



# Media Release

**Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**  
Te Manatu Ahuwhenua, Ngaherehere

8 February 2001 - *JOINT RELEASE MAF & NATIONAL BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION*

## **Varroa find at Pauatahanui highlights risk of Varroa spread**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and The National Beekeepers Association (NBA) are responding to a find of the Varroa bee mite at Pauatahanui, near Porirua north of Wellington.

A visual confirmation of the Varroa mite was made by Paul Bolger, MAF's Varroa Programme Coordinator, yesterday after the likelihood an infected colony of feral bees had been transported across MAF's movement control line was reported by a member of the NBA. A sample of the suspected Varroa infestation is being tested by MAF Laboratories to confirm the diagnosis.

MAF's control programme for Varroa includes a movement control line which extends across the North Island from Taranaki to East Cape which is designed to restrict movement of live bees. The Varroa mite was found in a hollow log in a load of timber transported to a timber mill at Pauatahanui from the north of the North Island.

Don Bell, NBA President, says the detection is a big disappointment. "Beekeepers have fully supported the movement restrictions. The NBA has also done its best to raise public awareness of the risk of live bees being accidentally transported from one part of New Zealand to another as appears to have been the case here".

"We issued a release in December which warned holiday motorists about the risk of picking up "bee hitchhikers" and would expect the wider public to show a high level of responsibility to guard against spreading the Varroa mite".

MAF immediately destroyed the host bee colony found at Pauatahanui and is confident all reasonable steps to contain the presence of the mite are being followed.

A meeting of MAF Biosecurity's Varroa Management Group was convened yesterday and further preventive measures are being put in place this week. These include placing an immediate restriction on live bee movement by beekeepers within a 5 kilometre radius of today's find and undertaking a programme of preventive Varroa treatment of all beehives within that radius.

**MAF BIOSECURITY AUTHORITY**

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MAF and the NBA are continuing their efforts to slow the spread of the Varroa mite into the lower half of the North Island which has been "Varroa free" until now. "We can only hope this is an isolated incident. Beekeepers are making progress in learning how to deal with the damage the Varroa mite causes and we are encouraged that an NBA member helped to alert MAF to this suspected find," says Mr Bell.

## **Background**

MAF's movement control line was established two years ago and as of December 2001 an additional Southern Boundary Area was agreed to by MAF and the NBA, immediately south of the line in the Central Plateau region.

As well as the ban on movement of live bees across the control line any movement of honey boxes or used hive parts (frames etc) requires a MAF permit. MAF's Varroa control programme for 2001-2002 features on-the-ground surveillance for the Varroa mite throughout the lower North Island from April onwards. This area has been designated a Buffer Zone.

## **For further information contact**

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