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RE: Issue of Veterinary Prescription – Honeybee treatment of Pyrethroid Resistant Varroa Mite.

Dear Sir,

I am a beekeeper normally running XX colonies of honeybees. As with the majority of UK beekeepers my bees have infestations of Varroa, *Varroa destructor,* (Previously recorded as *Varroa Jacobsoni*) an external parasitic mite. These mites are an on going problem within bee colonies as it is not possible to eradicate them. This problem is exacerbated as varroa mites naturally infest the Asian honeybee *Apis cerana* with which a symbiotic relationship occurs. Infestations within the western honeybee *Apis mellifera* multiply in a geometric progression roughly doubling each three weeks. I enclose a copy of the Defra/CSL National Bee Unit leaflet 'Managing Varroa' issued to beekeepers about the control of varroa. This includes details of mite population growth and the effects of different treatment or control efficacies. This leaflet and other information can be found on line at http://beebase.csl.gov.uk

Varroa was first identified in the UK in 1992 and since that time pyrethroid based varroacides under the trade names of Bayvarol and Apistan have been used for control. Both of these products are licensed for use with honeybees in the UK. They have been very effective in control generally used as a treatment after honey removal in late summer. Efficacy was generally in excess of 97%

In 2001 mites that had developed resistance to pyrethroids were identified in North West Devon. These resistant mites have now spread and are now endemic within most areas of the United Kingdom.

Currently the only alternative licensed treatment available to beekeepers is 'Apiguard' a thymol based gel. This product varies in its efficacy depending on external temperature and its correct use. It is generally considered that in the South of England an efficacy of between 80% and 90% should be expected if used in August/September after honey removal. With correct use a winter treatment should result in a 60% efficacy. During use there is a strong smell of thymol in the apiary that can result in increased incidents of robbing due to masking of natural colony odours.

Repeated applications of this product may result in tainting of honey with the taste or smell of thymol.

It is clear from scientific knowledge and practical bee keeper experience that the most reliable method of varroa control is to remove any honey crop and treat using a licensed varroacide e.g. 'Apiguard' which will reduce the varroa mite population to a level where no significant damage will be caused to the winter bees. (These bees usually live for a maximum of six months, damage caused by varroa shortens the bees lifespan causing colonies to dwindle and die in late winter/early spring.) Then in November or December when colonies have little or no brood an application of Oxalic Acid solution dribbled on seams of adult bees within a colony will reduce mite levels to a level where there should be no need for 'chemical treatment' before removal of the next seasons honey crop. I enclose an information sheet on the use of organic acids for varroa control.

If necessary in the following spring and summer bio-technical control methods can be used to slow mite population growth or control mite levels. Further details are to be found in the 'Managing Varroa' leaflet.

Oxalic acid is not available as a registered varroacide though it is available as a pre-prepared solution for this use. It is also available in crystal form for bleaching timber and cleaning metals. As honeybees are a food producing animal oxalic acid cannot be used as a varroacide unless it is licensed for use or prescribed by cascade by a veterinary surgeon. It is included in annexes of EU Regulation 2377/90 (Annex II in respect of honeybees)

As neither Bayvarol nor Apistan are now effective and the efficacy of Apiguard is insufficient for a single annual treatment I am writing to enquire if you would be prepared to issue me with a prescription for oxalic acid.

Other pertinent points are

1. Use should be restricted to one application per annum.
2. Apply only during November or December.
3. Use by the dribble method. (Explained in the information leaflet)
4. No Supers or Crates should be on the hive. (Boxes used for honey crop)
5. Withdrawal period 2 months.

To treat the bees I require a total of xxxxxx oxalic acid dihydrate/prepared oxalic acid solution. This is available from xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx in packages of xxxxxx.

I apologise for being so long winded but I felt that you needed to be aware of the facts. I am available on the above telephone number should you have further questions.

Yours faithfully

Xxxxxxx Xxxx