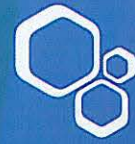


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Bee Health

Republic of Korea	Induction Of Virus In The Apis Mellifera Feb. Larvae By Varroa Destructor And Tropilaelaps Clareae Infection Yong-Soo Choi (beechoi@korea.kr), Man-Young Lee, In-Pyo Hong, Sun-ok Woo, Ha-Sik Sim, Gyu-Ho Byuon, Ratna Thapa, Myeong-Lyeol Lee	BH77
Russia	Influence Of Electromagnetic Fields Of Power Transmission Lines On The Honey Bees Behaviour Toboev Vyacheslav (stoboev@gmail.com)	BH78
Armenia	Influence Of Nosema Apis Quality Of Honey Roza Tsarukyan (info@multi-agro.am), Gayane Petrosyan	BH79
Turkey	Investigation Of Honeybee Winter Losses In Isparta And Burdur, Turkey, Between Of 2011-2012 Erkay Özgör-Fouat (erkay@hacettepe.edu.tr), Asli Özkırım, Nevin Keskin	BH80
Norway	Is It Possible To Eradicate Melisococcus Plutionius, The Causative Agent Of European Foulbrood, In Norway? Bjørn Dahle (post@norbi.no), Henning Sørum, Aud Kari Fauske, Gaute Skogtun, Eva Forsgren	BH81
Italy	Is The Integrated Pest Management Against Varroa Destructor The Best Way To Increase The Acaricide Efficacy Of Low Environmental Impact Compounds? Alessandra Giacomelli (alessandra.giacomelli@izslt.it), Marco Pietropaoli, Marcella Milito, Martina Pizzariello, Francesco Scholl, Giovanni Formato	BH82
Chile	Isolation And Characterization Of Acid Lactic Bacteria From Chilean Bees As A Potential Therapeutic Agent In Beekeeping Industry Patricia Henríquez (ceapi@mayor.cl), Patricia Aldea, Annette Trombert	BH83
Brazil	Isolation And Characterization Of Honeybee Native Bacterias Potential Probiotics To Improve Honeybee Health Loreley Castelli (castelli.loreley@gmail.com), Daniela Arredondo, Pablo Zunino, Karina Antúnez	BH84
Canada	Key Factors For Queen Introduction Maryam Moarefi (maryam.moarefi@yahoo.com), Hossein Yeganehrad, Abbas Mirabzadeh, Sina Yeganehrad, Soheil Yeganehrad	BH85
Brazil	Loss Of Colonies Of Africanized Bees: CCD Or Inadequate Handling? Thelmo Oliveira (dezoo@ufsj.edu.br), Deodoro Brighenti, Carla Brighenti, Potyguara Tupinambás	BH86
Portugal	Main Reasons For Honey Bee Colony Mortality In Portugal. A Snapshot Of Beekeepers' Beliefs Sância Pires (cimo@ipb.pt), António Murilhas, Paulo Russo, Maria Valério, Manuel Gonçalves	BH87
Italy	Maps Of Pollen Diversity And Protein Content Based On Beebread Sampled All Over Italy Piotr Medrzycki (piotr.medrzycki@entecra.it), Francesca Grillenzoni, Simone Tosi, Marco Lodesani	BH88
Switzerland	Microorganisms In The Ovaries Of Queen Honeybees Orlando Yañez (orlando.yanez@vetsuisse.unibe.ch), Alexandre Aebi, Peter Neumann	BH89
Bulgaria	Mite Control Of Varroa Destructor With Products Manufactured In Bulgaria Kalinka Gurgulova (ndrvmi-s@vetinst-bg.com), Ivanka Zhelyazkova, Vera Popova, Sonya Takova	BH90
Republic of Korea	Molecular Detection Of Honeybee Disease In Apis Mellifera And Apis Cerana In Korean Apiaries, 2012 Seungwon Kang (kangsw777@korea.kr), Jinhyeong Noh, Mi-sun Yoo, Youngha Kim, Sukchan Jung	BH91
Czech Republic	Monitoring Of The Varroa Destructor Mites Population In The Czech Republic Zdenek Klima (info@psnv.cz)	BH92

Abstract 1

Main reasons for honey bee colony mortality in Portugal. A snapshot of beekeepers' beliefs

To investigate claims of abnormally high honey bee colony mortality in Portugal during 2011, a survey was carried out via telephone interviews. It included 662 ($\approx 4\%$) registered Portuguese beekeepers and followed the basic 'Coloss' questionnaire. Interviewees were selected accounting for total numbers of colonies and the geographical distribution of their apiaries across the country. The 'sampling grid' was set to 5 beekeepers per county, fully covering continental Portugal and jointly considering the autumn and winter periods.

The overall annual colony mortality that beekeepers historically regard as 'natural' for their own apiaries is 9.7 ± 0.2 (mean \pm standard error of the mean), not significantly deviating from the 10.8 ± 0.2 they consider 'normal' for the wider region where their apiaries are located. Over the combined autumn and winter seasons, the initial number of interviewees' productive colonies (99428) decreased 3.6% (i.e. 3591). Furthermore, if the comparison is made with the total number of productive colonies existing in early spring of the previous year (93841), an increase of 2.1% was observed in April 2011. Although incorporating a considerable commitment to colony splitting and swarm captures, this increase is still surprising given the outcome of a nation wide survey focused on *Nosema ceranae* (showing that 51% of the 277 sampled apiaries across the country were infected by this microsporidian). It also demonstrates that the media hype generated around 'unexplained high colony mortality' occurring in Portugal was clearly unwarranted.

When beekeepers were individually asked to provide their views on the main causes for the colony mortalities observed, albeit the regional variations, *Varroa destructor* was flagged (by 25% of them) as the key problem they are faced with in terms of colony survival. 'Poor quality' queens (mentioned by 13%), colony starvation (indicated by 12%), colonies overwintering in 'weak conditions' (pointed out by 11%) and 'nosemosis' (suspected by 4%) are other considerable sources of problems encountered. Twenty seven percent of the participating beekeepers also additionally singly brought up an extra difficulty from a residual group of additional 'relevant challenges' posed by wasps, ants, chalkbrood, American foulbrood, bee-eaters, pesticide intoxications or thymol application induced accidents.