



National Bee Unit

OTC Treatment of colonies with European Foulbrood (EFB)

Please read and retain for future reference. This sheet deals with actions relating to colonies treated with oxytetracycline (OTC) following diagnosis of European foulbrood (EFB) by an Authorised Bee Inspector (ABI).

Alternatives to OTC treatment

The alternative to an OTC treatment is a technique known as Shook Swarm. This technique avoids the use of an anti-biotic. Further information is available from the Fact Sheet 'Shook Swarming'. Destruction of colonies infected with European foulbrood is an option, particularly when visible symptoms show 50% of the larvae to be infected in the hive. In the case of American foulbrood, destruction is compulsory. Colonies with EFB will also be destroyed if found in conjunction with a colony infected with AFB from the same apiary. Your Bee Inspector can advise you on the suitability of these alternatives.

What happens now?

On suspecting EFB in an apiary the ABI will issue a standstill on the apiary. This standstill notice means that you cannot remove any bees, equipment or honey crop away from the apiary without a movement licence. An application for a movement licence must be made through your Regional Bee Inspector. A standstill will remain in force until such time as it is lifted by a Bee Inspector, but will usually remain in force for a minimum of six weeks.

If you choose OTC treatment

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The Bee Inspector will apply OTC to the colony, which as it is issued on veterinary prescription will not be carried out at the time of discovery. The beekeeper is required to note the date and other details of the treatment on their medicine records card. The Bee Inspector will return to re-examine the bees after a minimum of six weeks or the following season. If there is no suspicion of an EFB infection the standstill will be lifted but the beekeeper would be expected to carry out a shook swarm on the affected colony(ies). If EFB is confirmed again from the same colony, the standstill will remain in force and the colony, in most cases, will be destroyed.

Can I remove the honey crop?

A licence may be made available to harvest honey from colonies in an infected apiary prior to OTC treatment. Conditions will apply to which the beekeeper must adhere to. These include returning supers and combs to the colony from which they came.

Will this apply to uninfected colonies?

Yes.

What happens after treatment?

Supers can be removed and harvested subject to a movement licence being issued. Honey extracted from colonies that have been treated with OTC must be packaged, labelled and stored for a period of least six calendar months from the date of treatment. ***This is the beekeeper's responsibility.*** The extraction equipment must be thoroughly cleaned after extracting honey from treated colonies and supers and combs must be returned to the hive from which they were taken.

What happens if the standstill order is lifted?

Supers can be removed and extracted without the need for a licence. However honey extracted from colonies that have been treated with OTC must be packaged, labelled and stored for a period of least six calendar months from the date of treatment. ***This is the beekeeper's responsibility.*** The extraction equipment must be thoroughly cleaned after extracting honey from treated colonies and supers and combs should be returned to the hive from which they were taken.

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