



Biosecurity for beekeeping clubs and beekeepers.

Advice on the purchasing and selling of used beehive components

Protecting and promoting best-practice biosecurity when purchasing and selling used (second-hand) beehive components is vital. By following biosecurity principles you can reduce the spread of honey bee diseases and improve honey bee health.

Remember - it is the responsibility of all beekeepers to reduce the risk of disease spread and incorporate best-practice honey bee biosecurity.

Background

The purchasing and selling of used beehive components presents a serious biosecurity risk that can cause the introduction and spread of honey bee diseases such as American Foulbrood (AFB). This risk also applies to used components that may have been in storage for many years. AFB spores can remain viable for up to 50 years.

Laboratory analysis is the only proven method to determine if AFB bacterial spores are present on or in used beehive components, it is not possible to observe these spores with the naked eye. AFB brood symptoms (not the spores) can be visually observed but only within live colonies and /or dead-out beehives.

Beehive components include, but are not limited to, boxes, frames, frames with wax comb, lids, bottom boards, queen excluders and escape boards.

Advice

- Both sellers and buyers have a responsibility to ensure used hive components are disinfected prior to sale or purchase and are in good condition for intended future use. Disinfection is only possible by two modes:
 1. Disinfection by gamma-irradiation. This should be undertaken by the seller and requested by bee clubs auctioning used beehive components. This is a safe and effective way of disinfection to ensure AFB and other honey bee diseases do not remain active in used components. Gamma-irradiation services are offered by Steritech Pty Ltd, 160 South Gippsland Highway, Dandenong, Victoria 3175, telephone (03) 8726 5566, or website www.steritech.com.au
 2. Disinfection by hot wax dipping. This method of disinfection should only be undertaken by an experienced commercial operator as it involves prolonged immersion of used beehive components (frames excluded) in a specialised hot wax

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dipping trough. Extreme hot wax dipping temperature in association with specific immersion time is required for effective disinfection. Some commercial beekeepers offer this disinfection service.

- If the decision is not to disinfect used beehive components (not recommended), the components should be used in an apiary separate from other hives and should not be interchanged with those from other beehives or apiaries. The beehive colonies that have been established with non-disinfected hive components should be inspected frequently for the detection of any honey bee disease symptoms. The use of a 'Barrier' system is highly recommended in these circumstances.
- For live honey bee colony sale or purchase the seller and buyer should inspect all brood combs for the presence of any pests and diseases prior. The buyer should request evidence of colony /apiary disease-free- status, such as requesting a current Honey Culture Test (HCT) laboratory test result(s) and certification of Compliance with the 'Biosecurity Code'.
- The seller should remove bee brands from the hive components and complete and submit the DEDJTR 'Disposal of hives' form.

For further information on bee diseases please visit the following websites:

Agriculture Victoria

<http://go.vic.gov.au/dhR2Kh>

Plant Health Australia Website – Bee Aware

<http://beeaware.org.au>

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