



Tropilaelaps mercedesae in Europe

APIMONDIA Federation call for action on urgent surveillance, institutional preparedness and rapid-notification systems

Apimondia Federation, after a consultation with WOAHP, is calling the beekeeping associations, and their authorities in the respective countries for an URGENT action:

The exotic mite *Tropilaelaps mercedesae* and its recent introduction in Türkiye after Russia and Georgia, constitutes an urgent emerging concern for honey bee health for Europe, as well as for other regions. This parasite, which is not yet established in Europe, is progressively expanding its geographic range towards the region and now warrants urgent and coordinated preparedness by all countries.

Tropilaelaps mites are characterised by their rapid movement, a cryptic phoretic phase, and an aggressive reproductive cycle that develops inside capped brood cells, making the parasite difficult to detect and control. Originally associated with its natural host, *Apis dorsata*, the mite has shifted host and is already parasitising *Apis mellifera* in Nepal, Myanmar, the Republic of Korea and Papua New Guinea, and is present on both bee species in India, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Viet Nam and the Philippines. Recent detections have been reported in Central Asia (Georgia in September 2024 [WAHIS Event 6115]), and a further report from Türkiye in August 2026 (WAHIS Event 7792) confirms the mite's continued advance towards Eastern Europe. Concerns have also been raised regarding its possible presence in different other countries of this area between Europe and South East Asia.

Prevention, early detection and rapid response against *Tropilaelaps* are the primary lines of defense.

Detection and diagnosis present particular challenges: *Tropilaelaps* is smaller and lighter in colour than *Varroa*, develops mainly within the brood, and moves very quickly across the comb, and the clinical signs of infestation can be confused with those caused by *Varroa*. It is therefore essential that beekeepers, veterinarians and Competent Authorities are well informed of the risk of introduction and are able to recognise warning signs and apply appropriate surveillance measures so that suspected cases are identified early and reported without delay to the veterinary authorities and through the World Animal Health Information System ([WAHIS](#)).

The WOAHP Reference Laboratory for the Infestation of honey bees with *Tropilaelaps* spp. as well as the WOAHP Collaborating Centre “Good Beekeeping Management Practices and Biosecurity Measures in the Apiculture Sector” are available and can be contacted to support Members, including the supply of reference material, the organisation of training and inter-laboratory trials, and the confirmation of suspected cases by morphological and molecular methods, including PCR and sequencing. Apimondia’s Bee Health is also available to be contacted for organising training activities and surveillance programs in collaboration with the beekeepers directly.



Apimondia Federating is calling all beekeepers' associations in European Countries to be aware of WAOH recommendations, and to contact their Veterinary Services and Authorities to harmonised efforts for early detection.

Recommendations to Competent Authorities following the recent [WOAH statement](#).

Surveillance and early detection

- All countries need to strengthen both passive and active surveillance, particularly in border regions and in areas at higher risk of introduction. Ensure that rapid reporting and diagnostic confirmation pathways are in place and notify suspected and confirmed cases promptly through WAHIS to support regional coordination and risk assessment.

Risk awareness and preparedness

- All countries, veterinary authorities and Beekeeping associations should raise awareness among beekeepers of the biology and epidemiology of *Tropilaelaps*, the risk of rapid spread, and its potential impact on the sustainability of the beekeeping sector. Risk-based surveillance measures should be adopted, particularly for high-risk apiaries located near key areas designated for pollination and foraging activities, in areas where migratory beekeeping is practiced, at apiaries receiving imported bees, and in apiaries located close to ports and airports.

Border control and trade vigilance

- Alert Border Control Posts to increase vigilance and enforce measures to detect possible illegal movements of bees and apicultural material, giving particular attention to the movement of queens, colonies, package bees and nuclei, especially from affected or neighbouring regions. Apply the relevant provisions of the WOAHS Terrestrial Code to secure trade in live bees, apiculture products and used apicultural equipment and raise awareness among beekeepers about the existence of WOAHS standards set out in the [Terrestrial Animal Health Code](#), and of the importance of complying with them to avoid the introduction of *Tropilaelaps* in a country through the international trade of live bees or bee products.

Diagnostic capacity

- Apply the methods official identification methods at EU level ([European Union Reference Laboratory for Bee Health / EURL](#)). Members are encouraged to make use of the laboratory support available from WOAHS Reference Centres and Collaborating Centres, including reference material, training and inter-laboratory trials, and to ensure that veterinarians and diagnostic staff are trained in field detection methods.

