

Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission Report

October 2008

CHAPTER 9.6.

VARROOSIS OF HONEY BEES

Article 9.6.1.

General provisions

For the purposes of this Chapter, varroosis is a *disease* of the honey bee *Apis mellifera* L. It is caused by the Korea and Japan haplotypes of the mite *Varroa destructor*, the original hosts of which are the Korea and Japan haplotypes of *Apis cerana* (under study). The mite is an ectoparasite of adults and brood of *Apis mellifera* L. Early signs of *infection* normally go unnoticed, and only when *infection* is heavy does it become apparent. The *infection* spreads by direct contact from adult bee to adult bee, and by the movement of infested bees and bee brood. The mite can also act as a vector for viruses of the honey bee.

The number of parasites steadily increases with increasing brood activity and the growth of the bee population, especially late in the season when clinical signs of infestation can first be recognised. The life span of the mite depends on temperature and humidity but, in practice, it can be said to last from some days to a few months.

Standards for diagnostic tests are described in the *Terrestrial Manual*.

Article 9.6.2.

Determination of the varroosis status of a country or zone/compartiment

The varroosis status of a country or *zone/compartiment* (under study) can only be determined after considering the following criteria:

1. a *risk assessment* has been conducted, identifying all potential factors for varroosis occurrence and their historic perspective;
2. varroosis should be notifiable in the whole country or *zone/compartiment* (under study) and all clinical signs suggestive of varroosis should be subjected to field and *laboratory* investigations;
3. an on-going awareness programme should be in place to encourage reporting of all cases suggestive of varroosis;
4. the *Veterinary Authority* or other *Competent Authority* with responsibility for the health reporting and control of diseases of honey bees should have current knowledge of, and authority over, all domesticated *apiaries* in the country.

Article 9.6.3.

Country or zone/compartiment (under study) free from varroosis1. Historically free status

A country or *zone/compartiment* (under study) may be considered free from the *disease* after conducting a *risk assessment* as referred to in Article 9.6.2. but without formally applying a specific *surveillance* programme (historical freedom) if the country or *zone/compartiment* (under study) complies with the provisions of Chapter 1.4.

2. Free status as a result of an eradication programme

A country or *zone/compartiment* (under study) which does not meet the conditions of point 1 above may be considered free from varroosis after conducting a *risk assessment* as referred to in Article 9.6.2. and when:

- a) the *Veterinary Authority* or other *Competent Authority* with responsibility for ~~the health reporting and control of diseases~~ of honey bees has current knowledge of, and authority over, all domesticated *apiaries* existing in the country or *zone/compartiment* (under study);
- b) varroosis is notifiable in the whole country or *zone/compartiment* (under study), and any clinical cases suggestive of varroosis are subjected to field and *laboratory* investigations;
- c) for the 3 years following the last reported *case* of varroosis, an annual survey supervised by the *Veterinary Authority*, with negative results, have been carried out on a representative sample of *apiaries* in the country or *zone/compartiment* (under study) to provide a confidence level of at least 95% of detecting varroosis if at least 1% of the *apiaries* were infected at a within-*apiary* prevalence rate of at least 5% of the hives; such surveys may be targeted towards areas with a higher likelihood of *disease*;
- d) to maintain free status, an annual survey supervised by the *Veterinary Authority*, with negative results, is carried out on a representative sample of *apiaries* in the country or *zone/compartiment* (under study) to indicate that there has been no new *cases*; such surveys may be targeted towards areas with a higher likelihood of *disease*;
- e) (under study) there is no self-sustaining feral population of *A. mellifera*, the Korea and Japan haplotypes of *Apis cerana* or other possible host species in the country or *zone/compartiment* (under study);
- f) the importation of the *commodities* listed in this Chapter into the country or *zone/compartiment* (under study) is carried out in conformity with the recommendations of this Chapter.

Article 9.6.4.

Recommendations on safe commodities

Regardless of the varroosis status of the *exporting country*, *Veterinary Authorities* should authorise without restriction the import or transit through their territory of the following *commodities*:

1. honey bee semen, honey bee eggs and honey bee venom;
2. extracted honey and beeswax (not in the form of honeycomb).

Article 9.6.5.

Recommendations for the importation of live queen honey bees, worker bees and drones with or without associated brood combs

Veterinary Authorities of *importing countries* should require the presentation of an *international veterinary certificate* attesting that the bees come from a country or *zone/compartment* (under study) officially free from varroosis.

Article 9.6.6.

Recommendations for the importation of larvae and pupae of honey bees

Veterinary Authorities of *importing countries* should require the presentation of an *international veterinary certificate* attesting that the products:

1. were sourced from a free country or *zone/compartment* (under study); or
2. have originated from queens in a *quarantine station* and were inspected and found free of *Varroa destructor*.

Article 9.6.7.

Recommendations for the importation of used equipment associated with beekeeping

Veterinary Authorities of *importing countries* should require the presentation of an *international veterinary certificate* attesting that the equipment:

1. comes from a country or *zone/compartment* (under study) free from varroosis; or
2. contains no live honey bees or bee brood and has been held away from contact with live honey bees for at least 7 days prior to shipment; or
3. has been treated to ensure the destruction of *Varroa destructor*, in conformity with one of the procedures referred to in Chapter X.X. (under study).

Article 9.6.8.

Recommendations for the importation of honey-bee collected pollen, beeswax (in the form of honeycomb), comb honey and propolis

Veterinary Authorities of *importing countries* should require the presentation of an *international veterinary certificate* attesting that the products:

1. come from a country or *zone/compartment* (under study) free from varroosis; or
2. contain no live honey bees or bee brood and has been held away from contact with live honey bees for at least 7 days prior to shipment; or
3. have been treated to ensure the destruction of *Varroa destructor*, in conformity with one of the procedures referred to in Chapter X.X. (under study).