

National Bee Health Action Plan

Vision:

Bees in Canada are thriving, are an integral component of the agricultural sector, and a key contributor to a healthy environment.

Mission:

To facilitate the continued growth of a healthy, innovative, and profitable apiculture sector in Canada.

Goal:

To identify priority issues and foster collaborative and innovative activities that help maintain a healthy honeybee population in Canada and support a competitive Canadian apiculture industry.

Mandate of the Bee Health Roundtable:

The mandate of the Bee Health Roundtable is to share information, educate, and work collaboratively on strategies to realize the goal of the Roundtable. This is facilitated by multi-stakeholder representatives from across the apiculture value chain, including beekeepers, professional apiculturists, agricultural producers, seed companies, government regulators, the crop protection industry, and agronomists.

Key Objectives:

The following objectives and action items form the basis of the Roundtable's National Bee Health Action Plan.

1. Mitigate losses from pests, pathogens, pesticides, and other causes; strengthen bee health and increase bee populations in Canada.

While all areas of bee health are important, the Roundtable will prioritize its work on two initiatives:

- a. Increase the range of management options to control Varroa mites and other parasites
- b. Actively identify and promote ways to reduce exposure of bees to pesticides both inside the hive and out

In addition:

- Increase the range of registered veterinary drugs to treat pathogens such as Nosema
- Actively identify and promote ways to reduce exposure of bees to pesticides through Best Management Practices (BMPs) and better communication
- Increase tools and information for farmers – thresholds etc.
- Obtain better data on incidents
- Nutritionally diverse forage over extended growing season (spring, summer, and fall)

2. Apiculture is a valued and recognized component of agriculture.

The relationship between apiculture and other agricultural commodities must be enhanced. Not only are there environmental and social benefits, but the economic interdependence is substantial and often overlooked. The profitable co-existence between apiculture and other agricultural commodities must be promoted and recognized by all involved in the sector.

- National coordination on bee health issues
- Proactive identification of partnering opportunities among stakeholder groups
- Active promotion of co-benefits between beekeepers and agricultural producers

Key Objectives:

3. Apiculture is a progressive and innovative industry in Canada

Apiculture is able to reap the benefits of innovative research into all aspects of apicultural production including, for example, nutrition, Varroa and other pest control needs and genetics.

- Strategy to improve and enhance bee health at the federal level
- Coordination, implementation, and funding support for a national bee research strategy
- Federal lead identified on bee health
- Apiculture industry participation on Pest Management Advisory Council (PMAC)
- Address the issue of data generation and registration for in-hive pesticides and veterinary products

Given the tremendous importance of pollinators to agriculture, it is important that apiculture keeps the pace with change. A key component of the National Bee Health Action Plan is to promote investment in apiculture research so that apiculture can reap the benefits of innovative research that other commodity groups have enjoyed and continue to enjoy.

Varroa control is paramount. A target to have a mite count below 5% at all times, with less than 1% mites in the spring and the fall is reasonable. In support of this target, access to several products that are 95% effective and can be used in rotation in order to mitigate the risk of resistance is essential.

For the apiculture industry to be sufficiently robust to meet the pollination needs of other agricultural commodities.

- Model predicted future pollination demands
- Develop potential capacity to meet demand

Pollination services are growing in importance in the apiculture industry. In recent years, the pollination industry has expanded from the traditional fruit crops, alfalfa, and clovers, to include canola, blueberries, and cranberries. Such expansion offers beekeepers substantial economic benefits. The growth opportunities are enormous and the potential economic returns for both beekeepers and agricultural producers are currently untapped. Working in conjunction with all components of agriculture, plans need to be developed to understand the projected needs of other sectors of agriculture and to expand the beekeeping industry to meet these needs.

4. To ensure industry expertise and secure consumer confidence in apiculture products.

As with other agricultural sectors, beekeepers must have the tools and knowledge to change with over time. Technology transfer initiatives need to be expanded. Educational initiatives in food safety and biosecurity need to be made available to all beekeepers independent of the size of operation. There needs to be recognition that there is a difference between commercial operations and hobby operations and appropriate tools for each need to be developed.

5. To build trust and understanding among all stakeholders.

To create and maintain channels of communication between all stakeholders involved in apiculture, including beekeepers, growers, commodity groups, regulators, crop protection companies, the public, etc.

- Telling the full bee health story to the public

As food production increases in importance and consumer interest grows in the production chain, it becomes increasingly important that a constant and cohesive message be put forward. This necessitates effective and efficient communication between all those interested in food production. With the growth of social media it is becoming more and more important that the correct message be expressed and that message should focus on collaborative efforts of all stakeholders to provide safe, nutritious and sustainable food for Canadian consumers. For beekeepers that means working closely with all interested parties.

- Conveying Canadian actions on all aspects of the bee health issue (Varroa, pesticides, forage, etc.)

The activities of the individual stakeholders that comprise the Bee Health Roundtable are not well understood by the Canadian agricultural sector or the public. All Roundtable members are committed to working together to promote a sustainable and healthy future for all agricultural stakeholders, including beekeepers. The Roundtable will need to continue to promote communications, both internally and externally, to improve cohesion and build trust.

- Bee Health Roundtable members commit to being champions

In order to ensure the strategy is successful and to gain trust among stakeholders, all bee health roundtable members need to commit to be champions for the strategy and objectives/initiatives as part of it; for the beekeeping industry and for the promotion of cohesion among beekeepers and agricultural producers. Roundtable members will play a role in implementing initiatives as part of the strategy and for promoting the roundtable and strategy with members of their respective organizations and the public.