

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources



Wednesday, 20 May 2020

A BUZZ - BACKING VICTORIAN APIARISTS ON WORLD BEE DAY

The Andrews Labor Government is continuing to back the state's \$17.5 million apiary industry by ensuring that Victoria's beekeepers have the tools they need to tackle any biosecurity threats and protect our vital horticulture sector.

Keeping Victoria secure and free from pests and diseases is a major priority for the Labor Government - as demonstrated by the \$142.5 million boost announced last year towards biosecurity in the agricultural sector.

This year is the International Year of Plant Health and is a timely reminder that two thirds of Australia's plant production is reliant on honeybee pollination.

At the start of the year, the Labor Government trained an additional 35 private beekeepers to be part of the State Quarantine Response Team, a partnership between government, industry and private beekeepers that allows us to respond to exotic pests and diseases of bees if found in Victoria.

The team was activated for the first time when Varroa mite, an exotic bee parasite which decimates bee colonies, was detected at the Port of Melbourne in June 2018. Now there are more than 180 beekeepers in the team who can conduct in-hive surveillance in the event of any bee biosecurity emergency response.

Victorian beekeepers are also preparing for the start of almond pollination season – the biggest livestock movement in Australia, where about 4.2 billion bees are transported to Northern Victoria to pollinate almond orchards. Beekeepers are asked to prepare their hives for almond pollination season ensuring their bees are healthy and strong.

Last year, the Government strengthened biosecurity for all Victorian beekeepers with the introduction of the new BeeMAX beekeeper registration and surveillance database. This new system assists all Victorian beekeepers by sharing information and surveillance data in real-time with Agriculture Victoria, including hive numbers, apiary site locations, pest and disease inspections and any completed biosecurity training.

The Government has also continued to improve biosecurity by adopting the Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice into the state's beekeeping regulations, which includes mandating all beekeepers check their hives for pests and diseases at least twice a year.

For more information visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/bees.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"Our horticulture sector is more important than ever in ensuring Victorians can access high-quality fresh food during this pandemic – a sector heavily reliant on the great work of apiarists and their bees."

"The partnership between Government and the apicultural industry in emergency preparedness is a model that can apply to other industries right across the biosecurity spectrum."