Training and technical capacity

- Initiate or continue training of veterinarians, official inspectors and beekeepers in detection methods, and develop and disseminate clear identification and reporting materials adapted



to both audiences. Dedicated manuals or guidelines should be developed to train beekeepers, veterinarians, diagnostic laboratory personnel and staff at border control posts.

National contingency planning and precautionary measures

- Prepare or update national plans and emergency response protocols and test them regularly through simulation exercises. Develop eradication and control strategies, including through field trials, in collaboration with laboratories and experts from non-EU countries.

Transboundary coordination

- Given the transboundary nature of this risk, Members bordering areas where the mite has already been reported are encouraged to act without delay and to coordinate surveillance and information-sharing with neighbouring countries. The spread of *Tropilaelaps mercedesae* towards Europe illustrates how quickly emerging bee health threats can move across regions and borders.

Preparedness could be assessed through harmonized, dedicated simulation exercises. Preparedness plans should reflect the specific difficulties associated with detecting and diagnosing this parasite.

Further recommendations to beekeepers and their associations

In response to this urgent situation, and in line with the recommendations previously issued by the [Apimondia Working Group on GVPA](#), the recommendations by WAOH (above) we propose a set of practical actions to beekeeping associations in collaboration with our members:

1. As a matter of urgency, clarification of the sanitary status of Ukraine and Türkiye, and neighboring regions concerning *Tropilaelaps*.
2. We propose to all beekeeping Associations to contact their Authorities and Veterinary Services and communicate the urgency of the matter., as well as cases of suspicion as early as possible
3. To encourage the activation of a formal technical alert system for *Tropilaelaps* under national animal health frameworks.
4. To ensure that no trade is taking place from areas in risk. Not importing live bees and products from foreign countries without veterinary certificates.
5. To avoid buying used materials except if they are treated correctly (e.g. disinfection).
6. As a beekeeping sector, we must work towards immediate awareness among veterinary services, inspectors, and beekeeping stakeholders, through our members. We should also engage with National Reference Laboratories and competent authorities to:
 - ✓ Organise joint meetings with our members and their local authorities, reference laboratories



- ✓ Review and update contingency and surveillance plans;
 - ✓ Validate and deploy diagnostic protocols (including molecular detection methods);
 - ✓ Ensure preparedness for rapid response scenarios.
7. Urgently request respective research to enhance both diagnostics and control
8. Collaborate with Apimondia for an immediate Coordinated surveillance and monitoring plan which should include:
- Training beekeepers on methods suitable to identify the mites and monitor their development (online training);
 - Coordinate surveillance on the apiaries (with beekeepers as citizen scientists: we propose to set up a database with names, locations, data sheets and reports every second month) within a preventive surveillance and control buffer zone (e.g., of at least 100 km). Establish, in coordination with countries along the EU's eastern borders:
 - Within this zone, implement systematic monitoring using modern molecular diagnostic tools, including the analysis of honey bee samples collected from beekeepers by official veterinarians.
 - Such approaches allow for cost-effective, large-scale confirmation of absence or early detection of *Tropilaelaps*.
 - In the event of a positive detection, existing EU legislation would enable the rapid activation of containment and eradication measures, if relevant.
 - Organise onsite demonstrations with local scientists or visit these countries when and where possible.

We underline that there are currently no veterinary medicinal products in the EU specifically authorised for *Tropilaelaps*. While some treatments used against *Varroa destructor* may show partial efficacy, their use raises concerns regarding residues, resistance development, and long-term sustainability. This further reinforces the need for prevention, early detection, and rapid response as primary strategies.

References

[WAHIS – World Animal Health Information System](#)

[Leaflet on *Tropilaelaps* spp. for beekeepers – European Union Reference Laboratory for Bee Health \(ANSES\)](#)

[WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code](#)

[WOAH Manual of Diagnostic tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals](#)



WOAH Reference Laboratory for Infestation of honey bees with *Tropilaelaps* spp.:

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@ Apimondia's Bee Health scientific commissions' major mission is to assist all who are dealing with bee health issues, including practical and scientific aspects, as well as to convey scientific/technical information and knowledge to beekeepers worldwide. The Bee Health Commission aims to help solve bee health problems either by offering solutions directly or by connecting with the respective specialists.