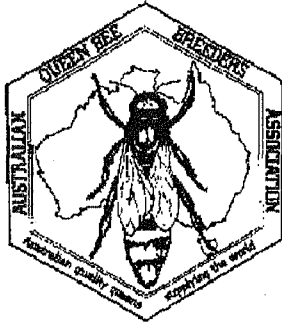


Submission No: 60
Date Received: 18/6/07
Secretary: *[Signature]*



*The Australian
Queen Bee Breeders Association
Inc.*

President:
Mr Colin Wilson

National Secretary:
Mrs Paula Dewar

The future development of the Australian honeybee industry

*Submission to the House of Representatives Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry
Committee Inquiry*

This submission is placed on behalf of the members of the Australian Queen Bee Breeders Association (AQBBA)

The Australian Queen Bee Breeders Association would like to formally endorse the submission placed by the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council of which we are a member.

The AQBBA has members from Queensland and New South Wales as these states are the queen breeding centres of Aust. We also have members from Victoria and Western Australia. Members supply all Australian states with the exception of WA which does not allow importation from the east. However our WA members can send to the eastern states. Most queens purchased from WA tend to be breeding stock.

Eastern state members export queen bees to various countries including the Middle East, SE Asia, Japan USA and Canada. Enquiries are also received from many European Union countries but currently we are unable to supply. The current EU protocol places unachievable demands regarding freedom from diseases that are endemic within EU countries.

Below are some areas that we would like to address.

AQIS CHARGES: The administration charge of \$104 is acceptable. The additional inspection charges, which vary from state to state, are inhibiting some exports. Various countries have different import protocols eg US requires inspection 10 days prior to shipment; Canada requires 30 days, Japan 30 days. If one operator has a large number of queen breeding colonies spread over a

wide area then the travelling/ inspection time will be significant. Please bear in mind that most apiaries are some distance from the department offices. E.g. Qld Queen Breeder situated in Murgon- the department office is situated in Nambour over 150klms away @ 50c per klm and time of \$140 hour with 2000 hives to be inspected by 10% the costs could be astronomical.

A US order of 500 queens @\$14 per queen plus charges (export certification(?), packing and shipping of \$ 640, plus transport Murgon to Brisbane.

200 Queens to Japan- \$14.00 per queen plus minimum freight charge of \$560 export certification of \$?

As can be seen we are not encouraged to export a world class product. Recently a broader community benefit has finally been recognised by the Horticulture and Agriculture industries and government. Australia needs a profitable queen breeding sector that can export queens, to sustain the whole industry.

TRADE (Barriers): We would like to start on a sour note and that is for a number of years the AQBBA has felt that our industry has been sacrificed in favour of the large agricultural and horticulture industries. For example it has taken 2 decades to get queen bees and package bees into the USA market. The US has every disease plus more than Australia but their protocol is seen as trade restrictive.

Japan- the Japanese protocol has been requiring amendment for several years. The last review unfortunately overlooked chalkbrood. The Japan protocol requires 5 klm freedom despite our associations efforts to seek action from AQIS/Biosecurity to amend the protocol this has not been achieved. Chalkbrood is endemic in Japan.

Korea is another country that has placed unrealistic protocols on queen bee imports. They are unable to meet their own protocol. Korea has the potential as a large importer of queen bees.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT: Small Hive Beetle (SHB) entered Australian in the early 2000's. This predator is very difficult to control. Left unchecked it can destroy strong colonies in a matter of days. By the time the adult beetle lays its eggs, they hatch (2-3 days), the larvae quickly go about destroying the brood, wax and defecating in the honey. The adult bees are unable to defend their colony and abscond into the environment. All the beekeeper is left with are boxes of slimy muck. These can be cleaned with a pressure cleaner before the beekeeper can recolonise the boxes.

This was a breach of quarantine and after the initial surveillance the pest was declared endemic. Industry was promised by government \$'s to assist beekeepers to live with and manage the pest. To date very little research has been done & besides the government matching \$ for \$ assistance through RIRDC industry finds itself trying to solve a multi million \$ problem with less than 2 men's salary. What happened to the promise?

Industry sought assistance for a tax benefit of 100=150% deduction for cold room installation and was told to hire them. That is okay if cold rooms are required for a short time. With SHB cold rooms are a necessary not a luxury. Also, beekeepers, being primary producers, have fluctuating incomes especially in the current drought conditions and to be able to receive a full tax deduction for the cost, in one year, would assist greatly.

We feel more research is required on pheromone traps, similar to those used in the orchard industry as our SHB is closely related to one that breeds on pears etc. In effect if no hives are around SHB will breed on decaying fruit. This research is vitally urgent as the incidental pollinators (unmanaged bee hives) are also being attacked. Even our native bee population (Trigona) unfortunately are being destroyed by SHB. If not reined in quickly the incidental pollination of Australian agricultural and horticultural crops will diminish.

INCREASED SURVEILLANCE: We need to learn from the incursion of SHB and Chalkbrood that our quarantine surveillance is inadequate. The longer we can keep Varroa, and other bee mites, out of the country the better off we will be.

The Eastern Creek Quarantine facility that is due for closure in 2010-2015 needs to be relocated and managed in the same efficient manner that it is at present. Beekeepers need these facilities to be able to access stock from overseas for future export to the same country, as buyers often require similar stock to that which have been reared for their own particular conditions. Should no quarantine facility be available we open ourselves up to the risk of illegal importation and the chance of bee mites being introduced into the Australian environment.

FOREIGN WORKERS: It is very difficult to get Australian workers for various reasons eg distance away from home, travelling, unusual hours etc.

Some members have applied and obtained workers from overseas from such places as the Philippines. The problem arises that beekeeping workers are generally required from August to April/May. Many beekeeping operations cannot afford to employ these workers for the whole year. Employment for 8-9 months is ideal.

The protocol for overseas employment needs revision and amending to take into consideration the employment period available.

Our association thanks this committee for the opportunity to place our submission before you.

Yours sincerely

Paula E Dewar
National Secretary
18 June 2007