

Races of Honey Bees:

The most commonly worked bee races in Australia

Italian

1. *Apis mellifera ligustica*. Good beginner bee. These, as all of the commercial bees, are gentle and good producers. They use less propolis than some of the darker bees. They usually have bands on their abdomen of brown to yellow colour. Their biggest weakness is that they are prone to rob and drift. Prone to drifting due to poor flight orientation. Strong tendency to rob.

2. Italian Bee - *Apis Mellifera* var. *Ligustica Spinola*

Originally from the Apennine Peninsula in Italy, the true Italian breed is the Ligustica. There are 3 yellow bands on the abdomen of the Ligustica and 4 or 5 bands on the Italian. These bees are usually gentle to manage, over winter well and build up quickly in spring. Their proficient breeding ability during periods of little or no honey flow often results in depletion of their honey stores and as a result they have a tendency toward swarming. Italians have the bad habit of robbing, selecting weak colonies or honey sheds but are a popular breed amongst beekeepers



Caucasian

1. *Apis mellifera caucasica*. They are a silver grey to dark brown color. They do propolis excessively. It is a sticky propolis rather than a hard propolis. They build up a little slower in the spring than the Italians. They are reputed to be more gentle than the Italians. Less prone to robbing. In theory they are less productive than Italians. On average they are about the same productivity as the Italians, but since they rob less you get less of the really booming hives that have robbed out all their neighbours. They are fond of propolis and often coat everything in a sticky kind of propolis, like fly paper.



2. Caucasian Bee - *Apis Mellifera* var. *Caucasica Gorbatshev*

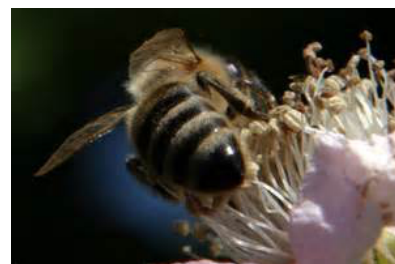
Originating from Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian Seas of Russia, these larger grey coloured bees are gentle to handle and very hard working. They are tolerant to a harsh winter environment, building up slowly during the spring and having a low inclination toward swarming. Caucasian bees are susceptible to diseases such as Nosema and produce more propolis than any other race.

Carniolan

1. *Apis mellifera carnica*. Very gentle, easy to work bees. These are darker brown to black. They fly in slightly cooler weather. Does not typically propolize heavily and creates less burr comb. They winter in small clusters and shut down brood rearing when there are dearths.

2. Carniolan Bee - *Apis Mellifera* var. *Carnica Pollmann*

The Carniolan bees originate from the Austrian Alps, northern Yugoslavia and Danube valley. They are grey or dark in colour, very gentle to handle, over winter well conserving their winter stores and breeding prolifically during spring. The Carniolan has a slightly smaller body than the other races of bees. Overwinters well on small stores, as queen stops laying in autumn. It has a high tendency toward swarming.



Ligurian

1. These bees are only found in their pure state on King Island.

Queens can and are sent to the mainland however.

The Ligurian Bee is distinguished by three golden girdles across its back.

Compared to other bee species, the Ligurian bees:

Are far more friendly.

Possess longer tongues and so can gather from flowers that are useless to other bees.

Are more active and with the same opportunities will collect more honey.

Work earlier and later. This is true not only of the day but also the season.

Are far better at protecting their hives

The queens are more prolific.

The Queen is more readily found which is a great advantage to apiarists.

Are less likely to rob other bees.

