



eat well
tasmania

SUBMISSION

Draft Varroa Mite Import Risk Analysis

September 2026



enjoy healthy eating, support local produce



About Eat Well Tasmania

Eat Well Tasmania is Tasmania's statewide healthy eating and food systems organisation. For more than 30 years, we have worked across government, community, industry and the food system to support Tasmanians to eat well and strengthen access to healthy, seasonal and locally produced food.

Our work recognises that healthy eating cannot be considered in isolation from the food system that supports it. A resilient local food system, thriving growers and producers, healthy natural systems, strong community food networks and consumer confidence all contribute to the health and wellbeing of Tasmanian communities.

Eat Well Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Tasmanian Import Risk Analysis for Varroa Mite (*Varroa destructor*).



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Our Position

Eat Well Tasmania supports the overall direction of the Draft Import Risk Analysis and efforts to maintain Tasmania's Varroa-free status. The protection of Tasmania's honey bees, agricultural production and biosecurity has direct relevance to the resilience of Tasmania's food system. The analysis highlights the scale of this relationship. Tasmania has more than 1,500 registered beekeepers and 39,000 hives, while honey bee pollination supports Tasmanian crops worth up to \$400 million annually, including apples, cherries, berries and carrot seed.

The potential impacts of Varroa mite therefore extend well beyond beekeeping and honey production. They reach into local food production, the viability of growers and producers, home and community food growing and, ultimately, the availability and diversity of locally produced food.

This broader food-system perspective is consistent with the emerging Australian Pollination Strategy and the Australian Pollination Security Status Report 2026, which recognise pollination as an interconnected ecological, agricultural and economic system underpinning food production, biodiversity, ecosystem health and community wellbeing.

The national work also highlights increasing pressures on Australia's pollination system, including Varroa destructor and other biosecurity threats, climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation, declining feral honey bee populations, pressures on native pollinators, and structural and economic challenges within the beekeeping sector. These pressures reinforce the importance of considering pollination security as part of broader food-system resilience and long-term agricultural capacity.

For Tasmania, maintaining strong pollination capacity should therefore be considered not only a biosecurity objective, but an important component of protecting our capacity to produce a diverse range of healthy, locally grown food. Prevention remains particularly valuable while Tasmania retains its Varroa-free status.

Eat Well Tasmania supports a coordinated approach that recognises responsibility for pollination security extends across government, industry and the broader community. Strong biosecurity protections should be complemented by collaboration between government, growers, beekeepers, agricultural and environmental organisations, researchers, community organisations and other food-system stakeholders.

Eat Well Tasmania also supports an education-led approach to biosecurity and pollination security. Tasmanians should be supported to understand why pollinators matter to our food supply, the risks posed by Varroa mite and other biosecurity threats, and the practical role individuals and communities can play in protecting Tasmania's pollination capacity. This includes accessible community education and extension, support for good pollinator practices, and clear information about biosecurity responsibilities and reporting.



This approach aligns with the emerging Australian Pollination Strategy's emphasis on stronger biosecurity and Varroa management, improved coordination across agriculture, environment and industry, monitoring and evidence, pollinator habitat, research and extension activities that enable land managers, organisations and communities to implement good practice.

Eat Well Tasmania brings a food-system and community perspective to this consultation. We support strong, science- and risk-based biosecurity protections alongside long-term planning, education and collaboration that recognise pollination as essential infrastructure for Tasmania's food system.

Protecting Tasmania from Varroa mite is ultimately about more than protecting bees. It is about protecting the productive capacity of our growers, the resilience of our local food supply, the diversity of food available to Tasmanians and the long-term resilience of Tasmania's food system.

Recommendation 1

Keeping Varroa mite classified as Prohibited Matter in Tasmania

Eat Well Tasmania strongly supports this recommendation. The analysis concludes that Varroa mite represents a significant biosecurity threat to Tasmania and rates the consequences of establishment as high.

Maintaining Tasmania's Varroa-free status provides benefits extending beyond the apiary sector. Protecting honey bee populations and pollination supports agricultural and horticultural production, local food availability and Tasmania's broader food-system resilience.

Preventing establishment should therefore continue to be recognised as an important biosecurity, agricultural and food-system priority.

Recommendation 2

Maintaining and updating import requirements

Eat Well Tasmania supports this recommendation. The analysis identifies nine of the nineteen pathways considered as exceeding Tasmania's acceptable level of risk.

Import requirements should continue to be informed by the best available evidence, proportionate to identified risk and responsive to changing conditions across Australia.

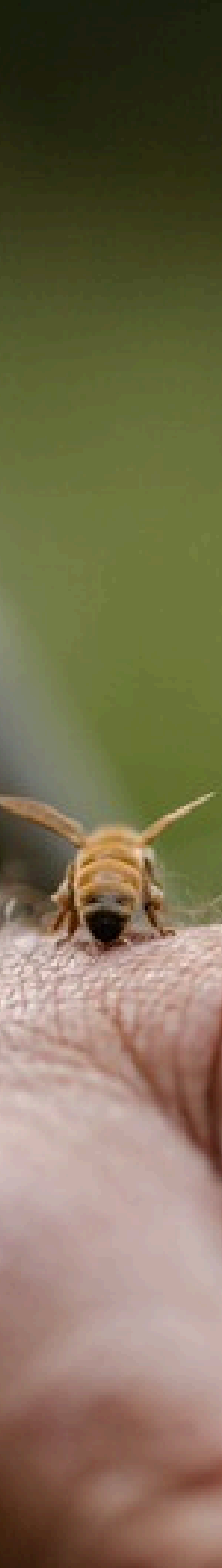
Eat Well Tasmania supports an approach that appropriately manages identified biosecurity risks while allowing products to enter Tasmania where those risks can be effectively managed. We defer to Biosecurity Tasmania and relevant scientific, apiary, agricultural and industry expertise regarding the specific technical controls necessary for individual pathways.

