

Varroa mite or Varroa destructor

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In news-Recently, Australian authorities have exterminated millions of honeybees in a bid to prevent a potentially devastating parasitic plague (Varroa mite) affecting the southeast region of the country.

What is Varroa mite?

- Varroa destructor (Varroa mite) is **a sesame seed-sized external parasitic mite that attacks and feeds on the honey bees** Apis cerana and Apis mellifera.
- The **disease caused by the mites is called varroosis**. The Varroa mite **can reproduce only in a honey bee colony** and can also transmit honey bee viruses.
- **Reddish-brown in colour**, the tiny pests are **known to kill entire colonies of honeybees**.
- **They often travel from bee to bee and also via beekeeping equipment**, such as combs that have been extracted.
- **It attaches to the body of the bee and weakens the bee by sucking fat bodies**. The species is a **vector for at least five debilitating bee viruses**, including RNA viruses such as the deformed wing virus (DWV).
- The spread of the mite is largely blamed for a **sharp decline in the number of honey bee colonies worldwide**.
- Although Varroa mites can feed and live on adult honey bees, **they mainly feed and reproduce on larvae and pupae in the developing brood, causing malformation and weakening of honey bees** as well as transmitting numerous viruses.
- Over time, as the mite population increases in bee colonies, the symptoms grow more severe.
- Generally, **heavy infestations lead to crippled bees**,

impaired flight performance, lower rate of return to the colony after foraging and reduced lifespan.