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Operation to protect Northern River's apiary industry

Biosecurity risks to the Northern Rivers beekeeping industry was the focus of the recent Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Biosecurity Compliance Regulatory Officers apiary operation.

DPI Senior Regulatory Inspector Anne Webster said the operation involved random and targeted inspections of beehives in the Lismore area aimed at neglected and abandoned beehives.

"Any neglected and abandoned hives are a major threat to the health of managed beehives," Ms Webster said.

"They can be responsible for the spread of notifiable diseases and pests due to the potential for them to become weakened by diseases such as American Foul brood (AFB).

"Neglected or abandoned hives can also become a source of infection for other hives when field bees rob stores from these hives."

Ms Webster said during the operation hives were inspected for AFB and action was taken for the failure to notify AFB and failure to correctly identify brood boxes.

"A number of AFB infected hives were destroyed as part of the operation to limit the spread of this bacterial disease to other managed apiaries, Ms Webster said.

"Most beekeepers were found to be doing the right thing and complying, but it was disappointing to find that several beekeepers were unregistered.

"An information and practical session was held at the start of the operation by the DPI Biosecurity Compliance Regulatory Officers to heighten beekeeper's voluntary compliance with the *NSW Apiaries Act 1985*.

"The sessions included information and training in best practice brood inspection for AFB and other pests and disease surveillance techniques.

"Thirty two local beekeepers attended representing all sections of the industry both commercial and amateur. Beekeepers also took the opportunity to speak with the Regulatory Specialist and apiary inspectors about their beekeeping operation."

Detailed information on pests and diseases of honey bees is available on the DPI web site <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/honey-bees/pests-diseases>

Photo Caption: Mick Rankmore, DPI Regulatory Specialist Apiary.

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