



SABIO

South African Bee Industry Organisation

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An Industry response by SABIO regarding the outbreak of American Foul Brood in the Western Cape.

There are some misunderstandings regarding the control of AFB in South Africa. The first is that all beekeepers need to realize that it is a notifiable disease and that the ultimate decision regarding its control lies with the Dept of Agriculture. Beekeepers are entitled to express any opinions they please about the measures they feel should be implemented but ultimately we are governed by the legislation that governs us based on our constitution. We may not agree with imposed laws but if we break them then we are guilty of an offence and liable for prosecution. The problem is that, as yet, we have never had an outbreak of AFB so legislation is not in place to control it. This means that in order to stop the spread of the disease enforcement will at present depend on orders given to specific beekeepers and regulations that will be promulgated as soon as possible, which may not be that soon, or too late to contain the spread AFB.

At present we have excellent communication with the DoA and I am sure that if we, as an industry, proposed suitable control measures we could control the spread of AFB without alienating beekeepers and fragmenting the Industry. In addition we need to reward beekeepers, especially those who have been totally co-operative in reporting the disease and who have shown enough confidence in the ARC to submit samples and have all their sites visited and inspected. Ironically it is these beekeepers who may bear the brunt of control measures, if they are introduced as suggested because fine tuned legislation has not yet been formulated.

The proposal is as follows: This has emerged from discussions with other interested parties and will I hope form the basis for future negotiations.

- 1. Identified areas with AFB and a suitable barrier zone be demarcated and all beekeepers in that zone accept a standstill of all bees with immediate effect**
- 2. All beekeepers are obliged to apply for a clearance certificate that is issued by an appointed inspector who will check all sites for infected colonies and issue a clearance certificate for that beekeeper, who may then resume beekeeping activities if not infected. This is repeated on an annual basis.**
- 3. If hives are seriously AFB infected – above 50 visible cells - then they would need to be destroyed as prescribed in most countries. That apiary site would then be in quarantine and inspected regularly every three months to manage the outbreak.**

4. Any beekeepers not complying with these requirements are given a standstill order by the Dept, which will effectively close business down for 18 months.

These measures require a degree of co-operation and certain matters will need to be arranged so that we can administer control measures.

These are my suggestions:

1. At least 10 bee inspectors be trained to visit bee sites and check on AFB so that clearance certificates can be issued as soon as possible
2. An administrative assistant be appointed to work with Mike Allsopp at the ARC to cope with the administrative details – ideally this should be a trained assessor to monitor and train inspectors. If possible this control office should be based at the ARC office in Stellenbosch and not necessarily with the SABIO.
3. Law enforcement agencies are informed immediately of requirements in place regarding bee movement.
4. A meeting with the SABIO Board members, Association Chair's, the DoA and the ARC needs to be arranged at a suitable date between the 6-10 April in the morning – all beekeepers be invited to an afternoon meeting. I suggest this be held in Stellenbosch at the ARC premises but have not yet asked them for approval for this meeting.
5. The issue of compensation for destroyed hives be discussed and a procedure worked out. (Unfortunately beekeepers' track record in this regard is not good and there is a History of abuse of compensation pay out in the past, which does not help our cause, but I sure we can work something out.)
6. The funding of this scheme would initially be by beekeepers applying for clearance certificate and SABIO but we could apply to the DoA for assistance.

I feel that if we present a united and feasible control policy to the Dept.of Agric from the industry we may persuade them that we are able to assist and monitor the control of AFB with the interests of our members being considered as well as the control of the disease. It would be sad and counter- productive if we lost the co-operation of beekeepers. The broader picture for Agriculture is that we have to have a management scheme in place before pollination of crops becomes necessary.

We all need to work together to control AFB. I am sure there will be refinements and other suggestions at the proposed meeting.

Signed: John Moodie. (Chairman SABIO)