Beetle waging war on our bees

AN African beetle is waging war on Australian bees, with researchers warning it could decimate the beehive industry and push up food prices.

Queensland scientists are leading the push to determine just how much damage the African Small Hive Beetle is doing, and early results are deeply worrying.

University of Queensland entomologist Bronwen Cribb says an initial survey of the state’s licensed beekeepers showed smaller backyard operators took a king hit from the beetle in 2009.

The pest, first detected in Australia in 2002, destroyed one in two backyard beehives in Queensland last year.

Large industry beekeepers also reported a five per cent loss.