

FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION
DA-2010-60
December 21, 2010

SUBJECT: Federal Import Quarantine Order to Prohibit Australian Bees

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

This Federal Order prohibits adult honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) from Australia into the United States. Importation and interstate movement of honey bees to Hawaii and the U.S. Territories is already prohibited. Pursuant to this Federal Order, we are removing Australia from the list of approved regions for the importation of adult honey bees.

This action is necessary because the Administrator has determined that the introduction and establishment of exotic bee diseases and/or parasites that may be associated with Australian bee species including *Apis cerana* pose a serious threat to the United States agriculture including almonds, apples, blueberries, and other crops grown in the United States. The vast majority of importations are brought into California through San Francisco and Los Angeles for almond pollination. These bees, in much fewer numbers, have also been imported into Florida, Texas, and occasionally other states.

Following the May 2007 discovery of colonies of the Asian honey bee, *Apis cerana*, near Cairns, Queensland in Australia, concerns were raised that exotic honey bee pathogens or parasites may have been introduced into Australia with the arrival of this foreign bee. An evaluation of pest risks associated with imported honey bees from Australia raised questions regarding viruses that are not present in the United States. Viruses once thought to be inconsequential are now being reevaluated in light of transmission by Varroa mite, interactions with *Nosema ceranae*, and further complications from Colony Collapse Disorder. The United States typically begins importing bees in late November and continues through April; with peak imports occur in late December and January. There are no Federal domestic restrictions governing the interstate movement of honey bees in the continental United States. APHIS is taking this action to prohibit imports of Australian bees due to viruses and other diseases that could be introduced into the United States. Following issuance of this Federal Order, the United States will only allow the importation of queen bees and packages from Canada and New Zealand.

For additional information on the importation of Honey Bees, you may contact Dr. Colin D. Stewart, Senior Entomologist, APHIS, PPQ, RIPPS at telephone (301)734-0774 or email: colin.stewart@aphis.usda.gov

/s/ Paul R. Eggert for

Rebecca A. Bech
Deputy Administrator
Plant Protection and Quarantine

FEDERAL IMPORT ORDER

Prohibit Importation of Adult Honey Bees (*Apis mellifera*) from Australia
December 21, 2010

The purpose of this Federal Order is to prevent the entry or introduction of harmful honey bee diseases and/or parasites from Australia into the United States including the territories. The Administrator of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has determined that it is necessary to prohibit the entry of adult honey bees *Apis mellifera* from Australia due to concerns with exotic honey bee pathogens or parasites associated with exotic bee species, particularly *Apis cerana*, an invasive species that has not been reported in the United States.

This Federal Order is issued pursuant to the authority provided by the Honey Bee Act (7 USC Chapter 11) which authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to prohibit or restrict the importation or entry of honey bees into or through the United States in order to prevent the introduction and spread of diseases and parasites harmful to honey bees or the introduction and spread of undesirable species or subspecies of honey bees within the United States. This Federal Order is likewise issued pursuant to the regulations found at 7 CFR Part 322.

This Federal Order, effective December 21, 2010, removes Australia from the list of approved regions for the importation of adult honey bees. This action is necessary because the Administrator has determined that the introduction and establishment of exotic bee diseases and/or parasites that may be associated with Australian bee species including *Apis cerana* pose a serious threat to the United States agriculture including almonds, apples, blueberries, and other crops grown in the United States. This action is necessary and warranted to prevent the introduction and establishment of exotic bee diseases and parasites associated with exotic bee species including *Apis cerana*.

Following the May 2007 discovery of colonies of the Asian honey bee, *Apis cerana*, near Cairns, Queensland in Australia, concerns were raised that exotic honey bee pathogens or parasites may have been introduced into Australia with the arrival of this foreign bee. An evaluation of pest risks associated with imported honey bees from Australia raised questions regarding viruses that are either not present in the United States or are rare and their introduction in commercial consignments of bees from Australia. Viruses once thought to be inconsequential are now being reevaluated in light of transmission by Varroa mite, interactions with *Nosema ceranae*, and further complications from Colony Collapse Disorder. We are concerned that these viruses and other diseases may be introduced into the United States in consignments of bees from Australia.

Approximately one half of the honey bees in the United States are present in California for almond pollination and are moved around the nation at the conclusion of almond pollination. If a pest or disease that is not widespread is brought in with these imported bees, it could rapidly spread throughout the United States.