

Canadian Honey Council and “What we do”.

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A New Beginning

The need for a national honey bee organization has long been recognized by the beekeeping industry. It was formally acknowledged by a diverse group of stakeholders at a summit meeting in Quebec in 2006 that the CHC is “the voice of the Canadian honey bee industry”. The problem was how to leverage support in principle into a working organization that is effective and sustainable. After two years of consultation, industry leaders voted unanimously to endorse twenty founding principles for the new CHC. At the Annual General Meeting held in Calgary January 2008, the directors of the CHC voted for new bylaws that support the changes to membership, participation, and structure of the organization.

The resulting new Canadian Honey Council is an organization of organizations mandated to deal with many national issues relevant to the Canadian honey bee industry. The CHC is no longer in competition with provincial associations for members. Provincial associations are now the voting members of the national organization and the members of each provincial organization, mostly beekeepers, receive benefits from the CHC in terms of better support for industry concerns. Benefits also include a subscription to the quarterly Hivelights magazine. As well, CHC communicates its activities via the website and our monthly b-TALK-newsletter. For archived copies of the magazine and b-TALK visit www.hivelights.ca

The change in organization:

- positions CHC as the unified voice of the Canadian honey bee industry,
- allows it to act as the instrument for achieving a sustainable Canadian honey bee industry
- brings it nearer to effectively promoting a dynamic and prosperous Canadian honey bee industry.

Strategic Priorities

The CHC has four strategic priorities and all the projects we undertake are guided by these priorities.

1. Hive Health – thriving productive livestock
2. Market Access/Share – increased demand that supports better prices
3. Food Safety – top quality products that instil consumer confidence
4. Labour and Succession – people to work in the industry now and in the future

Some of our many projects and issues that we are currently dealing with are summarized below.

1. HIVE HEALTH

IPM Poster

Colony losses have averaged 30-35% over the past three years and some regions lost 60%. The CHC held an ad hoc meeting on hive health in Winnipeg in June 2007 and January 2009 to address the situation. A hive health committee has been formed to advance the recommendations that emerged from these meetings. The committee is working on a comprehensive field manual for hive health, ways to develop a national bee breeding program.

In 2007 CHC, with advice from CAPA members, put together an Integrated Pest Management poster for beekeepers. It graphically shows cultural controls, monitoring techniques and treatments across the seasons. This poster is currently being updated and expanded into a booklet called IPM for Healthy Bees that will soon be available for distribution.

Oxalic Acid Registration

The benefit of using oxalic acid for treatment of varroa mites in honey bee colonies has been well documented. It has high efficacy if used once in the fall season after brood rearing has ceased. The product is widely available over the counter, has low risk when used as a trickle treatment in syrup and leaves no residue in honey. As well, it is environmentally friendly because it breaks down into carbon dioxide and water.

The Canadian Honey Council took the lead in registering oxalic acid with the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA). The PMRA reviewed our application and gave ministerial permission for use, in October 2005, but this was not the same as official registration. For international trade it is important to have all

chemicals used in the hive registered with the PMRA. Normally the company that manufactures a chemical is the registrant and the fee for registration is typically in the vicinity of two hundred thousand dollars. The CHC is a not for profit organization and we are not selling oxalic acid. This made the process more difficult as we do not fit the usual criteria for a registrant. It has taken three years to negotiate a working arrangement whereby the CHC can be the registrant for a reduced fee. We are pleased to announce that the documentation has been resubmitted to PMRA and we look forward to receiving full registration after a period of public consultation in spring 2010.

Formic Acid

A proposal was announced 4th June, 2009 to remove the status of CAPCO 94-05 for formic acid by December 31, 2010. The note to CAPCO 94-05 document was issued in 1994 based on the best knowledge at that time. Since then, there have been refinements to the methods of application of formic acid. Many beekeepers rely on 65% formic acid for suppression of varroa mites and are keen to have it available as a legal product. The CHC has requested that the PMRA maintains the status quo and if possible extends the deadline for withdrawal of formic acid.

Emergency Registration Amitraz

CHC and provincial apiculturists worked together on a national submission for Emergency Registration of Apivar (amitraz). This product is used in Europe and New Zealand for varroa mite treatment and has a good track record. The Pest Management Regulatory Agency reviewed the information that was submitted and granted temporary Emergency Use Registration for beekeepers in Canada until June 30 2010.

