Tropilaelaps Mites: A Fast-Spreading Threat Requiring Urgent EU Preparedness

BeeLife calls for strong vigilance and preparedness to prevent the introduction and manage the potential spread of *Tropilaelaps* spp. in the European Union

The European beekeeping sector is no stranger to parasitic pressure. For decades, *Varroa destructor* has defined the baseline for colony health management. Attention is now also turning to *Tropilaelaps*, a parasite spreading westwards and nearing the European Union's borders.

In a letter addressed to the European Commission (DG SANTE and DG AGRI), Member States, and National Reference Laboratories for bee health, BeeLife calls for immediate preparedness and reinforced vigilance, urging authorities to prevent the introduction of the mite and effectively manage its potential spread.

A parasite characterised by rapid spread

Like *Varroa*, *Tropilaelaps* reproduces within capped brood cells of the honey bee, *Apis mellifera*. However, several biological traits make it particularly concerning:

- faster reproductive rate
- rapid movement across combs
- exclusive feeding on brood
- very short phoretic phase

These characteristics enable infestations to develop quickly, often leading to rapid colony collapse and significant economic losses.

Increasing proximity to the European Union

Tropilaelaps has already been detected in Georgia and in Russian regions bordering Ukraine, where it is associated with colony losses. According to the European Reference Laboratory for Bee Health, limitations in surveillance capacity in parts of the Ukranian region make the epidemiological situation uncertain, while the risk of introduction into the EU remains significant.

Multiple pathways of introduction

The mite may enter the EU through several routes, including:

- movement of live bees (particularly queens and packages)
- used beekeeping equipment
- apicultural products such as comb

This diversity of pathways increases the complexity of prevention and control and highlights the need for reinforced border measures and coordinated surveillance.

No authorised treatments available

There are currently no veterinary medicinal products in the EU specifically authorised against *Tropilaelaps*. While some treatments used against *Varroa destructor* may offer partial efficacy, they do not provide a reliable or sustainable solution.

Preventive action, early detection, and rapid response remain the only effective strategies.

BeeLife's position: act now to prevent irreversible impact

BeeLife calls on the European Commission and Member States to urgently:

- clarify the sanitary status of neighbouring countries
- establish coordinated surveillance and buffer zones at EU borders
- strengthen monitoring using modern diagnostic tools
- reinforce controls on the movement of bees and apicultural materials
- ensure preparedness for rapid response in case of detection

Early action is essential. Experience with *Varroa destructor* demonstrates that delayed intervention leads to long-term, systemic impacts on beekeeping, biodiversity and food production.

A limited window for action

Unlike Asian honey bee species, Apis mellifera has not evolved alongside *Tropilaelaps*, making European colonies particularly vulnerable.

If the mite becomes established, eradication would be extremely difficult. The current situation therefore requires immediate, coordinated, and precautionary action at both EU and national levels.

The full letter addressed to DG SANTE and DG AGRI is available here.

About BeeLife

BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination is an umbrella non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting bees and pollinators in the European Union. Through research, advocacy, and collaboration, BeeLife promotes a sustainable environment that enables pollinators to thrive, thereby ensuring European biodiversity and food security.

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