



American-Australian Association for Affordable Pollination

*Enhancing American Agricultural Productivity with
Australian Honeybees*



March 2, 2011

The Right Honorable Senator Joe Ludwig of Queensland
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Commonwealth of Australia
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

Re: Restoring the Australian honey bee trade with the United States; Impact upon Australian and US pollination-dependent agriculture

Dear Minister, the Right Honorable Senator Ludwig:

I write to encourage your continuing support and Commonwealth funding for further efforts to control, contain and eradicate *Apis cerana* incursions in Queensland, Australia, and for implementation of other appropriate measures to restore the honey bee trade with the US. The failure to mount and continue a systematic, substantial effort to quarantine and eliminate the *Apis cerana* incursion near Cairns, and the lack of a survey of both *Apis mellifera* and *Apis cerana* bees in the vicinity of Cairns for the incidence and prevalence of novel pathogens has persuaded the US to suspend the honey bee trade with Australia.

We hope to alter the current trade embargo on Australian honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) to the US. US beekeepers and pollination-dependent agricultural producers of fruits, nuts and vegetables will be adversely affected by a continued suspension of trade in honey bees, as will Australian producers and suppliers of honey bee queens and swarms for the US market. But to reverse the US posture banning Australian honey bee imports will require Australia to demonstrate meaningful progress in eradicating and containing the *Apis cerana* incursion, and the development of data on the incidence and distribution of pathogens in the vicinity of the *Apis cerana* incursion.

The need for Australian honey bees to balance the US pollinator deficit is a real and growing phenomena, and represents an important economic opportunity for Australian apiculture. Recent unexplained declines in managed pollinator populations in the US and other parts of the world, collectively described as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), have repeatedly resulted in large numbers of dead and dying hives for each of the past several years.



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Apart from the economic losses these dead and weakened colonies have imposed upon US beekeepers, a resultant shortage of queen bees and swarms exists, impairing the ability of beekeepers to recover from their losses. The consequent risk of downstream harm to pollination-dependent producers is not just probable but inevitable if beekeepers lack a source of supply to reestablish the colonies lost to CCD and other mortality. Australian honey bee queens and swarms were in strong demand prior to the suspension in trade, and the potential market and economic opportunity for the Australian apiculture industry should trade be restored is certainly measured in the tens of millions of dollars.

I urge you to fund continuing efforts to eradicate or contain the current *Apis cerana* incursion, survey for pathogens, including viruses, near the *Apis cerana* incursion, and work to reestablish the honey bee trade with the US. Your efforts and a concerted government response will aid the apiculture industries of both Australia and the US, and help ensure a bountiful supply of pollination dependent agricultural production and the prosperity of Australian beekeepers.
Sincerely,

Daniel Weaver
Director