



Photo by Arthur Giblin

# Asian honey bees

Asian honey bees (*Apis cerana*) are introduced pest bees currently present in northern Queensland. The established population is expected to slowly spread throughout their natural range in Australia.

The bees most commonly seen in Australia are European honey bees (*Apis mellifera*). They are used to produce honey and pollinate crops.



Photo by Arthur Giblin

An Asian honey bee on a morning star flower

## Characteristics of Asian honey bees

- They are smaller (about 10 mm long) than European honey bees (about 15 mm long).
- They are less hairy than European honey bees.
- They have more prominent and even banding on the abdomen than European honey bees.
- When swarming, they move in very tight clusters that range from the size of a closed hand to that of a basketball.



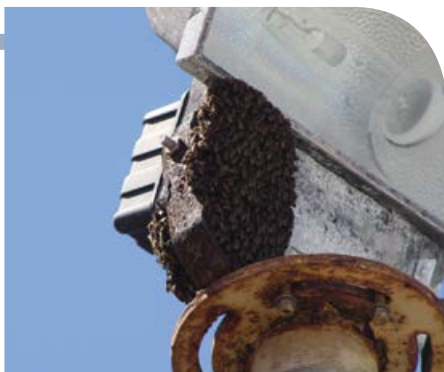
Actual length: Approximately 10 mm

European honey bee (left) and Asian honey bee (right)  
Photo by Arthur Giblin

## Asian honey bees in Australia

Asian honey bees are pests in Australia for a number of reasons:

- They tend to nest in small cavities (such as letterboxes and garden sheds) in urban environments, so there is a high risk of contact with people.
- They are a stinging bee and will sting if disturbed. A sting from an Asian honey bee could cause an anaphylactic reaction in a person who is allergic to other bees.
- They may compete with European honey bees and native animals for food and nesting cavities.
- They are natural hosts for varroa mites. If these mites are introduced into Australia, Asian honey bees could aid their spread, and this could cause severe losses in European honey bee colonies.



A swarm of Asian honey bees



An Asian honey bee nest in a letterbox



A swarm of Asian honey bees on a rubbish bin

### Help slow the spread

Be on the lookout for bees and check your vessel, vehicle and trailer before travelling long distances. This is important in reducing the risk of spreading Asian honey bees to other parts of Australia.

If you see a swarm or nest of Asian honey bees or any other suspect bees near a port or boat marina anywhere in Queensland, and you suspect they are a new incursion, notify Biosecurity Queensland by calling **13 25 23** or by using our online reporting tool at **www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au**.



An Asian honey bee nest

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### What you can do if Asian honey bees are endangering you

It is best to remove swarming Asian honey bees from your property before they establish a nest. Once the bees have a nest in a wall cavity or other location, it is likely to be more difficult and more expensive to remove them.

- If a swarm or nest of Asian honey bees is threatening you or others, have a pest control operator remove the bees.
- If the threat is from a European honey bee swarm, contact a local beekeeper to see if they can help you remove the bees.
- If there is a swarm or nest in a public place, contact your local government agency.

Details of local pest control operators, beekeepers and local government agencies are in your local telephone directory.

Do not attempt to move a swarm or nest of Asian honey bees by yourself. Interfering with the bees will only aggravate them and could make them sting in defence.

### How you can help

To protect the Australian honey industry from exotic bee pests and diseases, report any suspect bees or mites to Biosecurity Queensland by calling **13 25 23** or by using our online reporting tool at **www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au**.

Biosecurity Queensland has also developed a number of tools for industry to manage Asian honey bees. Visit **www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au** for more information.

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