



SABIO

South African Bee Industry Organisation

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Press release from the Chairman of SABIO regarding the outbreak of American Foul Brood in the Western Cape.

***Paenibacillus larvae* - deadly for bees but no direct threat to mammals.**

The official notification from the Dept of Agriculture on the 9 March confirming the outbreak of AFB in the Western Cape has grave repercussions for the Industry in Southern Africa. South Africa has struggled to keep this spore forming bacterium from our bees for years and measures such as the irradiation of honey and the restrictions on importing bees and bee products should have been enforced by strict legislation, which is currently in place for this purpose. Recent research done by the ARC did not find AFB in the country. We can be reasonably sure that this outbreak is of a local nature and confined to some apiaries in the Western Cape.

The announcement that the Department of Agriculture is conducting an extensive survey of the Western Cape as to how widespread the disease is, is reassuring, and we ask that all role players be fully informed regarding the progress made with this survey. The outcome and subsequent quarantine and eradication of infected colonies suggested may be necessary and the sooner this happens the more likely the disease will be contained. This does raise the question of compensation for colonies destroyed and manpower allocated to undertake a survey of this nature. I shall certainly encourage all beekeepers and SABIO members to co-operate fully with this survey but need to stress that it is urgent that it be undertaken as speedily as possible.

The measures that are recommended by the Department of Agriculture to be applied to help restrict the spread of infestation from one colony site to another have been sent to all associations, BeesSA@Googlegroups.com and board members and are published on our web site www.sabio.org.za. I encourage all beekeepers to refer to this letter if they have not yet seen it. There will be a number of questions regarding the spread of the disease and we need urgently to compile a strategy for beekeepers to follow to combat the spread of the disease from on apiary site to another.

I have scheduled a meeting with the Department of Agriculture, the ARC and my vice-chairman for Monday in Johannesburg to discuss how best to cope with the disease. We need to contain it but if this is not possible then we need to be instructed how to best to live with it.

I make a plea for beekeepers to cooperate with the authorities to provide a calm but structured response to this serious outbreak of AFB.

Signed: John Moodie (Chairman SABIO)