



Time's up for bees

Bushfire outcomes - No bees, means no pollination

Continued and expanded access to public lands was identified in June as the number one concern across Australia by professional beekeepers and there is no more time for decision makers to delay.

Peter McDonald, Chair of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) said, 'The bee industry, like so many others, has been devastated by the fires and while I'm pretty sure that decision makers know the extent of the damage they don't necessarily understand the implications for our almond and avocado growers - even those that have not been burned out.

'No bees, means no pollination.

'Where honey-bees have escaped the blazes, they will starve before Spring unless urgent action by both industry and government is taken to save them,' said Peter.

Two things need to happen, in order:

1. Hives need sugar syrup and pollen patties. These simulate pollen and can be used in the short-term to keep bees alive. They are expensive and Government subsidies would help. The NSW Department of Primary Industries has already provided a short-term food source of sugar supplements for bees in the affected fire areas. Even with supplements some mortality is expected because of the extended period. Pollen patties contain pollen or a substitute. It should be noted that crops such as almond and avocado will provide pollen for some bees but only for the short period of flowering, not for the rest of the year.

2. Alternative nectar and pollen sources must be found and for this, access to National Park areas that have not been burned is vital. This is not a 12-month panacea, it will be an ongoing requirement for years to come as the natural bush regenerates.

Peter said, 'The AHBIC is seeking urgent action from the Federal Government to coordinate State Government land managers in providing immediate and ongoing access to unburned public land such as National Parks and State Conservation areas over autumn and winter.

'This is a national problem which threatens food crop production and will also lead to shortages of Australian honey,' said Peter.

Individuals and corporations can also help struggling beekeepers, sometimes referred to as Australia's "Forgotten Farmers". Hive Aid is a drought and bushfire relief campaign managed by Rural Aid, one of Australia's largest rural charities, Hive Aid contributes financial assistance and practical support to professional beekeepers impacted by the ongoing drought and bushfires and donations can be made at https://www.ruralaid.org.au/donate/?supporter_id=14254

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) aims to ensure the long term economic viability, security and prosperity of the Australian Honey Bee industry in Australia.

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