

American foulbrood

American foulbrood (AFB) is a honey bee brood disease caused by the bacterium *Paenibacillus larvae larvae*. It has been regulated by government since 1907. The American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan (AFBPMP), under the Biosecurity Act 1993 and set up under in an Order in Council (Biosecurity Order 1998), appointed Apiculture New Zealand to oversee the AFBPMP, which is managed by the AFB Management Agency. More information can be found at www.afb.org.nz.

Key features of the AFBPMP are:

- All hives must be inspected annually for the prevalence of AFB by a beekeeper who holds a Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement (DECA) and who must report on the disease status of the hives to the AFB Management Agency or its contractor,ASUREQuality Ltd.
- All non-DECA beekeepers must annually submit a Certificate of Inspection issued by a DECA holder to the AFB Management Agency or its contractor, ASUREQuality Ltd.
- To attain a DECA beekeepers must first pass a competency test on AFB recognition and control, and then submit an AFB management plan to the AFB Management Agency or its contractor, ASUREQuality Ltd.
- Beekeepers must submit samples of bees, brood or honey for AFB testing on request.
- Random and focused inspections of suspect hives and hive equipment are carried out by Authorised Persons.

- The killing of infested colonies and destruction of contaminated hive parts is mandatory and must be reported to the AFB Management Agency or its contractor, ASUREQuality Ltd.
- All apiaries must be registered on the apiary database within 30 days of being established and all beekeepers must submit an Annual Disease Return confirming that the information on the database (including disease reports) is accurate.

Hive inspection and audit programme to 30 June 2019

ASUREQuality Ltd collates beekeeping and AFB disease statistics each year for the AFB Management Agency for the period 1 July to 30 June, which encompasses a full beekeeping season. The AFB Management Agency has appointed an Operational Manager who has taken over the management of Authorised Persons. During this reporting period, Authorised Persons inspected 7,605 hives (0.82 percent of total hives) from 1,084 apiaries (1.82 percent of total apiaries). As a result of these inspections 1,692 outbreaks of AFB were discovered in 3,001 hives. Corresponding AFB infection rates for 2017–2018 were 1,739 outbreaks found in 2,812 hives.

As of 30 June 2019 there were 4,663 beekeepers with DECAs, representing 50 percent of all registered beekeepers. During this reporting period 544 new DECAs were approved. The number and percentage of DECA holders increased.

A newly introduced DECA for hobbyists will make it easier for beekeepers with fewer than 10 hives and/or four apiaries to become DECA holders. These beekeepers are permitted to inspect their own hives for AFB and make reports to ASUREQuality via APIWEB or on the approved forms.

There were 4,619 beekeepers who owned 58,379 hives on 7,426 apiaries that required a Certificate of Inspection as of 30 June 2019. This means they had to engage the services of an approved beekeeper to inspect and report on the AFB status of their hives.

Apiary register and statistics

There were 9,282 beekeepers owning 918,026 hives on 59,693 apiaries as of 30 June 2019, compared with 8,533 beekeepers, 881,185 hives and 55,527 apiaries at the same time in 2018. Over the past few years the industry has continued to grow, with a further 8 percent net increase in beekeeper numbers – the same as for the previous year. This increase represents greater numbers of both commercial and hobbyist beekeepers. Although the total number of hives increased, the increase (4.2 percent) for the period was less than in the previous year (**Figure 1**). The drastic drop in non-manuka-honey prices offered by buyers made beekeeping an unattractive farming prospect.

The main increases in beekeeping operations were again in the North Island, where 71 percent of all beekeepers are registered, and is largely driven by mānuka honey production, which is much more prevalent in the North Island. Apiary density is a very real concern for beekeepers, landowners and other stakeholders, as is the continual increase in hive numbers over the past decade.

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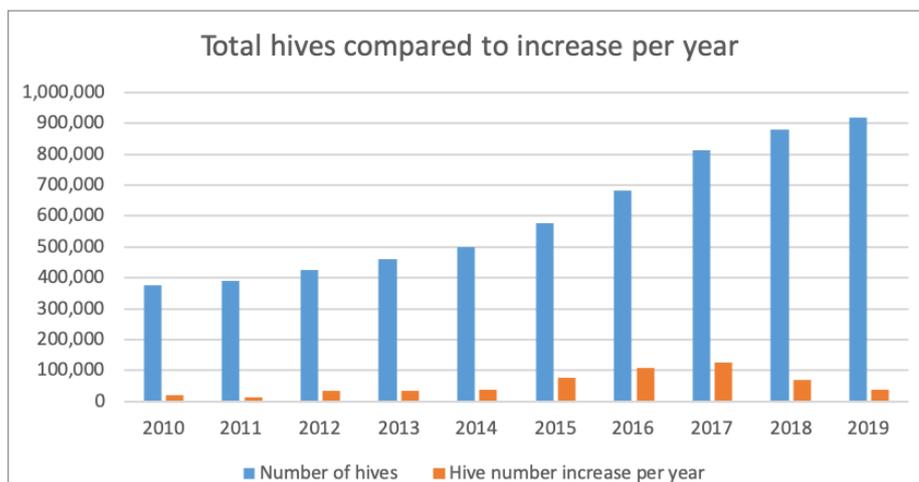


Figure 1: Total hive numbers, 2010–2019