

# Government Relations Report

by: *Tim May*  
ABF Vice President



There are two very important and urgent governmental issues that are affecting the beekeeping industry. The Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) and the change in nutritional labeling for honey both involve the FDA.

The FDA/CVM (Center for Veterinarian Medicine) is working to reduce the use of antibiotics throughout the food industry. This will affect the beekeeping industry. There has been some confusing information put out about the direct rule regarding the use of antibiotics on honey bees.

ABF President Gene Brandi, Fran Boyd (Meyers and Associates) and I discussed the new policy and how it will affect our industry with FDA/CVM representatives Dr. William Flynn, Dr. Margaret Oeller and Dr. Michael Murphy back in June and had a follow-up conversation with this group on September 13. The FDA plan is to change the marketing status of medically-important antibiotics (including those approved for the use on honey bees) from “over the counter” to prescription (for all water-soluble antibiotics) and from “over the counter” to VFD (for feed products).

This rule will require beekeepers to obtain a prescription from a state-licensed veterinarian to purchase products such as Terramycin, Oxytetracycline, Terra Pro and Tetra Bee Mix. In order to get the needed prescriptions, beekeepers are encouraged to have a valid client-patient relationship with a state-licensed veterinarian. Veterinarians will be able to give their beekeeper clients prescriptions that are valid for up to six months. The prescriptions will be valid even if the bees are moved to a different state.

Gene and I will be working on questions to present to the FDA/CVM regarding the ruling. If you have a question that you think should be presented, please email it to [tim@sunnyhillhoney.com](mailto:tim@sunnyhillhoney.com). Gene and I will review it and forward to the committee. A member of the FDA/CVM, Dr. William Flynn, has been invited to speak at the NABC in January. This presentation will take place during one of the general sessions on Wednesday or Friday. This discussion should help clarify any concerns beekeepers have regarding this ruling.

The second important governmental issue of interest to the beekeeping industry is the FDA’s new nutritional labeling requirement for honey. The term “added sugars” will now be required on the nutritional label. This will be very confusing to the consumer and will suggest that sugar is being added to honey. According to the FDA the term “added sugars” is referring to the sugar added to the consumer’s diet by eating honey. We realize that this will not be understood by consumers and will directly affect people’s opinion of honey being an all-natural product. Members of the National Honey Board will continue to meet with the FDA to discuss this ruling and present our concerns.

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