

DAFM Notice – Outbreak of Small Hive Beetle in Italy

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine wishes to advise beekeepers that the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the European Commission have advised the Department of an outbreak of Small Hive Beetle (SHB) *Aethina tumida* in the Calabria region of Southern Italy in early September.

The pest was originally confirmed in “bait” nuclei located in the vicinity of the Port of Gioia Tauro. These “bait” nuclei had been placed there as this area was considered a possible entry point for this exotic parasite.

Following discovery of the beetle the Italian Authorities have implemented a range of measures to eradicate the pest. All nuclei at the site were treated by fumigation followed by freezing to destroy the pest. The soil in the area has also been treated. 20 km protection zones and a 100km surveillance zone have been established. The EU Reference Laboratory for Bee Health and experts from the Italian Reference Laboratory for Beekeeping are assisting the local authorities on the ground to ensure successful eradication.

The European Commission is keeping all EU Member States informed of developments in this case. In the event of any significant developments the Department will issue a further notice for Irish beekeepers.

Lifecycle and Spread

The Small Hive Beetle is a good flyer. Spread is enhanced by movement of package bees, honey bee colonies, honey bee swarms, honeycomb, unrefined beeswax, beekeeping equipment and clothing. Movement of soil, fruit, and alternative hosts (e.g. bumble bees) may also spread the pest. Adult beetles can live for significant periods without food or water. They can live for up to 50 days on used comb and survive several months on fruit. The life span of an adult beetle depends on environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity but, in practice, adult female beetles can live for at least six months and, in favorable reproductive conditions, the female is capable of producing up to a thousand eggs over a lifespan of four to six months. If established within a localised environment it is extremely difficult to eradicate the Small Hive Beetle.

Imports of bees / visits to Italian Apiaries

There have been no authorised imports of bees into Ireland from Italy since at least the start of 2014. However **if anyone is aware of an unauthorised import of any bees into Ireland in 2014 or has been on an Italian apiary in 2014 they are requested to contact the *Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine* (details below).**

Check your Bees

Irish beekeepers are hereby requested to **immediately and then regularly check their colonies for symptoms of the Small Hive Beetle**. Further information on the lifecycle, symptoms and what to do if you suspect an outbreak of the pest are set out in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Notice to Irish beekeepers on the Small Hive Beetle see:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/beekeepinghoney/>

Queries

Given the importance of ensuring the Small Hive Beetle does not become established in Ireland anyone with queries or concerns regarding the pest should immediately contact:

Horticulture & Plant Health Division, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Backweston Campus, Celbridge, Co. Kildare. Phone: 01 5058600

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