

# ABC NEWS

## Varroa mites found at second north Queensland site, prompting expanded search for pest

by David Chen

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**Biosecurity Queensland is boosting its efforts to find and destroy Asian Honey bees in north Queensland after the discovery of more varroa mites.**

Tests on an Asian honey bee hive found in the backyard of a house in the Townsville suburb of Annandale have confirmed the presence of the potentially destructive pest.

Another hive, which also had the mite, was found last month at the Port of Townsville.

Varroa mites feed on larvae, and a bee hive infected by the pest usually dies within three or four years.

**Australia is so far the only continent not infested with the mite.**

Biosecurity Queensland director for the varroa mite response Ashley Bunce said the authority was increasing its surveillance in the area.

"The intention is that we will have four teams with four people in each team conducting surveillance and if we get any more detections we may even increase that further," he said.

Biosecurity Queensland is now planning to hire up to 20 beekeepers to help search for signs of the Asian Honey bee.

### 'I'm getting phone calls nearly every minute'

The president of the Queensland Beekeepers Association, Robert Dewar said the latest find was concerning for apiarists.

"I'm getting phone calls nearly every minute at the moment, which is understandable because they want to know what's being done," he said.

**He said the bee keeping industry was worth more than \$1 billion to Queensland and authorities needed to "throw whatever we can" at the mite.**

**The Australian Honeybee Industry Council's executive director Trevor Weatherhead said he was confident the threat could be contained.**

**"So far the industry is happy with what the Queensland department has been doing," he said.**

Mr Weatherhead hoped people in Townsville could help eliminate the threat posed by the varroa mite by reporting any signs of the Asian Honey bee in their yards.

**Topics:** rural, quarantine, pests, environment, townsville-4810

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**PHOTO:** Beekeepers are being urged to report signs of varroa mite to Queensland authorities (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)

**MAP:** Townsville 4810

