

Exposing honey to robber bees

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Exposed honey

Honey, bee comb or appliances containing honey (for example, exposed honey combs, dead out hives, waste wax material, leaking honey drums, extracting plants) are not to be left exposed to robbing bees because this material:

- can lead to spread of disease, for example American foulbrood (AFB), if bees take honey from a diseased hive or from other products containing diseased honey back to their own hive;
- causes bees to rob, making the colonies very defensive and thus aggressive to people in the area;
- can cause the queen to reduce her egg laying, and the brood area will actually decrease as a result of robbing activities (honey does not act as a stimulant whereas a good nectar flow will stimulate brood raising).

In the results of the 2006 survey 'American foulbrood disease *Paenibacillus larvae* in New South Wales apiaries', the top 4 answers to the question 'What do you consider to be the highest risks in spreading AFB from an outside source to your apiary?' were:

1. another beekeeper's apiary nearby (robbing);
2. abandoned or neglected hives and beekeeping equipment (robbing);
3. feral colonies (robbing);
4. Dead-out hives (robbing).

The Apiary Industry considers robbing of honey a major concern and all beekeepers should ensure honey, wax, slum gum and other sources of honey are not left exposed to robber bees.

Beekeepers should store apiary equipment in a bee-proof shed, under tarp or other such cover to

prevent robber bees gaining access to the equipment.

Stored apiary material of an unknown disease history is potentially a source of disease. Having the material irradiated will ensure that the material is disease free.

Legislation

Section 20(1) of the Apiaries Act 1985 states:

Where honey, or any bee comb or appliance in or on which honey is deposited, is in the possession or under the control of a person, the person shall ensure that the honey, bee comb or appliance does not remain exposed in a manner or under conditions which would provide robber bees with access to the honey.

The penalties for leaving exposed honey to robber bees are an infringement penalty notice of \$275 or a maximum of \$1,100 if convicted in a court of law.

Further information

- [American foulbrood](#), NSW DPI
- *Irradiation of beehive equipment* – information from Steritech (www.steritech.com.au)

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ISSN 1832-6668

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Job number 8572

