

Owning bees

Council regulates the keeping of bees in the Rockhampton Region including how many and where bees can be kept. Native bees are different to European bees and may be exempt from some beekeeping requirements

Requirements and approval required to keep bees other than native bees

Under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, you must be registered to keep European bees. You must also mark your hives with a hive identification number (HIN).

It is illegal to keep European bees on an allotment with an area less than 800m².

If your allotment is between 800m² and 1000m², you are permitted to keep up to two hives on the premises. More than two hives will require approval.

If your allotment is between 1001m² and 2,000m², you are permitted to keep up to five hives on the premises. More than five hives will require approval.

Native bees

Native bees that are kept domestically are not required to be registered and are not restricted to an allotment size. However, they must be kept in compliance with the Local Law and are subject to the standards for keeping bees.

Standards for keeping bees

The keeper must ensure:-

- The bees are kept without being a nuisance to neighbours
- The beehive is not located within 10m of any neighbour's residence

Helpful hints for keeping bees

Talk to your neighbours - before placing hives in your backyard, let your neighbours know you will be keeping bees. Explain how you plan to manage your hives to avoid bees becoming a nuisance.

Managing beehives - beehives in residential backyards must be managed to ensure bees don't become a nuisance to neighbours.

Managing swarms - bees may swarm in spring to early summer, and may create a nuisance for your neighbours. If your bees do swarm, it is your responsibility to capture the swarm as soon as possible after it forms a cluster.

Provide water for your bees - ensure water is available before placing bees in your backyard. Position hives in a sunny place with access to capillary moisture, e.g. wet sand or gravel, the edge of a concrete pond or floating water plants. Bees will be less likely to visit neighbouring backyards or swimming pools looking for moisture.

Use a smoker to assist with handling bees - smoke can be used to subdue bees, but check fire regulations before using a smoker in residential areas. Noisy machines such as whipper snippers and mowers can upset bees and make them aggressive. It is a good idea to smoke the entrance to the hive before using these devices, or if you know that your neighbour plans to use them.

Provide barriers - place hive entrances so bees fly across your property rather than directly into a neighbouring property. If this is not possible, provide a barrier to encourage the bees to fly up and over so that they don't bother neighbours. Barriers can be hedges or shrubs, or shade cloth fixed to a trellis. Bees are attracted to lights, particularly fluorescent types. Use physical barriers between hive entrances and lights on neighbouring properties.

Robbing and working hives - avoid working bees when conditions are poor (such as cool or rainy weather) and there is little pollen and nectar available to foraging bees. This places the colony under stress, encourages robbing, and makes bees more aggressive. Cooperate with neighbours when you need to work the bees. Recommend that they stay inside while you work the bees or work out a mutually convenient time which won't disturb them.

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