

## HIVE AIDE Q&A

Last updated 28.11.2019

### Q&A: What is 'Hive Aid'?

- A Rural Aid initiative, Hive Aid is a drought and bushfire relief fund aimed specifically at struggling beekeepers and will be used to provide financial assistance to professional beekeepers impacted by ongoing drought and bushfires.
- The fund will be overseen by industry body, The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC), and will provide financial and practical support to beekeepers, with 100% of donations going directly to the cause.
- Hive Aid provides a donation platform for all Australians to help support our littlest livestock and the forgotten farmers who care for them. Donations can be made at [www.ruralaid.org.au/hiveaid](http://www.ruralaid.org.au/hiveaid)
- Professional beekeepers are encouraged to apply for support at <https://www.buyabale.com.au/can-we-help-you/>.

### Q&A: Isn't there already drought assistance available for farmers?

- Aside from some indirect funding, fodder and freight subsidies, as well as waiving of national park permits and truck registration fees in NSW, there has not been any direct support or funding made available on a national scale for beekeepers registered as primary producers.

### Q&A: Are beekeepers really farmers?

- Absolutely. Too often are these important primary producers overlooked, which is why they have been referred to as Australia's Forgotten Farmers.
- While the beekeeping industry is only a small sector, it has a big impact on the Australian agricultural industry via pollination of crops for many of our favourite foods as well as crops used to feed livestock such lucerne.
- Like many primary producers, professional beekeeping businesses are often family-run with generations of beekeeping experience, history and wisdom passed on from one generation to the next.

### Q&A: What kind of assistance will Hive Aid provide?

- Hive Aid will provide financial assistance to professional beekeepers, helping to fund:
  - Bulk water for bees. An apiary of 400 hives can require over 4000 litres of water a week to cool the hives and maintain the colonies.
  - Supplementary feed to help maintain their bee colonies. This can include:
    - Sugar syrup for energy, to sustain the bees when seasonal or environmental conditions do not provide this naturally
    - Pollen supplements which provides protein, to keep the bees strong
    - Other nutritional supplements for key vitamin and minerals to help mitigate the occurrence of deficiencies. Liquid seaweed is a common supplement added to sugar feeding and provides an organic source of key minerals and essential trace elements that is usually obtained from floral nectar but is missing in sugar feed.

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- Fuel so they can transport water to their bees, or move bees away from bushfires or to better floral resources
- Access to counselling services
- Funds to restart colonies (buy queen bees with escorts, hive materials, nutritional supplements)
- General cost of living support for those with low to no income coming in

### **Q&A: Is this assistance available to part-time and recreational beekeepers? Why not?**

- No. This assistance has been designed to support registered primary producers running fulltime beekeeping operations.
- Australia's hardworking professional beekeepers are the cornerstone of Australian agriculture. By supporting these forgotten farmers we are doing the most we can to help support the 'littlest livestock with the biggest impact'.

### **Q&A: What makes someone a professional beekeeper?**

- Typically, beekeepers who run over 400 hives are classified as Professional Beekeepers. Registered as primary producers, these beekeepers produce honey and provide pollination services on a commercial scale.
- There are around one thousand professional beekeepers whose livelihoods are based on managing these fulltime, commercial-scale beekeeping operations.
- Professional beekeepers produce pure Aussie honey from our rugged Australian bushland. While this is typically the main income source for their business, a large majority also offer pollination as a service. As such, they are also directly responsible for pollinating one third of everything that we eat.

### **Q&A: What impact do beekeepers have on Australian Agriculture?**

- Professional beekeepers are the cornerstone of our agricultural industry. They play a vital role in helping to pollinate important food crops for both humans and livestock, in addition to producing delicious Aussie honey from our rugged bushland.
- There are 53 agricultural crops in Australia that depend solely on bees for pollination. But there are also many other crops that benefit from bees and produce better yields when exposed to pollination by bees.
- Crops like nuts, apples, avocados, cherries, citrus, mangos, berries, cucumbers, kiwi fruit, pumpkins, melons, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflowers, celery and even clover and lucerne hay used for livestock rely heavily on pollination by bees.
- The contribution of honey bees to agriculture in Australia through pollination services has been estimated at up to \$20 billion annually.

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### Q&A: Why do Professional Beekeepers need assistance?

- Australia's professional beekeepers are our forgotten farmers. These important primary producers are often overlooked when it comes to the effects of drought, bushfire and other natural disasters. We need to support our "littlest livestock", honey bees, and the Australian beekeepers who care for them.
- Australian beekeepers are experiencing one of the toughest seasons on record thanks to drought and bushfires, with conditions only set to become worse in coming months. A scarcity of water and flowering trees mean honey production has fallen sharply, bee populations have suffered, and many honey bees are currently neither producing honey nor pollinating crops.
- Significant swathes of prime beekeeping country have already been lost across Queensland and New South Wales with bushfires continuing to destroy much needed habitat relied on by professional beekeepers to support healthy bee colonies. Sadly, this impact will be felt for many years to come.

### Q&A: How do Professional Beekeepers care for their bees in times of drought and bushfire?

- Many hardworking beekeepers are now having to resort to extreme measures to support their bee colonies, with the focus for many now switching to maintaining their hives rather than producing honey.
- Facing decimated floral resources, many beekeepers are resorting to supplementary feeding their bees to ensure they have the nutritional requirements they need to avoid starvation. Many are carting water to their hives and some beekeepers have even been forced to move their hives interstate to seek adequate floral resources for their bees.
- The cost of water and supplementary food to sustain the bees and the cost of fuel to transport hives to areas with more floral resources are an added burden to the beekeeper's businesses, putting livelihoods at risk.

### Q&A: Why do beekeepers need to provide bees supplementary feeding provide?

- To be healthy, honey bees need:
  - water,
  - carbohydrates from honey, which is made from the nectar they have foraged,
  - protein from pollen that they also collect, and
  - key minerals and vitamins from nectar and pollen.
- When any of the above aren't readily available in the environment, beekeepers turn to supplement feeding to care for their bees. This is a costly investment but in times of drought and bushfire without this support the bee colonies are at risk of starvation.

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### Q&A: Is Supplementary feeding of honey bees bad?

- No. In fact, right now it is the main thing sustaining honey bee colonies. Just as other farmers supplementary feed cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry to ensure proper nutrition, beekeepers sometimes need to supply their bees with nutrition not otherwise available.
- Supplementary feeding bees is following proper animal welfare protocol.
- Seasonal effects, such as drought and even excessive rainfall, can significantly impact bee nutrition. Poor weather conditions and natural disasters can also negatively impact nectar and pollen production, which reduces the availability of food for bees to consume. This impedes the bees energy and as protein absorption, causing nutritional deficiency in bees and greater susceptibility to bee health problems.
- Aside from water, bees need energy from carbohydrates (found in sugars) and strength from protein (found in pollen) to survive.
- When bees do not have energy from carbohydrates (found in sugars), they do not have the energy to forage for nectar and pollen. If forager/field bees cannot find the energy to collect more food the hive will continue to weaken, starve and eventually the colony will perish.
- When pollen is in short supply beehives may become deficient in protein. Protein deficiency is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the bees and bee colonies. While not widely used unless in extreme circumstance, internationally sourced pollen is a last resort for beekeepers in promoting bee welfare.