Beetles’ sad song for hives

AN AFRICAN beetle is waging war on Australian bees and researchers are warning it could ruin the honey-producing sector 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 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 last year.

The beetle destroyed one in two backyard hives in Queensland last year. Larger beekeepers also reported a 5 per cent loss.

Dr Cribb says if the beetle is not controlled there will be serious consequences.