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MailOnline

Worker bees cheat on queen behind her back so they can have an easier life

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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She is said to be the mother of the hive, the queen of all she surveys.

But behind her back, the queen bee's control might be slipping.

For amid all the buzzing, some worker bees cheat on their queen by reproducing for themselves to prolong their own lives, scientists have declared.



What's the buzz? A study of bees in Brazil found some male bees are the sons of workers and not the queen (file picture)

A study of a Brazilian species - *Melipona scutellaris* - found that some male bees are the sons of workers, rather than the queen bee.

Its colonies generally contain around 1,500 workers and are led by one single-mated queen.

The research, published in the *Molecular Ecology* journal, looked at nearly 600 males from 45 colonies and studied their genotypes to discover their parentage.

Results showed that 23 per cent of the males were sons of the workers, rather than the Queen. Worker bees are usually unable to mate, but are capable of laying unfertilised eggs which can develop into male offspring.

To ensure dominance, the Queen usually eats any eggs laid by her workers.

The only benefit of workers producing their own offspring is that it allows them to live three times longer - giving them a life expectancy that almost matches the queens.

This is because workers who reproduce do less work and don't carry out risky tasks such as foraging.

Co-author Denise Alves said the study demonstrated how worker bees can be 'reproductively parasitising the next generation of the workforce for their own selfish benefit'.

She added: 'These results are the first explicit demonstration that conflict over male parentage in insect societies is not just played out between the queen and workers.'

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Do you also know that the male drones cannot feed themselves? They must be fed by the females.

And to add, their main function is to mate with the queen (which only a one-time event).

Ah, but do you know what happens to those male bees come cold weather? The females chew off their wings and kick them outside to die!

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