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Tropilaelaps mercedesae: An emerging risk for European apiculture due to its rapid expansion

How beekeepers around the world are finally starting to speak the same data language — and why it matters for every hive.

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Apimondia , as one of the BEE-GUARDS partners, had an obligation to organise a Workshop on *Tropilaelaps* mites given the risks the European apicultural sector will face in the case of arrival of the mite.

The workshop took place in the Kazakh Research Institute of Animal Husbandry and Feed Production (KazNIIZHik), with the support of the local beekeeping association.

The objectives of the workshop were: Increasing preparedness of European apicultural sector to invasive pests and more specifically to equip participants with the biological and technical skills and knowledge required to support enhanced action for *Tropilaelaps* surveillance and control. The workshop was designed around a train-the-trainer approach, and participants are therefore expected to commit to sharing the knowledge and practical skills gained with colleagues and stakeholders in their home countries / regions.

Day 1 - August 17th

The participants were addressed by the Rector of the University, were blushed according to local protocol and then visited the apiary of the Institute located in one of the

building roofs. Invited experts had the opportunity to demonstrate different methods for the mite detection and discuss the Pros and Cons of the methods. Afterwards, live mites, collected from the hives during the methods' demonstration were observed under the microscope.

During the afternoon of the same day, participants visited the apiary of Oleg Kruptsky where a small population of the special breed of the *Apis mellifera pomonella* is kept.

We also had the chance to taste different monofloral and polyfloral honeys, and experience the unique taste of Accuray honey coming from a local plant called *Cullen drupaceum*.

Day 2 - August 18th

The day was devoted to presentations by experts that have lived-experience dealing with mite infestations, or have extensive experience studying the mites. About 28 participants were attending in person and as so many online. All talks and discussions were translated into Russian. Dan Aurell, Maggie Gill, Anna Brandorf, Jef Pettis and Chuleui Jung, shared their experience and knowledge in different topics (biology, reproduction, behaviour, detection methods, treatments, dispersal). A presentation on 'WOAH International framework on *Tropilaelaps* mites' was also delivered by Stephanie Franco, WOA expert on WOA Reference Laboratory for Infestation of Honey Bees with *Tropilaelaps spp*- ANSES. Treating *Tropilaelaps* mites might be similar to Varroa treatment but requires methods that can penetrate sealed brood caps, as these parasites spend most of their time reproducing on developing pupae. The most effective strategy combines a cultural brood break with penetrating organic acid treatments like formic acid.

The local organisers, were also organised a 2 day excursion to Lepsi honey farm, where 83 organic beekeepers produce once a year, the honey with the brand 'Lepsi honey'. Also we visited the apiaries; we met traditional nomadic beekeepers; we got to know the pomonella bee and had the honour also to visit the 300 old apple tree, the 'mother' of the apple trees.



Many conclusions could be drawn out of this workshop:

- Raise awareness among beekeepers, veterinary services and Competent Authorities (CAs), especially in the countries of high risk of invasion, is an urgent need
- Regulations need to be put in place, for the quick diagnostics, for Contingency Plans, control of importations.
- The registration of the apiaries is absolutely necessary
- Initiate surveillance programs as soon as possible, where they do not yet exist.