National Honey Bee Surveys

Last Modified:

Since 2009, APHIS has funded an annual national survey of honey bee pests and diseases. The national survey documents which bee diseases, parasites, or honey bee pests are present or likely absent in the United States. Specifically, we have verified the absence of the parasitic mite *Tropilaelaps* spp. and other exotic threats to honey bee populations (e.g., *Apis cerana*).

Although there are over 4,000 types of bees in the United States, honey bees are America's primary commercial pollinator. More than 100 types of crops grown in this country rely on pollinators. USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) estimates that pollination is responsible for more than $18 billion in added revenue to crop production. Additionally, ERS estimates that the total annual value of U.S. honey bee products and services is approximately $700 million.

Overview

The national survey continues to be the most comprehensive honey bee pests and diseases survey to date. The survey has three goals:

1. Detecting potentially invasive pests, such as the exotic mite *Tropilaelaps,* and problematic *Apis* spp., such as *A. cerana*;

2. Expanding the honey bee health surveillance dataset, which provides critical long-term historical perspective of colony health; and
3. Identifying risk and protective factors that predict colony health and operational success by connecting honey bee health measures over time and annual colony losses.

Here's how the survey works:

- The survey is open to all States and Territories on a voluntary basis.
- Beekeepers within the State or Territory volunteer to have their apiary inspected.
- Samples are collected by participating agencies or universities and processed by the University of Maryland.
- Surveyors will make 3 or more sampling trips to an apiary throughout the year to collect a total of 14 general survey surveillance samples.
- They will also sample five apiaries twice during the year—in the spring before or at the start of the honey flow and in the fall after honey flow—to more closely monitor factors that affect honey bee health seasonally.

Resources

This information is for people who are conducting honey bee surveys. More resources are available at ushoneybeehealthsurvey.info.

USDA Honey Bee Pests and Diseases Survey Project Plan: 2025

Questions and Answers: National Honey Bee Pests and Diseases Survey

Protocol for National Honey Bee Survey

(PDF, 1.24 MB)

Step-by-step guide on how to collect samples from honey bees

Wax Sampling

(PDF, 1.09 MB)

Step-by-step guide on how to collect wax samples

Bee Bread Sampling Protocol

(PDF, 535.63 KB)

Guide to bee bread sampling, including how to distinguish bee bread from fresh pollen

Sampling Pollen in Hives for Pesticide Residues

(PDF, 309.94 KB)

Step-by-step guide on how to collect pollen samples from hives for pesticide residues

Apiary Data Information Sheet

(PDF, 69 KB)

Use this sheet to capture visual inspection information during the honey bee collection process.

U.S. Postal Service Regulations for Mailing Live Bees

Requirements for mailing live honey bees or queen honey bees

Shipping Instructions for Survey Participants

(PDF, 73.31 KB)

Instructions and contact information for shipping samples

Survey Videos

National Honey Bee Survey Sample Collection Training

Wax Sampling

Learn how to sample wax from brood frames.

Varroa Mite Detection and Sampling

Learn how to detect Varroa mites.

Related Links

- Introduction to Beekeeping: Equipment (Video)
- Introduction to Beekeeping: Opening Colonies (Video)
- Varroa Mite Detection and Sampling (Video)
- Parasite: Tropilaelaps Information Sheet
- Exotic Bee ID guide
- Bee Mite ID Guide
- Northern Giant Hornet
- Yellow-Legged Hornet
- Import Permits: Honey Bees and Other Bees

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