



Protecting Pollination: What Passionfruit Growers Need to Know About Varroa Mite in QLD and NSW

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The *Varroa destructor* mite, a parasitic pest that attacks European honey bees, was first detected in Australia in 2022. Since then, it has spread across New South Wales, Victoria, the ACT, and, most recently, Queensland's Lockyer Valley in March 2025.

In September 2023, the National Management Group declared eradication unachievable, shifting the national strategy to long-term management.

This transition has significant implications for passionfruit growers, who rely heavily on honey bee pollination. The Varroa mite weakens bees by feeding on their fat bodies and transmitting viruses, leading to colony collapse if unmanaged.

Current Situation in Queensland and NSW

In Queensland, the Varroa mite was confirmed in the Lockyer Valley in March 2025. Biosecurity Queensland has since shifted focus from eradication to management, implementing movement controls and urging beekeepers to conduct monthly hive health checks and report findings using the Bee 123 online form.

Queensland growers can check the map at www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/industries/bees/varroa-mite/surveillance-map to see where the latest detections have been recorded.

In New South Wales, the Department of Primary Industries is rolling out a national Varroa education program to train beekeepers and pollination-dependent industries in pest management.

Recommendations for Passionfruit Growers

1. **Collaborate with Beekeepers:** Work closely with beekeepers to ensure hives are healthy and Varroa-free. Regular communication can help detect and manage infestations early.

2. **Implement Biosecurity Measures:** Adopt on-farm biosecurity practices, such as controlling hive movements and disinfecting equipment, to prevent mite spread.
3. **Stay Informed:** Keep up-to-date with the latest guidelines from [Biosecurity Queensland](#) and the [NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development](#). Attend workshops and training sessions on Varroa management.
4. **Monitor Pollination Services:** Ensure that any contracted pollination services comply with current biosecurity regulations and have measures in place to manage Varroa mite.
5. **Support Research and Innovation:** Engage with initiatives like the National Virus Baseline Project, which aims to strengthen and future-proof Australia's honey bee and pollination-dependent industries.

The *Varroa mite* poses a significant threat to honey bee populations and, by extension, to passionfruit production. By collaborating with beekeepers, implementing stringent biosecurity measures, and staying informed, growers can help mitigate the impact of this pest and ensure the continued health of their crops.

Resources

The **National Varroa Mite Management Program** has produced a range of resources to assist beekeepers and growers who rely on pollination services varroa.org.au

The **Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC)** works to protect the long-term economic viability, security and prosperity of the sector and to promote the important links between the honey bee and healthy Australians. Their website has links to a range of recorded webinars, factsheets and other resources to assist honeybee.org.au/varroa

BeeAware is a hub of information for beekeepers and growers about honey bee biosecurity and pollination of agricultural and horticultural crops. The site contains an extensive range of information about exotic and established pests and diseases of honey bees, and helps beekeepers to identify and respond to these pest threats.

beeaware.org.au/industry/education-and-resources

PAI represents the passionfruit industry's interests in the various stages of the response to the Varroa mite incursion. Together with other pollination dependent industry bodies and relevant federal and state agencies, PAI was a member of the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) and the decision making National Management Group (NMG). As a pollination dependent industry and a signatory to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD), PAI is required to make a proportionate contribution to funding the industry agreed response activities. This funding is to be covered through the introduction of the Biosecurity Response Levy.