



BEES AND HONEY

Alex's favourite fast facts

(including why bees BUZZ)

- ➔ Honey bees that are common in Australia for producing the honey we love are not native Australian bees. They were introduced from Europe in about 1822.
- ➔ One hive of honey bees can have up to 80,000 bees and each hive consists of:
 1. **One queen bee** whose main job is to lay eggs so there are always new bees to keep the hive alive. Queen bees can live for up to 5 years and can lay more than 1,500 eggs each day.
 2. **Hundreds of drone bees** that are male bees with the job of mating with the queen bee. Drones cannot make wax and don't collect pollen or nectar. They are lazy and hold their tongues out for worker bees to put food on it!
 3. **Thousands of worker bees** are female bees but they cannot breed. Jobs of worker bees include: cleaning the hive, feeding the queen and the drones, caring for new bee larvae, collecting pollen, nectar and water. They also build wax hexagonal honeycomb structures to store the honey, which they also make. PHEW! Worker bees live for 42 - 45 days! No wonder - they must get exhausted!
- ➔ A worker bee weighs around 80 milligrams but it can carry a huge 70 milligrams of nectar! They make 7 - 10 flights a day from the hive and need to forage for pollen and nectar in as many as 250 flowers on each flight.
- ➔ Around 35% of all crops grown in Australia need bees for pollination and around 75% of all crops produce a better crop because of bees.
- ➔ So, why do bees BUZZ? Bees beat their wings about 200 times per second. This action makes their buzzing noise!
- ➔ Even bees poop! They try not to poop on flowers and they do not poop in the hive. The queen bee poops inside the hive and worker bees clean up after her! Bee poop looks like very small mustard-yellow blobs or longish splats. Have you ever seen bee poop on your family car or on outside furniture?
- ➔ A hive of bees can produce up to 27 kilograms of honey and maybe even more in a good season, when there are lots of flowers around.





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- ➔ Bees produce about three times as much honey in their hive than what they need to feed young bees, and all the other bees in the hive during winter. Bee keepers know this and only take honey from the hive that the bees don't need.
- ➔ When bees collect pollen, they pollinate flowers and crops at the same time. When not loaded up with pollen, bees can fly more than 20 km per hour.
- ➔ Australia has its very own native bees and there are about 1,700 species of these Aussie bees. Our native bees do not produce very much honey and it tastes different to what honey bees produce. It is often called 'bush tucker'.
- ➔ Most Australian native bees do not live in large hives and they do not have a queen bee or worker bees. Native female bees mate with male bees and build small nests in burrows in the ground or in timber hollows in the wild.
- ➔ Honey comes in many different flavours, depending on the type of flowers bees visit to collect their pollen. Popular honey flavours include wildflower, clover honey and many types of Eucalyptus honey. What's your favourite?
- ➔ Australian honey is highly-prized around the world for its unique taste and for the way it is produced in clean, sustainable environments. Around 4,000 tonnes of Australian honey is exported overseas every year. WOW!
- ➔ Honey is said to be the only food that can, on its own, help keep a human alive. It contains water, vitamins, minerals and enzymes to give the body energy.
- ➔ If kept in an airtight container, honey is said to never go off! Honey has been found in Egyptian tombs, dating back thousands of years!
- ➔ Some honey you buy is labelled as 'raw' honey. This means that the wax has simply been filtered out of the honey before it is put into jars - which sounds amazing. Some honey goes through considerable processing before it goes into jars. The label on the jar should tell you how raw the honey is inside.
- ➔ Some types of honey have long been used as a medicine. It is also used to make soothing body lotions and many other items.
- ➔ Remember to read the label on jars of honey in the supermarket to make sure we all buy genuine Australian honey!





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References

- Australian Honey Bee Industry Council: <https://honeybee.org.au/home-sweet-home/>
- Talking with Bees: <https://talkingwithbees.com/i-love-honey/honey-facts>
- The Wonderful World of Bees: <https://www.buzzaboutbees.net/>
- Aussie Bee: <https://www.aussiebee.com.au/keyfacts.html>