

PROTOCOLS FOR BEEKEEPING UNDER COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 3

New Zealand will shift from a COVID-19 response Alert Level 4 to Level 3 on Monday 27 April at 11.59pm. Operationally, little will change for beekeepers and their businesses, who have been able to continue operating under Alert Level 4.

The key message from the Government is that Alert Level 3 does not signify a return to normal, or business as usual.

Beekeepers do not need to register with MPI under Alert Level 3. However, all essential businesses need to continue operating in a way that minimises the risk of spreading the virus. This means the protocols prepared by Apiculture New Zealand for Alert Level 4 remain valid, with only a few changes, reviewed by MPI, identified below:

NEW PROTOCOLS FOR COMMERCIAL BEEKEEPERS

- During Alert Level 3 all workplaces should strive for social distancing of at least 1 metre. This represents a reduction from the 2 metres, stipulated under Alert Level 4.
- There is now the potential to travel with more than one person per vehicle, given the reduction in social distancing from 2 to 1 metre. It is still however recommended you travel as part of an existing 'work bubble'. Records should still be kept on who travelled together and to which locations. While non-essential workers are not allowed to travel between regions, those in essential services (including beekeepers) can, but only where it is necessary to do so.
- Businesses that include interactions with the public - for example, selling honey through a shop or 'at the gate' - will be able to operate/open to customers but ONLY for delivery or on a contactless basis such as a 'pick-up-at-door'.

Other key protocols to remain the same

- All people working together should regularly wash and sanitise hands.
- 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.
- Physical distancing should be practiced at all times when working with beehives (keep a pallet space between each other).
- Communication with landowners should be by phone. Restrict 'on farm' interactions with landowners to a 'wave' and 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. Sanitising should also include any shared tools in use such as in the workshop.
- Each vehicle should be equipped with a wash bucket, suitable disinfectant/sanitiser, soap, paper towels and a rubbish bag for disposals.

FOR NON-COMMERCIAL/ HOBBYIST BEEKEEPERS

- Hobbyist or non-commercial beekeepers can continue operating to manage their hives.
- If you do have hives away from your home property and need to feed or treat them for disease, then you should follow the protocols outlined for commercial beekeepers.