

Abandoned or neglected hives

Mick Rankmore

Regulatory Specialist, Apiaries

Agriculture & Fisheries Compliance Operations

Gunnedah

Abandoned or neglected hives of bees or hive materials often become matters of concern and complaint within the beekeeping industry. Complaints are usually made on a variety of allegations. The most common are as follows:

1. There is a positive identification of disease in the hives.
2. Abandoned or neglected apiaries may represent a disease risk to nearby colonies.
3. Their unsightly appearance reflects badly on the standards of management of the better beekeepers and they present a poor public image of beekeeping generally.
4. Property changes ownership and the new owner can't identify the owner of the apiary.

What are abandoned hives?

Any of the following reasons may indicate abandonment:

- The owner/manager pays no attention to the identification, management or welfare of the hives.
- Hives are not identified, and a Regulatory Officer (Apiary Inspector) has taken reasonable steps to locate the owner of the hives without success.
- The owner of the hives fails to contact an Apiary Inspector within 20 days of a notice being left clearly displayed in the apiary requesting the owner to do so.
- Hives are owned by an unregistered beekeeper and the owner is unable to be contacted.

What are neglected hives?

The following are some of the indications of neglect:

- Hive material is unsound and would allow the entry of robber bees.

- Hive material is missing from the hive, such as lids, frames or bottom boards.
- Hives do not have removable frames to allow disease inspection by an apiary inspector.
- Dead-out hives show American foulbrood (AFB) scale.
- Disease is present in hives to the extent that other apiaries are at risk.
- Dead-out hives in an apiary are not sealed and allow robber bees to remove honey or other materials which may be infected with disease organisms.
- Exposed honey combs or other apiary products and/or appliances are accessible to robber bees.
- Hive material is knocked over and scattered about the apiary.
- Apiary sites are overgrown with vegetation which prevents an apiary inspector from access to the hive for disease inspection.
- Hives have excessive dry rot or white ant damage.

Reporting abandoned and/or neglected hives

The *Apiaries Act 1985* and *Apiaries Regulation 2005* confer specific powers to deal with abandoned and neglected beehives.

Before an Apiary Inspector can exercise those powers, the inspector must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that any bees, beehives, apiary products or appliances within an apiary are abandoned or neglected or are infected.

Complaints or information, from beekeepers or other persons, of alleged abandoned or neglected hives must be in writing. An 'Advice form' is available for persons to submit the information. Advice forms are available at the NSW Department of Primary Industries web page <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/about/legislation-acts/apiaries> or by contacting NSW Department of Primary Industries, Gunnedah Office, phone (02) 6741 8333.



The identity of the person supplying the advice and the detailed information provided in their advice is treated confidentially and is not disclosed to other beekeepers or to the owner or occupier of the land on which the bees are located, unless required by law.

If there are reasonable grounds to assess that the beehives may be abandoned or neglected, then an apiary inspector will inspect the site. Depending upon the findings, follow-up action may include:

- no further action if the hives are found not to be abandoned or neglected;
- provision of advisory information to the beekeeper by an Apiary Livestock Officer if improved management is required;
- written direction to the beekeeper for the apiary to be 'put into order';
- if AFB is detected, written direction to the beekeeper to irradiate or destroy the infected bees and hive material;
- seizure and disposal of the hives.

What does 'put into order' mean?

An Inspector's powers to direct beekeepers to 'put hives into order' may include (but are not limited to) the following directives:

- Stand fallen hives upright.
- Replace missing frames or other defective hive parts which could make the colony vulnerable to attack by robber bees.
- Prevent robbing.
- Replace missing frames to allow inspection of brood for disease symptoms.
- Remove dead-out hives from the apiary and store them in a bee-proof manner.
- Transfer bees, honey and bee combs from unframed hives into framed hives.

- Identify all unbranded brood boxes with the beekeeper's registered brand.
- Keep normal access to the beehives clear from obstructions to allow hive inspection.

NSW Department of Primary Industries will report back to the person who provided the original 'Advice form' when the matter has been investigated.

For further information, contact Mick Rankmore, NSW Department of Primary Industries, phone (02) 6741 8374 during business hours or mobile 0402 078 963.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Robert Gullilford, retired Apiary Livestock Officer, NSW Department of Primary Industries, and NSW Apiarists' Association Executive, for their advice and assistance.

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ISSN 1832-6668

JOB NUMBER 6210

Replaces Agnote DAI-326

Updates of this Primefact are available at
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/primefacts

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (December 2005). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.