

PROTOCOLS FOR BEEKEEPING UNDER COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

Why do we need these protocols?

Beekeeping is considered an essential service in the COVID-19 environment however we must reiterate this does not mean you can operate in a state of business as usual.

MPI has stated that all essential services must change the way that they operate to minimise the risk of spreading the virus. There must be nowhere in your supply chain that will facilitate the spread of the virus.

This means that in order to continue operating, all beekeeping businesses, no matter what size, will have to develop protocols to ensure the virus cannot be spread in your working environment, but also that your staff are observing all safety guidelines when they are not at work.

PROTOCOLS FOR COMMERCIAL BEEKEEPERS

- **First and foremost, observe the two-metre rule.**
- Ensure workers are observing social distancing at home, on the way to and from work, and while on breaks.
- Ensure staff observe the lockdown rules that apply to everyone, once they have finished work.
- Establish processes for staff to report illnesses or potential exposure on a daily basis.
- Establish steps you will take in the event of a staff member having either confirmed infection, or had contact with someone who has been infected.
- If you have members of staff that are not essential to your business continuing to operate, they should stay at home in lockdown.
- Ensure all staff who are most at risk (those over 70, and those with pre-existing medical conditions) are already isolating themselves.
- If there is any aspect of your operation that is not essential, then you should not be undertaking it.

If you are unable to meet any of these requirements you should not be operating.

PROTOCOLS FOR COMMERCIAL BEEKEEPERS continued

- Physical distancing includes prohibition of handshakes or close physical contact.
- All people working together should regularly wash and sanitize hands.
- Physical distancing should be practiced at all times when working with beehives (keep a pallet space between each other).
- Make sure you remain distant during breaks, eating lunch etc. Consider staggering meal breaks and ensure common surfaces are sanitised prior to meals.
- Communication with landowners should be by phone. Ensure they are aware that beekeeping is an essential service, and your access is legitimate. Restrict 'on farm' interactions with landowners to a 'wave'. Make clear the hygiene protocols you will undertake when accessing farms. This should include, for instance, sanitising hands before opening and closing gates.
- Vehicle steering wheels and door handles should be sanitised daily, or as drivers change.
- Each vehicle should be equipped with a wash bucket, suitable disinfectant/sanitiser, soap, paper towels and a rubbish bag for disposals.
- Use of personalised beekeeping gloves is encouraged.
- When travelling, only one staff member should be in a vehicle at a time. Where there is no way to avoid this, we recommend establishing a travelling 'work bubble' as you would a 'family bubble'. These work bubbles should not physically interact with anyone else at work. But even within these bubbles, please respect the two-metre rule. Records should be kept of who travelled together in any vehicle for determining any possible future isolation. Where possible, dedicate a particular vehicle to the same individuals.
- If you are working inside a building, consider creating 'grids' of two metre distances, with tape on the floor. Maintain good ventilation and manage tasks so that no physical contact or crossover is necessary.

FOR NON-COMMERCIAL/ HOBBYIST BEEKEEPERS

- Hobbyist or non-commercial beekeepers need to recognise they do not qualify to continue their normal activity under the Government's directive that only businesses providing the 'essentials of life' should continue operating.
- Managing disease, especially varroa and preventing starvation is however an animal welfare issue, and hives can still be managed for this purpose.
- It is recommended that non-commercial beekeepers limit any beekeeping activities outside of your home property during the period of lockdown.
- If you do have hives away from your home property and need to feed or treat them for disease, then you should follow all the protocols outlined for commercial beekeepers.