Canadian **BEEKEEPERS** Federation

Protecting bees. Supporting beekeepers. Sustaining Canadian food.
Advocating for commercial honey producers and pollinators in Canada

Honey bee imports from outside North America should be suspended

The mite that could end commercial beekeeping in North America is now in Türkiye. *On August 31, 2026 Türkiye notified the World Organisation for Animal Health that Tropilaelaps mites had been confirmed in an apiary at Borçka, Artvin province, on the Georgian border (WAHIS event 7792). The laboratory confirmed it on July 31. By October 23, five apiaries were affected and 53 hives had been destroyed. Türkiye took a month to report it, and experts judge it had been there for some time, at least a year by one estimate.*

BACKGROUND

Tropilaelaps mercedesae is a parasitic mite of honey bee brood, native to Asia, listed by the World Organisation for Animal Health and not present in North America. Where it occurs alongside varroa it outcompetes it: in co-infested Thai colonies worker-brood infestation averaged about 20% for *Tropilaelaps* against 0.7% for varroa in the same hives. It feeds on both pre- and post-capped brood, vectors deformed wing virus, and *Apis mellifera* has none of the grooming and biting defences the Asian host species deploy. It was confirmed in *Apis mellifera* in southern Russia and Georgia in 2024 and in Türkiye in 2026, and is moving west.

Neither Australia nor New Zealand could eradicate varroa once it was established, and neither found it in time. A hobbyist found New Zealand's mite in 2000 and the government's own assessment was that it may have been present for up to five years. Australia ran sentinel hives at its ports, found varroa at Newcastle on June 22, 2022 and dated the incursion to somewhere between June 2021 and March 2022, with an older infestation inland. Australia gave up after fifteen months, New Zealand within three months at an assessed eradication probability of about 17%. Canada has no sentinel apiary network for *Tropilaelaps* and no national emergency response plan for it.

Canada's protection rests on one mechanism. An exporting country tests its bees, does not find the mite, and certifies accordingly. What a country can honestly certify is that the mite was not detected, which is not the same as absence.

KEY FACTS

Why a certificate cannot stop it

- **The tests used worldwide do not detect this mite.** It lives and reproduces in the brood and does not spend a settled phase on adult bees. The ED50 is 5.2% brood infestation for alcohol wash and 5.7% for sugar shake, against 1.15% for the brood bump test.
- **A colony can be roughly 5% brood-infested and still return "not detected".** A diligent exporter using internationally accepted methods can certify an infested apiary in complete good faith. The certificate can be truthful and worthless at the same time.
- **Transit is not a barrier.** Mites survived up to about a week on dead adult bees, against an average of 15 hours on live ones. Every commercial package arrives with a layer of dead bees on its floor, and that layer is a survival substrate.
- **A live package cannot be certified clean.** It cannot be alcohol-washed or brood-uncapped without destroying the product, and those are the tests that fail on this mite anyway.
- **Detection runs at least a year behind introduction, and often more.** The EU reference laboratory records late detection of the mite "generally at least one year after the presumed period of introduction". *Tropilaelaps* was present in Krasnodar and Rostov from at least the summer of 2021 and confirmed in print in 2024. It was collected in Uzbekistan in 2022 and confirmed in 2024. It was confirmed in Georgia in 2024, in a study suggesting it had been there at least a year and finding up to 24% of capped brood cells infested.

- **Until Türkiye's notification in August 2026, Georgia was the only country to have notified a *Tropilaelaps* introduction to the World Organisation for Animal Health.** The EU reference laboratory notes that most of what is known comes from research projects rather than official surveillance, and calls for increased vigilance on imports from territories considered "officially free" but geographically close to infested areas or with beekeeping links to them. That vigilance is necessary to keep this devastating pest out of North America.

