



August 18, 2015

Kelly McAslan
Director (Acting)
Animal Health and Welfare | Office of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Via email

Dear Kelly,

While the recent small hive beetle (SHB) sightings in Niagara represent only a limited incursion, the OBA takes the current SHB situation seriously. This issue exposes both biosecurity risks and direct impacts on the economic viability of Ontario's beekeeping industry.

There is no easy solution to mitigating the spread of SHB. However, the OBA asks OMAFRA not to take any unilateral action at this time to restrict movement of bees within the province. Rather, the OBA commits to working collaboratively with OMAFRA on an industry-led effort designed to mitigate the spread of small hive beetle. The OBA's proposed biosecurity practices will be designed to benefit all Ontario beekeepers, small or large, and regardless of whether or not they are affiliated with the OBA.

Similarly, for movement of bees to pollination areas outside of the province, the OBA proposes to take the lead with the close assistance of OMAFRA, where appropriate, and where jurisdictional rules may require provincial assistance. This will include dialogue with beekeepers in Québec and with fruit growers in Québec, NB, NS and PEI, with the hope of establishing protocols for the safe movement of bees to pollination sites and back to bee yards in Ontario.

It is important to add that the OBA Small Hive Beetle Working Group includes representation from commercial beekeepers in the Niagara Region. You can be assured that they are fully onside for adopting rigorous biosecurity practices, given their proximity to these finds.

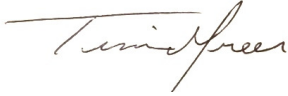
We see no pressing need to lift the Windsor/Essex quarantine zone at this time.

Finally, we cannot recommend involuntary depopulation of infested hives without a means of compensating beekeepers.

We believe we can retard the advance of SHB in Ontario. To that end, we are currently putting together a comprehensive plan of biosecurity practices governing surveillance and reporting, hive management, equipment, travel, and honey house hygiene. It is our aim to work with OBA's Tech-Transfer Program and OMAFRA to aggressively promote these practices to all Ontario beekeepers. We hope to have a draft plan for your review in early September.

In the longer term, SHB will likely be another beekeeping management protocol for Canadian beekeepers, as it is now for our U.S. counterparts. Any risk mitigation measures to prevent, control or reduce infestation by SHB cannot completely eliminate the chances of survival, spread or establishment of this beetle due to its high mobility and possibility to reproduce outside of managed honey bee colonies. However, for the time being we believe an industry-led approach focused on mitigation is the best course of action to serve the interests of Ontario's beekeepers.

Thank you for your cooperation and continued support,



Tim Greer
Chair, OBA Small Hive Beetle Working Group

cc: Deb Sikora, Assistant Deputy Minister, Food Safety and Environment Division, OMAFRA
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