



Bee medicaments

Honeybees are classified as a food producing animal so due care must be taken with anything introduced into a hive so that it does not contaminate honey or any other hive products for human consumption. Today beekeepers regularly use medicines and other products to control pests and diseases. Use of these medicines is controlled by statute and statutory approval is regulated by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. This sheet is intended to offer some basic guidance about them and the records of purchase, use and disposal that must be maintained.

What are 'approved medicines'?

These are treatments that are intended to control a disease or pest in a bee hive. They will have undergone a registration process to ensure that they are safe to use. Some may require a veterinary prescription whilst others are freely available over the counter. At the time of writing the following are the only approved medicines for use with honeybees in the UK:

Apistan®*, Bayvarol®*, Apiguard®, Api Life Var® and Thymovar® and Mite Away Quick Strips MAQS®* for the control of *Varroa destructor*.

***Resistance to some of these products has been confirmed in the U.K.**

They are all available 'over the counter' from bee equipment suppliers, however with forthcoming legislation they will have to be obtained through a Specially Qualified Person. At present there are no UK approved bee medicaments that are prescription only medicines. An up to date list and further information can be found at; <http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/public/bee.aspx>

Changes to medicine approvals

Fumidil B®, is no longer authorised for the treatment of *Nosema apis* and *N. cerana* within the UK.

Can I use products that are available in Europe and elsewhere?

Where UK approved products are ineffective or unsuitable a Veterinary Surgeon can prescribe, using the cascade principal, products approved elsewhere in the EU. E.g. Apivar and Checkmite+ for varroa control. In some circumstances he can prescribe other products and those approved outside the EU. Usually the vet has to obtain an import license and import the product for you.

How about using formic acid pads?

Formic acid treatments such as Mite Away Quick Strips (MAQS)® are considered to be fumigants so do not fall into the medicinal window. It is a registered product within the UK and can be used for the treatment of *Varroa destructor*

How about using oxalic acid?

This is currently used by many beekeepers to control varroa in winter. It is classed in EU legislation as an 'Annex II' product so it may be prescribed by a veterinary surgeon under the cascade principle. A commercially prepared oxalic acid based treatment 'Oxovar', which is approved for use in at least one EU country, is available.

What is the situation with hive cleansers?

There are products available, known as 'hive cleansers', which make no medicinal claims so are not considered to be honeybee medicaments. If you choose to use them it is good practice to follow label instructions and maintain a record in case residues are found in your hive products.

What records should I keep?

Current legislation requires that you keep a record of the purchase, use and disposal of any honeybee medicines. On the reverse of this FAQ is a record sheet, which meets all record keeping requirements laid down in Veterinary Medicines Legislation, that you can copy and use. You may however wish to incorporate it into your apiary records so make sure you record all the mandatory requirements listed and that you keep them for at least five years.

This form is also available as a pdf at:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?sectionid=109>

No mention of a treatment should be taken as an endorsement of efficacy, safety or a recommendation to treat.

Do not use homemade concoctions.

Contact

Should you have any questions regarding honey bee health and bee medicaments then please do not hesitate to contact Jason Learner our technical advisor:

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