

Controlling feral honey bees

The European Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*) is an introduced species in Australia and the most common feral bee in Victoria. Feral colonies can:

- Disrupt pollination of plants
- Displace wildlife from tree hollows and nest boxes
- Consume nectar that would otherwise support birds, mammals, and insects

Location and habitat

These bee control methods are relevant statewide across a range of habitats.



General information

- Identify bees correctly – there are many species of native bees that are essential for a healthy environment. Native bees are mostly solitary and do not form swarms
- European Honey Bees may be found in hives in hollows and nest boxes, or as swarms out in the open
- Qualified apiarists may be able to safely extract and relocate feral swarms
- Consider your safety. Bee stings and working at heights pose risks

Methods

While qualified apiarists may be able to relocate hives and swarms, landholders may use chemicals to kill bees.

Chemical control:

- Use non-residual insecticides (e.g. pyrethrum) to kill bees
- Fumigate using petrol-soaked rags or pyrethrum on cool nights when bees are inside

Post-treatment:

- Remove old wax and honey residue to discourage the bees re-colonising
- Monitor the site for new swarms

Maintenance and monitoring


- Regularly inspect nest boxes and hollows for signs of feral bee activity
- Remove old wax and honey residue
- Record sightings and report to local conservation groups such as landcare or the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas
- Encourage native bees by creating suitable habitat (e.g. bee hotels, resin tubes)


Safety

Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when undertaking land management. Follow all label instructions on equipment and local regulations. Be mindful of weather conditions. Do not conduct land management on days of extreme or catastrophic fire danger or total fire ban.

Further information

For further advice and support, please contact Trust for Nature.

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