THE HONEY BEE AND POLLINATION PROGRAM

Horticulture Innovation Australia

RURAL INDUSTRIES Research & Development Corporation

WESTERN AUSTRALIA *FACT SHEET*

Compatibility of management objectives on public lands and beekeeping

Introduction

The Australian beekeeping industry is an important agricultural industry with an estimated gross value of $88 million (2012-13 estimate). Beekeepers also provide indirect benefits to the broader agricultural economy through the provision of pollination services valued between $4-6 billion. The true value of beekeeping in maintaining the health and resilience of broader the Australian agricultural economy is therefore significant, extending well beyond its direct economic contribution.

Importance of public lands

Public lands provide important seasonal floral resources for Australia's migrating beekeepers. With one third of Australia's native forests located on public lands, and an additional 40% on crown leased land, access to these areas underpins production for the industry.

Forests and woodlands provide up to 80% of pollen and nectar resources, with between 70-90% of honey production across south east and south west Australia reliant on the flowering tree and understory resources of forested areas, primarily located on public lands. Floristic diversity on public land is not only important for honey production, but also provides a means to build up hives prior to and post pollination.

The continued productivity and viability of the beekeeping industry is therefore contingent upon maintaining flexible and ongoing access to apiary sites located on public lands. This is particularly important in drought periods or following floods or fires, where beekeepers require additional flexibility to find alternative food resources for the survival of their bees.

Area of public lands in Australia and Western Australia

Public land is a significant land tenure across Australia's States and Territories. Approximately 63% of Australia's land mass (484,067,824 hectares) is classed as public land.
In WA public land accounts for approximately 92% of all land (233 million hectares).

Importance of migration

In order to optimise production across seasons, it is necessary for beekeepers to migrate hives across landscapes when seeking the most productive sources of pollen and nectar. Hive migration will be planned to coincide with peaks in flowering of key plants, typically occurring over a two to four month period. Production is predominantly from eucalypt, angophora and corymbia tree species, although acacias, banksias and other species are also important. Variability in Australian weather conditions affect budding and flower patterns of flora and consequently pollen and nectar levels, requiring beekeepers to maintain their production through a constant state of migration.

Migration across public land

Migrating hives between different public land tenures can present significant challenges for beekeepers, because each type of tenure will have different management objectives and licencing requirements. Migrating hives interstate is even more complicated because comparable land tenures, such as 'National Park', may not have the same management objectives or licencing requirements in different States, due to differing State/Territory legislation. Ensuring that interstate migration satisfies the relevant state biosecurity procedures and approval requirements is another factor that complicates migration for apiarists.

Figure 1 summarises the public land tenures for each Australian State and Territory.

In pursuing the dynamic floral resources required to maintain honey production, apiarists face an increasingly complex and challenging environment when negotiating access to the range of public land tenures, on which these resources occur. It is therefore important that apiarists have a current knowledge of the policies that affect beekeeping across the Australian States and Territories so that they can plan future migration activities effectively. This factsheet summarises the key public land tenures and associated management objectives in relation to beekeeping for Western Australia.

