BRIEF · Canadian Beekeepers Federation · November 2026

Tropilaelaps should be a reportable disease, and Canada should agree to one bee movement policy country-wide before it arrives

BACKGROUND

***Tropilaelaps* is spreading west.** *Tropilaelaps mercedesae* is a mite that feeds and breeds on developing honey bees. It is not known in North America. It has been confirmed in southwestern Russia, Georgia and northeastern Turkey. Turkey confirmed the Borçka outbreak on July 31, 2026, and reported it on August 31.

It came from the giant honey bee. Its native host is the giant honey bee of southern Asia, *Apis dorsata*. It moved onto western honey bees, *Apis mellifera*, in Asia by the 1950s and has been spreading west since 2021. Apimondia listed 17 countries in June 2026, before Turkey.

It does more damage than varroa. *Tropilaelaps* multiplies more quickly than varroa and kills hives faster. In Turkey, every infested colony examined was weakened, with deformed bees unable to leave their cells.

The CFIA does not list the infestation as reportable or immediately notifiable. The CFIA's immediately notifiable list names two honey bee pests: fluvalinate-resistant varroa and small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*). The reportable list names no bee disease at all. Provincial rules are a patchwork. Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Alberta and Manitoba name the genus or *T. mercedesae*. British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia name only *T. clareae*, a different species. Of the provinces that cover *T. mercedesae*, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island require beekeepers to report it; Alberta and Manitoba list it but require no report.

The response needs to be determined now. When the mite is found in Canada, the CFIA and the provinces will face two decisions within days: whether to attempt eradication, and whether to stop bees moving. Both decisions affect crops across the country, and the evidence for both is already very clear. Once it is here there is no stopping it.

KEY FACTS

How the mite works

- **It lives in the brood.** *Tropilaelaps* feeds and breeds on larvae and pupae in worker and drone cells, and stays almost entirely inside sealed brood.
- **It survives off the brood longer than anyone assumed.** Mites live up to 8 days on dead adult bees, the layer found on the floor of every package. A broodless swarm on a ship bound for New Jersey still carried 28 mites after 29 to 99 days aboard.
- **It wounds each bee many times.** Varroa shares one feeding site per cell. *Tropilaelaps* makes multiple feeding wounds, and also feeds on open larvae before the cell is capped.
- **It outbreeds varroa.** Its population grows about 2.7-fold a month, against 1.9-fold for varroa. Where hives raise brood all year, *Tropilaelaps* infestations usually exceed varroa.
- **There is no licensed treatment.** Dr Maggie Gill of PHIRA-Science reports that no miticide is licensed for *Tropilaelaps*. Formic acid is the only treatment that reaches into capped brood, and beekeepers who live with the mite treat every 6 to 8 weeks, year-round. Formic acid also kills brood and queens. In a Dutch trial, treated colonies lost 1.6 times as much brood as untreated ones, and half lost their queen against a fifth of the untreated. It is not a solution.
- **Adult-bee tests miss it.** In the Russian outbreak, washes of adult bees found no mites all season while up to 75% of sealed worker brood was infested.

What it has done

- **Colonies die in months.** Beekeepers in Asia and Eastern Europe report that *Tropilaelaps* kills colonies within 3 to 6 months of infestation. Unmanaged varroa takes about three years.
- **Georgia.** At a closed convent apiary near Nigoiti, two colonies held a single mite each in mid-March 2025. By June 18 every colony examined was infested, at 3% to 22% of brood. By early September many of the 86 colonies were on the verge of collapse. Some Georgian beekeepers lost up to 80% over winter.
- **China.** Beekeepers in China have lived with it on western honey bees since the 1950s. Its arrival there brought heavy colony losses.

- **Russia.** In Krasnodar, 53% of 130 monitored colonies died between May 2022 and April 2023. The survivors were reduced to 3 or 4 frames of bees.

Detection can come a year or more after the mite arrives

- **Detection history.** The EU Reference Laboratory finds that detection comes "generally at least one year after the presumed period of introduction".
- **Georgia.** Researchers estimated that the mite had been present for at least a year before its confirmation in 2024.
- **Turkey.** Turkey had screened for the mite since 2024. The date of introduction is unknown. When it was found in July 2026 it was already in all 8 apiaries inspected and in 22 of the 24 declining colonies sampled, from 200 m to 40 km inside the border. Apimondia's Commission on Bee Health suggested that the level of infestation in one filmed colony could indicate the mite had been present for some time. Dr Gill judges it had been there at least a year.
- **Ships.** In July 2025 the crew of a container ship bound for New Jersey found a swarm of giant honey bees carrying 28 *Tropilaelaps* mites, 3,600 nautical miles out in the Atlantic. The crew found it, not an inspector.

Eradication of an established honey bee mite has never succeeded

- ***Tropilaelaps*.** No country has eradicated it. In March 2025 the EU Reference Laboratory reported no eradication attempt anywhere. Turkey has since destroyed 53 infested hives in Borçka district. Dr Gill calls eradication virtually impossible because the mite hides in sealed brood.
- **New Zealand.** Varroa was found in South Auckland on April 11, 2000, after up to five years undetected. The government's technical advisory group put the chance of eradicating varroa at about 17%. The government decided on July 12, 2000 not to try. Varroa then spread through the North Island.
- **Australia.** Varroa turned up in sentinel hives at the Port of Newcastle in June 2022. After 15 months of eradication work, Australia's National Management Group declared on September 19, 2023 that eradication was not feasible.

Stopping movement stops pollination

- **Blueberries.** About 40,300 hives pollinated New Brunswick wild blueberry in 2025. Three quarters came from outside the province.
- **Hybrid canola seed.** Seed companies contract 53,000 to 72,000 colonies a year in southern Alberta. The colonies move in for bloom and out after.
- **Ten sets of rules.** Each province sets its own entry, transit and permit rules. Newfoundland and Labrador requires a 12-month quarantine after entry.
- **A standstill comes too late.** Bees will have been moving for the year or more the mite went undetected. A standstill at detection would stop pollination without containing the mite.

REQUEST

The CBF asks for three things.

- **List infestation with *Tropilaelaps* spp. as a reportable disease.** Under the Health of Animals Act, anyone who owns or looks after bees would have to notify the nearest CFIA veterinary inspector immediately upon learning of the mite's presence in or around the bees or of any fact indicating its presence. Veterinarians and anyone who analyses animal specimens would have to notify a veterinary inspector immediately upon suspicion.
- **Set management, not eradication, as the response when it is found.** Agree now that a detection triggers tracing, treatment and surveillance, not depopulation.
- **Agree one movement policy with the provinces before the mite arrives.** One set of inspection and certification rules that every province accepts, so colonies keep reaching blueberry, hybrid canola seed and tree fruit after a detection. The CFIA's existing work with the provincial apiarists is the place to do it.

Contact: Connie Phillips, Executive Director, Canadian Beekeepers Federation, info@canadianbeekeepers.ca. Find more information at canadianbeekeepers.ca.

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