Proposed import conditions for bee products

Eat Well Tasmania supports, in principle, the proposed approach to allowing bee products to enter Tasmania where relevant biosecurity requirements are met and identified risks can be appropriately managed.

We recognise that proposed measures include new processing requirements for some honey and beeswax products, while allowing products including honey, beeswax, propolis, bee pollen, royal jelly, bee venom and bee semen to be imported where Tasmania's biosecurity requirements are satisfied.

From a food-system perspective, import settings should provide strong protection against the introduction of Varroa mite while remaining proportionate to identified risk and informed by the best available scientific evidence. We also encourage consideration of potential impacts on Tasmanian producers and the local food system as import conditions are implemented and reviewed.



Recommendation 3

Regular review of import conditions and risk

Eat Well Tasmania strongly supports this recommendation.

The biosecurity environment continues to change, particularly following the establishment and spread of Varroa mite on mainland Australia. Annual review of import conditions provides an important mechanism to ensure Tasmania's protections remain informed by current evidence, emerging pathways, new technologies and practical experience.

We support annual review of import conditions and review of the broader risk analysis within five years, or earlier where significant changes in evidence or risk warrant this.

Recommendation 4

Reviewing surveillance and inspection activities

Eat Well Tasmania strongly supports this recommendation.

Prevention, surveillance and early detection are important investments in protecting Tasmania's food system. The analysis identifies ships and boats, shipping containers and vehicles among pathways requiring consideration.

The consequences of an established biosecurity threat can extend beyond the sector immediately affected, creating flow-on impacts for producers, pollination services, food production, communities and the broader economy.

Eat Well Tasmania supports continued review of surveillance and inspection activities to ensure Tasmania's approach remains appropriate to changing risks and potential pathways.

Recommendation 5

Increasing community awareness and understanding of biosecurity responsibilities

Eat Well Tasmania strongly supports this recommendation and sees education as fundamental to effective community participation in Tasmania's biosecurity system.

Strong biosecurity requires appropriate regulation and compliance. However, compliance is most effective when supported by accessible education that helps people understand not only what they are required to do, but why it matters.

Eat Well Tasmania supports an education-led approach, underpinned by appropriate and proportionate compliance measures. For many Tasmanians, the connection between biosecurity, pollinators and the food on our tables may not be immediately apparent.

There is an opportunity to communicate this relationship more clearly:

Biosecurity → healthy pollinator populations → local food production → availability and diversity of local food → resilient Tasmanian communities.

Connecting individual biosecurity responsibilities to outcomes people understand and value can help build community understanding, shared responsibility and confidence rather than relying predominantly on regulatory or compliance messaging.

Community education should provide practical information about:

- what Varroa mite is and why Tasmania remains focused on preventing its establishment
- what people's individual biosecurity responsibilities are
- why particular restrictions and requirements exist
- how individual actions contribute to protecting Tasmania's bees, producers and food system, and
- where people can access trusted and current information.

Eat Well Tasmania acknowledges the accessible consultation materials already provided by Biosecurity Tasmania and encourages this approach to continue through implementation.

Community information should use plain English, accessible formats and trusted networks to reach Tasmanians with differing levels of food and biosecurity literacy. This could include collaboration with beekeepers, growers and agricultural organisations alongside local government, schools, neighbourhood houses, community gardens, food-system organisations, home growers and other established community networks.



Supporting Tasmania's local food system

The analysis identifies potential impacts including reduced honey production, increased costs for beekeepers and pollination services, and impacts on agriculture reliant on bee pollination.

Eat Well Tasmania encourages these broader food-system consequences to remain part of ongoing Varroa mite prevention and preparedness.

Potential impacts extend across:

- commercial horticulture and agriculture
- small-scale and local food production
- home and community food growing
- availability and diversity of locally produced food
- affordability and accessibility of healthy food, and
- Tasmania's longer-term food-system resilience.

Biosecurity should therefore be understood not only as an agricultural or environmental issue, but as an important part of protecting the systems that enable Tasmanians to access healthy, locally produced food.

Consumer confidence and communication

Eat Well Tasmania also encourages consideration of consumer confidence when communicating about Varroa mite and other emerging biosecurity issues affecting food production. Where appropriate, communications should clearly distinguish between a biosecurity risk affecting production or the environment and a food safety risk affecting consumers.

Clear, timely and trusted communication can help prevent misunderstanding or unnecessary changes in consumer behaviour while supporting Tasmanians to understand the risk, take appropriate action and continue to confidently support local producers.

This is another area where an education-led approach can complement Tasmania's regulatory and compliance framework.

Conclusion

Eat Well Tasmania supports the broad direction and recommendations of the Draft Tasmanian Import Risk Analysis for Varroa Mite and the continued prioritisation of maintaining Tasmania's Varroa-free status.

With honey bee pollination supporting Tasmanian crops worth up to \$400 million annually, protecting Tasmania from Varroa mite is not only an issue for beekeepers. It is important to our agricultural industries, local food production and the resilience of Tasmania's food system.

We particularly support the proposed increase in community awareness and encourage an education-led approach, supported by appropriate and proportionate compliance measures, that helps Tasmanians understand both their biosecurity responsibilities and why those responsibilities matter.

Strong technical and regulatory measures, combined with accessible education and community engagement, can help protect the pollinators, producers, communities and natural systems that support Tasmania's local food supply.

Eat Well Tasmania would welcome opportunities to work alongside Biosecurity Tasmania, industry and community partners to support accessible community communication and strengthen understanding of the relationship between biosecurity, local food production and a resilient Tasmanian food system.

