies, depending on species - Asian honey bee are present near Cairns in north Queensland

Pathways: Imported goods, vehicles, machinery, shipping and recreational boat movements

At risk: Honey, honey products, pollination-reliant food crops



Asian honey bee by Charles Lam, China, flickr.com



Swarm of Asian honey bees by Ros Gloag

Why is it a concern?

Asian honey bees (*Apis cerana*) are present in Queensland, creating a significant risk for entry to NSW over the state border, as well as through shipping or boat movements from overseas.

The Asian honey bee is a natural host for varroa mites. Varroa mites have the potential to disrupt both honey production and pollination services, and cause significant damage to our apiary industry. Asian honey bees can also compete for food sources, upset the natural balance for native bees and insects and in turn may have impacts on other native species.

The discovery of Asian honey bees in Queensland carrying *Varroa (jacobsoni)* has heightened surveillance efforts for swarms or colonies to be found and checked for Varroa.

Observations of flowering plants that are attractive to foraging bees is a step to finding nests. If you enjoy an early morning or mid to late afternoon walk or jog through your surrounds, stopping at flowering plants and watching for 5 -10 mins for the presence of bees could be an invaluable contribution to the detection of an exotic bee.

Other exotic bee species that could be a threat to the healthy populations of European honey bees we have in Australia are Giant, Dwarf, Cape, African and Africanised honey bees.

How can you spot it?

Description

- 10-13 mm in size, smaller than the European honey bee
- Similar in colour to European honey bee but with more defined abdominal banding
- 4-5 visible yellow bands on abdomen
- Wing colour clear with dark brown veining

Behaviour

- Fly faster and more erratically than European honey bees (who look quite uniform and orderly) when foraging on flowers
- May swarm up to a distance of 10km in an 'invasive' mode
- Swarm frequently and readily abscond if disturbed

Nests

- Average nest size 20,000 bees
- Build small nests of parallel wax combs in protected spaces. Unique drone cells differ from other bees by having a raised cap with a distinct pin hole at the top.

Report it!



If you think you have found brown an Asian honey bee (or any other unusual insect), report it through the **FREE MyPestGuide Reporter app** www.agric.wa.gov.au/apps/mypestguide-reporter. Select 'Make a Report' and choose 'Peri-urban Environmental Biosecurity Network' from the 'Send Report to' list.

Or report by calling the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881** or email biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

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