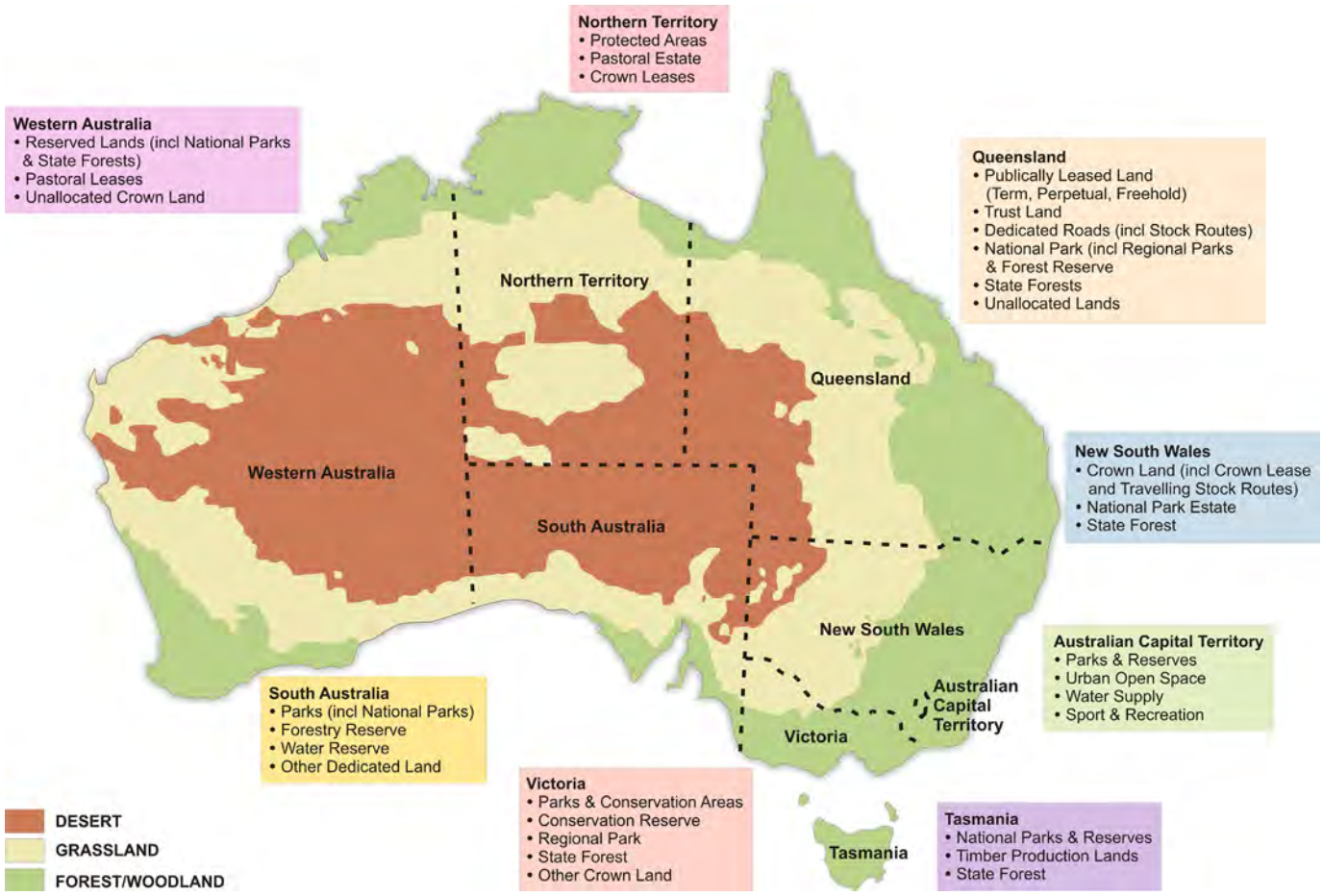

Figure 1: ***Main public land tenure categories by State/Territory***

Beekeeping in Western Australia

The Western Australian beekeeping industry is relatively small, given the size of the State. There are approximately 880 beekeepers (8.2% of the national total) controlling 39,000 hives that contribute 7.5% of total national honey production in Western Australia. Beekeeping activity in Western Australia is regulated by the Beekeepers Act 1963, which includes the requirement of compulsory beekeeper registration with the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia.

The classification of Crown lands in Western Australia is reasonably complex. The core public land tenures and their relation to the access by beekeepers are summarised in the following table. Further detail, including the legislative basis and registration requirements is contained in the project document Compatibility of Management Objectives on Public Lands with Beekeeping prepared by GHD for RIRDC (PRJ-009102).

Western Australia Beekeeping Policy Documents

The General Conditions for using Apiary Authorities on Crown land in Western Australia estate specify the requirement for an 'apiary authority' to be issued prior to operating on public land.

The Beekeeping on Public Land (CALM) policy statement determines the suitability of beekeeping activity on public lands.

Table 1: ***Beekeeping on Western Australia public lands summary***

Public land category	Land area (hectares)	Beekeeping permitted?	Additional Conditions	Regulatory agency
Reserved Land	45.5 million	✓	Existing sites governed by an apiary authority will continue to exist. New sites will not be granted.	Department of Parks and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Pastoral Leases	86 million	✓	Beekeeping activities must not affect pastoral operations or cause environmental damage.	Pastoral Lands Board
Other Leases	7.6 million	✓	Beekeeping conditions will depend on the negotiations with the lessee on a case by case basis.	State Lands Services
Unallocated Crown Land	93 million	✓	There are no formal policy or management objectives are available to guide beekeeping activity.	Department of Parks and Wildlife

Migrating hives into Western Australia

Honey bees (including packaged bees) and used hive equipment are prohibited entry into Western Australia. Some low-risk products may be permitted entry to the State.

There are minor restrictions which apply for migrating hives within Western Australia that relate to Aboriginal Trust Land, Disease Risk Areas, the South Coast region and State Barrier Fences.

Process for accessing public lands

In order to access public land in WA, beekeepers must ensure the following:

- Maintain a current level of registration with the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (renewed annually).
- Engage in negotiations with the lessee when seeking access leased land other than pastoral.
- Hold an apiary authority from the Department of Parks and Wildlife which establishes the conditions for operating apiaries on public land for reserved land and pastoral leases.
- It is unlikely that apiary authorities will be issued for additional sites on reserved land.

Conclusion

Public land is an important resource for Western Australian beekeepers, particularly during the crucial periods of hive build up prior to and post pollination. Whilst beekeepers derive a direct benefit from accessing this resource, pollination-reliant industries also derive substantial indirect benefits from such access.

The management objectives for public land in Western Australia are defined in the legislation under which the land tenure has been established and/or in specific plans of management. Public land is typically managed to meet a range of community, recreational, educational, commercial and conservation objectives.

The compatibility of beekeeping on public lands is largely determined by the anticipated impact that the activity will have on the other prescribed uses. In some cases, public land sought by beekeepers in Western Australia will be subject to few competing uses such as pastoral leases, which increases the chance of complying with management objectives. On public lands with a high conservation value such as reserved land in Western Australia a more precautionary approach is evident with greater restrictions governing access by beekeepers, however on an individual reserve basis beekeeping may be considered an appropriate complementary use.

The willingness of public land managers in Western Australia to issue an apiary authority or otherwise negotiate access to those lands by beekeepers will be dependent on their ability to determine whether beekeeping activities will adversely impact the management objectives or other users on a site by site basis. The beekeeping industry and land managers may be able to develop a decision framework to help identify areas where risks associated with managed honey bees are likely to be minimal as well as those where the risks are likely to be more significant.

For more detailed information on the role of public land management objectives and beekeeping for WA and other States and Territories refer to the project document, Compatibility of Management Objectives on Public Lands with Beekeeping and other Fact Sheets prepared by GHD for RIRDC (PRJ-009102)