



Newfoundland & Labrador Beekeeping Association

NEWS RELEASE

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“Beekeeping Association To Conduct Its First Survey of Provincial Beekeepers”

Logy Bay (Newfoundland). The Newfoundland and Labrador Beekeeping Association announced today the first comprehensive survey of provincial beekeepers for gathering information about the health of our honey bees and the growth of beekeeping in the province for both hobby and commercial enterprises.

Dr. Stephen Walsh, a member of the Association’s Research Committee said, “Although we have relatively healthy bees compared to the rest of the world, we have other serious challenges that make the province a difficult place to keep honey bees, in particular long winters, cold, wet and late springs and a short growing season. The results from our survey will better inform us about annual changes in the number of honey bee colonies, management practices used to keep our colonies strong, diseases and their treatment, and other issues which could impact honey bee mortality. The annual survey will collect information on the strength of honey bee colonies in both the fall and spring periods of each year, preparations for winter management, forage (nectar and pollen sources) availability, hive design, habitat usage, queen bee health, diseases, and pesticides to determine if these variables correlate with colony loss. We hope to pinpoint which environmental stressors either act alone or in combination with each other to affect colony survival in our province.”

Dr. Walsh continued, “Information from the survey will help our Association, bee researchers, and the provincial government monitor honey bee health and manage diseases such as the fungus *Nosema spp.*, viruses and other diseases, and monitor for the presence of parasitic mites, beetles and other pests not yet identified in NL, but common in most parts of the world. It will also help our Association monitor the growth of beekeeping as an industry and as a hobby, anticipate beekeeper training and educational needs, assess our capacity to provide pollination services to local farmers, and provide other benefits to the beekeeping community in the province.”

Dr. Walsh explained, “The Association currently has close to 100 members who collectively manage over 500 colonies. We’re sending the survey to members, and non-members for whom we have mailing addresses. Should any non-member wish to participate in the survey they can send an email to our research committee address below and we will send out a copy of the survey. Beekeepers can respond anonymously if they wish,” he stressed. Dr. Walsh noted that “Previous surveys of provincial beekeepers were either small scale and/or did not address a broad range of management, climatic, and other challenges confronted by beekeepers in this province. For example, the annual winter colony loss survey of commercial enterprises carried out by the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists (CAPA) for Canadian honey bee colony losses has 10 core questions of which only 3 questions are relevant to NL beekeeping. The survey targets only the 6 commercial beekeepers, however, most beekeepers are hobbyists. Our survey will gather information from both groups.

“Our research committee is excited about doing this survey,” he continued. “As we gather more data each year from various regions of the province, our analyses should help us understand what combination of management practices works best at keeping colonies alive from season to season, and whether these practices vary from region to region. We will publish annual statistics on honey bee health and management practices on our website to provide our beekeepers with an ongoing picture of the general health of honey bees in the province. This information will help beekeepers throughout the province adjust their beekeeping practices with a view to reducing colony losses,” said Dr. Walsh. “We also want the database to be accessible to bee researchers, locally, nationally and internationally who wish to study bacteria, virus, and fungus diseases and pest profiles of our honey bees, as well as factors that affect their health, including possible pathogen spillover between native and honey bee pollinators.”

Dr. Stephen Walsh is a Scientist Emeritus with DFO NL region and has an extensive background in carrying out surveys and statistical analysis of data associated with ecological research.

FOR MORE INFORMATION – Tel: (709)765-0799. Email: research@nlbeekeeping.ca . Visit our website at: www.nlbeekeeping.ca