



Saskatchewan Beekeepers' Association

Saskatchewan Beekeepers Development Commission

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Dear Carlos,

This letter is to inform you that the Saskatchewan Beekeepers Association and the Saskatchewan Development Commission(SBA and SBDC), is declining your offer to meet to discuss the National Honey Bee Health Survey as requested in your letter addressed to the Saskatchewan Beekeepers Association (SBA) Board on January 8, 2016.

Our executive had the opportunity to meet with you at the SBA convention in 2015 and shared the SBA's concerns with you then. The SBA/SBDC board also had the opportunity to hear your presentation at convention and many of their concerns with the survey still remain.

In your presentation you mentioned the following:

1. Samples are being taken mid June through to August, which is not the best time, in our opinion, to get a representative sample of pests and diseases in the hives. Varroa mites will have been treated in the spring, there-by not giving accurate mite levels. Nosema levels are typically highest in the spring and lowest during the summer. The timing of the collection does not allow for the 'worst-case' scenario;
2. Samples are not being taken at the same time of year in every province, thereby distorting the reliability and the comparability of the data being collected;
3. The samples are being collected by the individual beekeeper – some may take bees from the top supers and have more foragers, and some may take bees from the brood boxes and have more nurse bees, especially with honey collection in the summer and the hives stacked high with honey supers. This will impact the virus/mite counts;

The board feels all these protocols bring into question both the validity and the reliability of the data being collected.

Additionally, as has been shared with you in the past, the board has concerns with some of the epidemiological reports presented by the NBDC lab that is processing the results and analysing the data from this survey.



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1. You showed a slide that had the Standard deviation for sperm found in queen spermatheca at 14.5 million sperm, despite the fact that 14.5 million sperm will not fit into a spermatheca.
2. You reported the percentage of queens infested with the SBV as being in the 27 to 36% range with no explanation as to why, as this was in direct contrast to what is being reported in other labs around the world.

You have indicated that Provincial Apiculturist's (PA's) would have access to the screened data from their provinces and would be told of any reportable disease infestations in their provinces. The Board does not believe this is good enough. The Board believes that every (PA) should have access to all of the raw data from every year and from every province. This would give PA's the information necessary to make informed recommendations as to the movement of bees within and between Provinces.

Finally, despite its name, the Board does not believe this project was ever designed to be a truly "national" project. From the start the project was designed to exempt over half of the country in its data collection for the first two years of its 4 year project. Calling this a national project could lead to misunderstandings in the future if the study is referenced as a 'national project' when in fact it has not included bees from all of Canada, for the entire project. This is of particular concern, to the Board, with the emergence and movement of Small Hive Beetle and resistant AFB. If faulty conclusions are drawn from this study that are referenced as being a "national study", CFIA may refer to this study and allow modifications to current bee movement that would not be beneficial to the health of the beekeeping industry in Canada or desired by Saskatchewan beekeepers. The Board does not think this survey should ever be referred to as a 'National' project since it was started without the agreement from all the Provinces and still does not have the agreement from all the Provinces.

The SBA and SBDC continue to believe that a national survey is a good idea but it must be set-up with input from all Provinces and support from all Provinces, prior to beginning the project. Such a project should have all associations and PA's working collaboratively. We believe a national project of this nature would have a much greater impact and provide much better information, about the health of Canadian bees, to the whole beekeeping industry in Canada.

Sincerely,

Jake Berg, SBA President

Simon Lalonde, SBDC President