

MPI/PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL

SAMPLING CONCLUDES FOR NZ'S BIGGEST EVER BEE STUDY

Media release from Ministry for Primary Industries, 11 March 2019

Biosecurity New Zealand has completed sampling for the largest and most detailed study of honey bee health ever undertaken in New Zealand.

More than 60 beekeepers have participated in the Bee Pathogen Programme and had their hives tested every 6 months for 2 and a half years.

Biosecurity New Zealand senior scientist, Dr Richard Hall, says the research will provide a wealth of valuable information to the beekeeping industry.

"The Bee Pathogen Programme will help us better understand the effect that diseases, climate and apiary management practices have on colony losses and productivity," he says.

"We have completed sampling and our experts have begun carefully evaluating the huge amount of data that has been collected.

"This includes studying more than 130,000 honey bees from 300 samples taken throughout the country that are now archived in Biosecurity New Zealand's freezers.

"Once the data has been carefully evaluated it will be available to the beekeeping industry and to researchers for further analysis."

Biosecurity New Zealand is aiming to release its conclusions from the Bee Pathogen Programme in late 2019.

Dr Hall says Biosecurity New Zealand is grateful to the beekeepers who participated in the research programme and the inspectors who conducted the fieldwork.

"We are very thankful to all of the beekeepers who have participated in the programme and allowed us access to their hives for sampling."

Biosecurity New Zealand
Tiakitanga Pūtaiao Aotearoa

ALL ABOUT THE BEE PATHOGEN PROGRAMME

The largest and most detailed study of honey bee health ever undertaken in New Zealand. It will help us better understand the effect that diseases, climate and apiary management practices have on colony loss and productivity.



132,100

Bees archived in our freezer, taken from all over New Zealand, including Chatham Island, Great Barrier Island and Stewart Island



111

Face-to-face meetings with beekeepers and industry



2,595

Beehive lids lifted for inspection and sampling. Representing every region of New Zealand. The hives were checked each spring and autumn, over 2.5 years

1,693

Hours spent looking inside beehives, doing inspections, and collecting bees



16,300

Bees counted out by hand using tweezers, in preparation for diagnostic testing



652

Boxes and bottles of bees shipped from the 85 participating apiaries, back to our labs



15

Pathogens and pests tested for, including varroa mites, nosema, parasites, viruses and bacteria



4,235

Diagnostic tests performed using microscopy and DNA-based molecular methods



31,344

Datapoints collected representing over 180 years of apiary data



100%

Positive feedback from beekeepers who participated in the research programme

For more information visit:
<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/readiness/bee-pathogen-programme/>

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Manatū Ahu Matua

