

Abandoned or neglected hive material

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Abandoned or neglected hives of bees or hive material 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 or hive material
2. Abandoned or neglected apiaries and exposed hive material may represent a disease risk to nearby colonies of bees.
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 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?

- 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 apiary material 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 or hive material

The Biosecurity Act 2015 allows specific powers to deal with abandoned and neglected beehives and hive material.

Before an Apiary Inspector can exercise those powers, the inspector must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that any bees, beehives, apiary product 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 site

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees/beekeeper-registration>

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 th 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 improvement management is required
- Written direction to the beekeeper for 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 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 be make the colony vulnerable to attack by robber bees
- Prevent robbing
- Remove dead-out hives from the apiary and store them in a bee proof manner
- Transfer bees, honey and bee combs from unframed hives to framed hives
- Identify all unidentified brood boxes with the beekeeper's registration number
- Keep normal access to the beehives clear form obstructions to allow hive inspection

Reporting a Biosecurity Risk (AFB, neglected or abandoned hives)

To report neglected hives, bees creating a public nuisance or other bee related biosecurity issues refer to;

Biosecurity complaints, phone 02 9741 4790

For forms and further information visit

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees>

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