Replacement Bees

High losses of honey bees have spurred the CHC Board of Directors to investigate the possibility of alternative sources of honey bees. Our issues committee will develop an approach to determine what action can be taken, from improving the availability of Canadian queen bees to exploring opportunities for healthy package bees from the USA. Currently the CFIA only allows package bees from New Zealand and south western Australia. Queen bees are available from New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, USA and Chile. The potential for Hawaiian packages is under consideration. A CHC stakeholder meeting is in the planning stages to consider recommendations to the CFIA for protocols for healthy packages of honey bees from the USA.

Canadian Bee Research Fund

The Canadian Bee Research Fund is administered by the CHC. It offers grants to researchers on an annual basis. One of the requirements of funding is that the researcher must present a report to beekeepers at the research symposium held during the annual honey bee industry convention. Research topics can be seen on the website www.honeycouncil.ca.

Steve Pernal, Rob Currie, Leonard Foster, and Albert Robertson presented the results of their research at the CHC AGM in Orlando.

Save Our Bees

The CHC has launched a campaign, "Save Our Bees", to raise funds in support of honey bee awareness. We anticipate, in the future, an online bee resource centre with interactive real time information where researchers and beekeepers and the public will be able to get the most recent hive health data and information about the importance of pollinators. There are many levels to show support for honey bees and we invite sponsors and donors to help us through our website www.saveourbees.ca.

2. MARKET ACCESS/SHARE

Agri-Marketing

The CHC has joined Brand Canada and is pursuing the development of a Long Term International Strategy for marketing honey. We have begun the process of promoting Pure Honey 100% Canadian to overseas markets through participation in a trade show in Orlando. Future steps in this direction will depend, in large part, on the success of our funding applications to the federal AgriMarketing program and others.

Pierre the Bear

Our mascot Pierre the Bear continues to promote Pure Honey 100% Canadian. He is featured on our honey information brochures that provide facts, tips and recipes. Pierre now has two brothers, one in Ontario and one in Saskatchewan to help promote Canadian honey.

Honey for Health Brochure

The CHC has produced a new honey for health brochure that provides information on the healing properties of honey. It is a popular brochure for consumers who are concerned about healthy choices of food and can be obtained by contacting Geoff at the CHC office.

3. FOOD SAFETY

Drum Standards

The CHC's drum standards committee produced a set of guidelines for the CFIA to implement. For more information on the standards visit the CHC website at www.honeycouncil.ca.

C-BISQT

The Canadian Bee Industry Safety Quality Traceability (C-BISQT) project continues. The C-BISQT committee has completed a Good Production Practices Manual that is in process of a final Technical Review by the CFIA. This is expected to be a lengthy process as many people are involved in the review. As soon as the manual passes this final review it will be made available to beekeepers for use in their operation. For more information visit www.cbisqt.ca.

4. LABOUR/SUCCESSION

Foreign Workers

Recruitment of labour is often a problem for beekeepers, especially in rural areas where workers are in short supply. An alternative that has become increasingly popular is to seek seasonal workers from overseas. There are many issues with off shore workers. It takes weeks to complete the process of recruiting employees, satisfying immigration requirements, organizing air travel and arranging housing. On top of problems with finding workers, beekeepers are forced to pay higher wages for unskilled workers than other commodities. One size does not fit all and the CHC foreign worker committee is working with the federal Department of Human Resources and Skills Development to rectify the situation.

Education

A School kit for teachers of grades K1-3 was produced with input from qualified teachers. It is based on Alberta curriculum and is readily transferable to the requirements of other provinces. We believe education of children in the knowledge of pollinators and pollination is key to understanding the role of humans in protecting the environment, as well as promoting bee keeping as a viable future occupation. Visit our website at www.canadianhoney.ca.

CHC – a bold new future

The CHC is truly the national voice for the Canadian honey bee industry, dedicated to supporting and promoting a dynamic and prosperous Canadian honey bee industry that promotes “100% Canadian” and acting as the instrument for achieving a sustainable Canadian honey bee industry in the global economy. Our link to the provincial association is through the CHC director. For more information or to let him know your concerns please contact your provincial CHC directors.