



Newfoundland & Labrador Beekeeping Association

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — 10 April 2017

“Beekeeping Not AS Easy As it Seems”

Flatrock (Newfoundland). Catherine Dempsey, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Beekeeping Association, (NLBKA) suggested that people need to give a lot of thought and planning before starting to keep honey bees. “At the Association we have noticed that at this time of year many people start thinking about gardens and pollination. With heightened awareness about the importance of “Saving the Bees” for pollination and food security, increasing numbers of people are thinking they should get a hive and set it up in the garden.” However, if you want to start beekeeping here in Newfoundland and Labrador you can’t just go out and buy a hive and package of bees off the internet and expect honey to pour out.

There is a huge amount to learn and think through, including the investment of labour and money, and there is a small window each year to establish a successful hive. “This is one way that our provincial Beekeeping Association can help. “We have held a general information session each year since we formed in early 2015,” said Dempsey. Interest has been growing so fast that most of us are inexperienced, but we do have a few apiarists who have been generous with time and advice and can help a starter get off on the right foot. And we can put you in touch with local sources for equipment, workshops, and even people keeping bees near you.”

“Beekeeping in our province has unique climate challenges, but is in a very unique position in being free of many of the pests and diseases that are the bane of the beekeeping industry throughout much of the world, Dempsey continued. “The nastiest one is a kind of vampire mite called *Varroa destructor*. We’re free of this pest, and we want to keep it that way! We have good potential to expand beekeeping in the province to help with the pollination of blueberries, cranberries and various vegetable and fruit crops. And, we could develop a strong “clean bee” export market. But we need the cooperation of the public and people who want to get honey bees in keeping *Varroa* and other pests out.” It is important that new “would-beekeepers” follow all the provincial regulations. That means getting a start-up colony from an established, local beekeeper here in the province. It is illegal to bring honey bees or bumble bees from the Mainland without a permit from the provincial government. If someone was to try to sneak bees into the province it could be an irreversible blow to our honey bees and native pollinators.”

Dempsey said the association is so concerned that it has asked Canada Post to tell all its postal stations across the province to contact the provincial government or the beekeeping association should packaged bees arrive in the mail. The association is also in the process of contacting the private courier companies to ask them also to watch for illegal packages of honey bees.

“We were pleased with the cooperation we received from Canada Post. We hope to remind the staff at all entry points to the province that this could be a serious problem if we don’t all work together. And we will continue to work to support the success of beekeeping in the province.”

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MORE INFORMATION – Catherine Dempsey, tel.709-437-5155 www.nlbeekeeping.ca

BACKGROUNDER

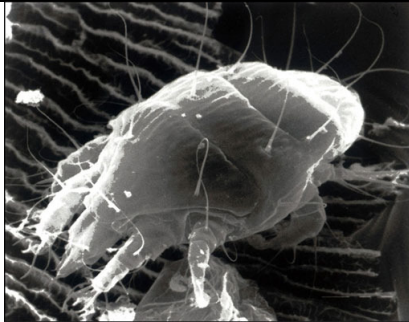


Devastating pests and diseases NOT found in NL honey bees*

American Foulbrood (*Paenibacillus larvae*) – A spore-forming bacterium that is the most devastating brood disease of honey bees, world-wide. The disease affects only the immature stages of the honey bee and can be highly contagious. If left untreated, AFB can develop very rapidly within a colony leading to its death.



Small Hive Beetle (*Aethina tumida*) – Similar to wax moth, it is the larval stage of the beetle that causes the greatest amount of damage. The beetle larvae tunnel through combs feeding on pollen, brood and honey. As the larvae feed, they defaecate on the honey causing it to ferment and bubble out of the cells. Fermented honey and beetle secretions produce a slime that contaminates the equipment.



<p>Tracheal Mite (<i>Acarapis woodi</i>) – A tiny mite about the size of a grain of pollen that lives in the larger tracheae (breathing tubes) and air sacs of honey bees. In colonies that are heavily infested, the premature death of infested bees can result in rapid dwindling and colony death.</p>		
<p>Greater Waxmoth (<i>Galleria mellonella</i>) – Infests beekeeping equipment causing serious economic damage as a result of their feeding activities.</p>		
<p>Varroa Mite (<i>Varroa destructor</i>) – Adult <i>Varroa</i> spend part of their life cycle attached to adult bees but move into brood cells to reproduce. The mite damages colonies through direct feeding on brood and adult bees. <i>Varroa</i> also transmits a wide range of honey bee viruses including Deformed Wing Virus, Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus and Sacbrood virus that can weaken and kill colonies.</p>		

*source – Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists. 2013. *Honey Bee Diseases and Pests*. Third edition. Beaverlodge, Alberta.

Some notes on the spread of *Varroa*

New Brunswick – *Varroa* was discovered in Florida in 1987 but spread rapidly as far as Maine by 1989 due to migratory beekeeping operations that travelled north for blueberry pollination. By 1990 it had crossed the border into New Brunswick. It is suspected the mite travelled across the border in a swarm from a blueberry farm on the U.S. side of the border.

Prince Edward Island – The origins of *Varroa* on PEI are unclear. However, it is believed that a person from Ontario brought the pest with his honey bee colonies to his Island cottage one summer and they spread from there. The mites spread throughout the Island with great rapidity, hitting virtually every Island apiary in about one year.

Thunder Bay, Ontario – A refugium until three years ago, this part of Ontario lost its *Varroa*-free status when a maverick beekeeper imported five infected colonies. Every

apiary was infected within three years. This has completely changed beekeeping in Thunder Bay given the need for systematic treatment, and has ruined export business based on exports of *Varroa*-free bees.

Elsewhere in Canada – In the late 1980s, isolated cases appeared along the U.S. border in New Brunswick and Manitoba. *Varroa* seemed to have become established in a few operations in Manitoba by 1992 and were found in Alberta in 1993 among some colonies that had been overwintered in southern British Columbia. Other Alberta finds in 1994 occurred in bee yards containing colonies that had overwintered in British Columbia areas distant from the U.S. border. By 1995, more general finds were recorded from bee operations in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

NLBKA pamphlet concerning honey bee importation -

<http://nlbeekeeping.ca/data/documents/honeybeeimportpamphlet-2.pdf>