

Assistance for beekeepers affected by bushfires

Agriculture Victoria is working with bushfire affected beekeepers to assess fire damage to their beehives on private/freehold and public land to help deliver appropriate support.

ARE THERE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR BEEKEEPERS?

Yes. Agriculture Victoria is supporting Gippsland and North East landholders through animal welfare assessments and assistance, farm impact assessments and the referral of urgent cases of personal need to the appropriate agencies.

If you have destroyed or damaged beehives, please report them to Agriculture Victoria on 1800 226 226.

Important information on financial, personal and family support programs is available at:
www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/gippsland-upper-murray-fires

WHY SHOULD BEEKEEPERS REPORT DAMAGED BEEHIVES?

If you have or know of damaged beehives, please report them to Agriculture Victoria on 1800 226 226.

This information will help us understand the extent of bushfire damage to the apiary industry and will help us tailor our assistance for beekeepers as quickly as possible.

DO YOU NEED AN EMERGENCY APIARY SITE?

The Victorian Apiarists' Association (VAA) is coordinating the allocation of emergency apiary sites for beekeepers who have been affected by the recent devastating bushfires.

Beekeepers who require an emergency apiary site should contact the VAA preferably by email vaa@vicbeekeepers.com.au or by calling Aris Petratos on 0425 706 426.

Landowners who would like to volunteer to host a bushfire affected apiary on their land should contact the VAA to check the suitability of your land.

IS YOUR APIARY LOCATED IN A FIRE AFFECTED AREA?

Beekeepers with apiaries in bushfire affected areas must contact the nearest Incident Control Centre to confirm their apiary site is safe to access and to seek permission before entering to remove your hives.

Access cannot be guaranteed for all areas due to changing bushfire conditions and concerns for your personal safety.

If you believe a bushfire could potentially threaten your apiary you can monitor the situation and stay up to date with incidents and warnings at www.emergency.vic.gov.au.

For more information on road closures go to www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

DO NOT travel into an area until safe passage is assured.

Even after the bushfire passes, the threat of falling trees will continue for some days and safe passage is sometimes impossible until heavy machinery has cleared away fallen tree limbs or damaged trees have fallen.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SITE FOR AN APIARY CONSIDERING THE FIRE SITUATION?

Selecting a new bee site involves a thorough risk assessment. Before going to the trouble of delivering your hives to a new site, ask yourself:

- What is the fuel load (dry leaves, grass and branches) on the ground where the hives will be sitting?
- What fuel could be blown against the hives in high wind events?
- Where is the nearest water supply that your bees will access without causing public nuisance or will I need to cart in water?
- What access is there to the site and could it be easily cut off?
- Is there more than one way to approach the site, and an alternative route out?

When using public or private apiary sites, even though a pre-existing agreement exists, it is advisable to contact the land manager or property owner, to inform them that you have located your bees on their site. This will allow owners/managers to alert beekeepers of the threat of fire, if time permits.

DO YOU NEED TO MAKE AN INSURANCE CLAIM?

If you need to make a claim with your insurer for damaged hives, equipment or bee colonies it is critical that you make contact with your insurance company as soon as possible.

Insurance policies vary, so make sure you check with your insurer to see what your options are.

If you require information from Agriculture Victoria in relation to your beekeeper registration details in support of your claim please contact us at honeybee.biosecurity@agriculture.vic.gov.au and we will assist where we can.

WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE BUSHFIRES?

For more information on bushfire recovery, please contact Agriculture Victoria on 136 186 or see <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/bushfires>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This factsheet was produced by Cynthia Kefaloukos, Apiary Pest and Disease Officer, Chief Plant Health Officer Unit, January 2020

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ISBN 978-1-76090-276-6

Accessibility

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