The import system does not do what the government says it does

- **Parliament asked for a standardised risk assessment for every source of bees.** Recommendation 5 of the House of Commons agriculture committee's first report, presented December 9, 2025. The government response of April 13, 2026 acknowledged it and committed to nothing new, restating that the CFIA "follows a structured process to approve countries".
- **The CFIA cannot produce a risk assessment for New Zealand,** the largest source of Canada's packages, about two-fifths by weight in 2023–25. It has supplied the CBF with its assessments for packages from Italy, Chile and Ukraine and for queens from Australia, Chile and Italy. Asked for New Zealand's, it replied that it was unable to locate it, that it was likely done "over a couple of decades ago", and that its retention rule is ten years. An access to information request produced nothing, and in January 2026 the agency confirmed it holds no further document.
- **The American border has been shut since 1987 on a written assessment the CFIA has defended in public and in court.** American bee hives are constantly placed within metres of the Canadian border where they can easily reach Canadian hives and transfer any pests they carry. The prohibition on the import of American bees is the most documented risk assessment in the CFIA's bee file, while the assessment for the largest source of Canada's packages cannot be produced.
- **Packages arrive carrying more varroa than the CFIA's pre-export limit.** Manitoba Agriculture sampled 80 New Zealand packages just after installation in spring 2025 and found varroa infestation from 0 to 6%, mean 1.6%, against the 1% average the CFIA requires of the exporting operation before shipment. Alberta's provincial apiculturist warned beekeepers on July 15, 2025 that New Zealand packages "may carry elevated levels of varroa mites".

What a perimeter would cost

- **Canada imported about 35,000 packages a year in 2023–25 (roughly 46,000 kg), against about 336,000 colonies lost over winter 2024–25.** Offshore packages are a small part of how Canadian colonies are replaced.
- **Canadian commercial beekeepers replace their losses overwhelmingly by splitting their own hives.** Offshore packages struggle in the Canadian disease and climate environment and often need requeening with North American stock to remain viable.

Pollination of food crops is a critical role that honey bees fill

- If Tropilaelaps were to arrive in the country, provinces could restrict honey bee movement, disrupting pollination of crops such as small fruits and vegetables that rely on honey bees.

REQUEST

It is necessary to establish a roundtable for honey bee (and other bees) biosecurity or bring honey bees to the Animal Health Canada table for consistency with other livestock species in surveillance and emergency response.

The CBF asks for three things.

- **Reopen the import risk assessments on the basis that certification-based assurance is not fit for this pest.**
- **Suspend package and queen imports from outside North America pending that assessment.** This is the position Canada already takes for Ukraine, and Scotland took for Ukraine on the same reasoning in 2025. Great Britain suspended imports from Türkiye in September 2026.
- **Produce the New Zealand risk assessment, or suspend the approval.** If no current document supports the approval, nothing stands behind it. The same test applies to any other source the agency cannot document.

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NOTES AND SOURCES

Each figure was checked against the source shown.

Co-infestation, about 20% *Tropilaelaps* against 0.7% varroa in worker brood: Buawangpong et al. 2015, as reported in the review by de Guzman et al. 2017, doi.org. One Thai study of co-infested colonies; the primary paper has not been opened.

Detection sensitivity, ED50 5.2% alcohol wash, 5.7% sugar shake, 1.15% brood bump: Sensitivity of current *Tropilaelaps mercedesae* monitoring methods, Scientific Reports, 2026, doi.org. 26 infested colonies.

Survival on dead bees, up to 192 hours in the results (168 in the abstract) against a mean of 15 hours on live adults: Gill et al., APIS 2(2):22–27, December 2025, ojs.mtak.hu. One site in Thailand; 30 mites in each of three replicates.

