

Government Relations Update



by Troy Fore, ABF Director of Government Relations



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Notice of Availability of a Draft Pest Risk Assessment on Honey Bees Imported from Australia

A recent USDA-APHIS assessment of the risk the importation of Australian honey bees pose to U.S. honey bees is available for your study. The Federal Register notice of the

availability and the pest risk assessment are available on the home page of the ABF Web site at www.abfnet.org under "USDA News & Notes."

We encourage ABF members to read the assessment and make their views known to APHIS. Directions on submitting comments are in the Federal Register notice. The stated deadline is May 14, 2010, but an APHIS official has said informally: "There will be no problem with us accepting your comments after the date listed in the Notice."

A prime consideration on the Australian imports is the Asian honey bee, *Apis cerana*, which has migrated into Australia from Papua New Guinea and is spreading across northern Australia. At least that's what is being reported on Australian news Web sites, as well as on official government Web sites.

However, the APHIS assessment flatly states: "[*Apis cerana*] has not been introduced into mainland Australia." In the past, proponents of the imports have argued that the *A. cerana* incursion was limited and hundreds of miles from the Australian package bee and queen breeding area. According to news reports, as of April 17, the monitors had found 86 *A. cerana* swarms. U.S. beekeepers may be wondering how many have escaped detection.

In addition to comments on the assessment itself, the Washington attorney advising ABF and other U.S. beekeeping associations is urging beekeepers to tell APHIS how bad their colony losses have been this winter and what this has cost the beekeeper in lost revenue and rebuilding expenses. Local and state beekeeper associations are also urged to file comments about their members and to adopt resolutions on the issue. And, all this should be copied to your Congressmen.

In Orlando this January, the ABF membership adopted the following resolution addressing honey bee imports:


WHEREAS, there is concern that imported honey bees may contain known and unknown honey bee pests and diseases; and,

WHEREAS, ABF has requested that USDA-APHIS immediately suspend all live honey bee imports into the United States, including both queens and honey bees, until further research can demonstrate that these imports hold no harm for U.S. honey bees; and,

WHEREAS, ABF has joined in a coalition of beekeeping organizations seeking to end these honey bee imports and has contributed funds toward the coalition's legal expenses; now,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the ABF Executive Committee is authorized to continue supporting the coalition in its efforts to end these honey bee imports.





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