



(MAF, 2000)

First week of varroa mite response completed

18 April 2000

The number of apiaries with hives infected with the varroa mite has increased to 23. These are all in the upper North Island.

This comes after varroa was confirmed by laboratory results at an apiary in Ohope, near Whakatane, late yesterday.

An apiary site near Rotorua is suspected of having varroa, but laboratory confirmation is required because of the potential for the misidentification of the endemic species of mite, *Mellitiphis alvearius*, that is commonly mistaken for varroa. This species is associated with honeybees, but is not a parasite of honeybees.

Varroa mite presence in the North Island of New Zealand was confirmed late last Tuesday. In a week of operation, the Ministry, the National Beekeepers Association and AgriQuality staff have worked together in the field surveying the mite's spread.

In a week, field teams have checked 3356 hives on 318 properties. Apistan diagnostic strips have been placed in 871 hives on 56 apiaries.

Field teams have followed up 777 traces of bee movements from one property to another since the response started. The number of calls received from beekeepers on the MAF Exotic Disease Hotline (0800-809-966) stands at 404.

The number of teams working in the field today has increased to 24. Each team has three members.

The number of beekeepers owning infected apiaries is 18. Some voluntary destruction of heavily infected hives has occurred.

Police and MAF are investigating five movement control violations. MAF, in consultation with the National Beekeepers Association, declared the entire North Island a controlled area under the Biosecurity Act 1993. Until further notice, bees, beehives, and beekeeping equipment cannot be moved within or from any part of the North Island, without the permission of an officer under the Biosecurity Act.

Failure to comply with the movement control conditions is an offence under the Act. The penalty for non-compliance is up to five years imprisonment or a fine of up to \$100,000 for individuals.

Fifteen beekeepers have requested permits to move bees within the controlled area.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the National Beekeepers Association will be meeting today to discuss the surveillance results to date. There are not expected to be any changes made to the direction of the response operation. The meeting will review the operation and examine what further information will be available during the week as a result of field operations.

Information on the varroa mite is available on the MAFBNZ website.

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