Geographical spread, detection lag and notification: EU Reference Laboratory for Bee Health (ANSES), Geographical Spread of the Exotic Mite *Tropilaelaps* spp.: State of Play of the Worldwide Situation in March 2025, anses.fr. Russia, Krasnodar and Rostov, present since at least summer 2021 (Brandorf et al. 2024); Uzbekistan, mites collected 2022 and confirmed 2024 (Mohamadzade Namin et al. 2024); Georgia, confirmed 2024 in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti with infestation up to 24% of capped brood cells and presence suggested for at least a year (Janashia et al. 2024). The note states that almost no notification has been made to WOAH, that only the Georgian detection has been notified in WAHIS (consulted December 31, 2024), and that most data come from research projects rather than official surveillance. Its own conclusion is that imports from territories considered "officially free" but close to infested areas call for increased vigilance. The EURL's December 2025 Caucasus update adds reports from Abkhazia and Dagestan. Türkiye: WOAH immediate notification, event 7792, confirmed July 31 and reported August 31, 2026; follow-up report of October 23, 2026, five apiaries in Borçka and 53 hives destroyed. Duration: Apimondia, August 14, 2026 ("not a recent introduction"); M. Gill, personal communication, November 2026 (at least a year).

Australia: varroa found June 22, 2022 in sentinel hives at Newcastle, the incursion dated to between June 2021 and March 2022 with an older infestation inland, eradication abandoned September 2023. NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development varroa emergency response, dpi.nsw.gov.au. New Zealand: found by a hobbyist in 2000; the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry assessed that the mite may have been present for up to five years, put eradication probability at about 17% and abandoned the attempt within three months. Office of the Controller and Auditor-General, Biosecurity case studies, Part 4 (2002).

Ukraine suspension: CFIA letter to stakeholders, June 5, 2024, CFIA letter. The CFIA could not conclude that *Tropilaelaps* mites are completely absent from Ukraine. Scotland: Notice of Special Measures, October 6, 2025, on reasonable grounds for suspecting the mite. Great Britain: suspension of imports from Türkiye from September 4, 2026 (Defra).

Recommendation 5 and the bees section: House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, first report, presented December 9, 2025, ourcommons.ca. The bees section rests on Connie Phillips's testimony of November 3, 2025 and quotes the CFIA's statement that it "does not have a duty of care to protect the economic interests of stakeholders". Government Response tabled April 13, 2026; on Recommendation 5 it "acknowledges this recommendation" and describes the existing approval process.

CFIA correspondence on the New Zealand risk assessment: web enquiry 2024/3-634 (April 22 and May 6, 2024); access to information request A-2024-00046 (filed May 22, answered June 27, 2024); web enquiry 2025/11-2969 (December 4, 2025 and January 6, 2026). Assessments supplied across those replies: packages from Italy (2022005), Chile (Q36) and Ukraine (2021031); queens from Australia (R31), Chile (2006O32), Italy and Malta. Originals held by the CBF and available for inspection. The CBF does not claim that no assessment was ever made; the claim is that none can be produced today.

New Zealand's share of package imports, 19,516 kg of a 45,922 kg annual average for 2023–25 (about 42%): AAFC Statistical Overview, 2025 edition, agriculture.canada.ca. The 2024 total was revised from 46,985 kg to 38,642 kg.

Varroa on arriving New Zealand packages, 0 to 6% with a mean of 1.6%: Manitoba Agriculture's Knowledge and Research Transfer Program, 80 packages, spring 2025, reported by Derek Micholson, Provincial Apiarist, November 28, 2025. One province, one season, 80 packages, no sampling method stated. Alberta advisory: Ali Panasiuk, Provincial Apiculturist (Acting), July 15, 2025. Both held by the CBF. Import condition: CFIA Automated Import Reference System, requirement 35054 (packaged bees from New Zealand), an average of 1% or less across the export operation by alcohol wash before shipment (captured February 2025).

Package imports, about 46,000 kg a year in 2023–25 (48,117, 38,642 and 51,008 kg), all from outside North America; about 35,000 packages at 1 kg and 1.5 kg package sizes: AAFC Statistical Overview of the Canadian Honey and Bee Industry 2025, agriculture.canada.ca.

Winter loss of about 336,000 colonies, 39.3% of 854,653: CAPA final report on winter losses 2025, capabees.com; Statistics Canada Table 32-10-0353-01. Winter only, colony-weighted self-report, excludes mid-season losses.

The prohibition on United States packages: CFIA Notice to Industry and decision on risk management, August 6, 2025, inspection.canada.ca. Four hazards are named in that notice.