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The Portuguese experience with bee pathology laboratories for the diagnosis of bee diseases

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In Portugal there are two referenced laboratories responsible for the diagnosis of bee diseases, namely the National Laboratory of Veterinary Investigation (LNIV) which is the National Reference Laboratory and the Bee Pathology Laboratory from the Agrarian Superior School of Bragança (ESAB). This laboratory was created in collaboration with the Apicultural Association of Montesinho Natural Park (AAPNM) and was certified by Veterinary Authority in 2006 year. Bee Pathology Laboratory is located at the city of Bragança, integrated in the Trás – Os – Montes e Alto Douro region and has foreseen for beekeepers supporting or individually or throughout Apicultural Association including those of Controlled Zones. The Controlled Zones are defined as areas from the national territory where the systematic control of the bee diseases is undertaken. Until the year of 2007 only existed two Controlled Zones, namely, Terra Fria (located in the region from the Northeast Transmontano) and Apilegre, (located in the Alto Alentejo region). At the beginning of this year have been approved more three Controlled Zones namely Melbandos (that comprises counties of Beira Baixa region and Estremadura e Ribatejo region), Montemor-o-Novo e Alcácer do Sal (located in the Alentejo region) and the Pinus Verde (located in the Beira Baixa region). These zones are regulated by at national level by the Decree – Law nº 203 of 25 de November of 2005, which also establishes what diseases are considered to be of mandatory notification in our country. These diseases referred in this regulation are, American foulbrood (AFB), European foulbrood (EFB), Acarapodosis, Varroosis, Small Hive Beetles (SHB) infestation, Tropilaelaps infestation, Chalkbrood (only in Controlled Zones) and Nosemosis (only in Controlled Zones). The surveillance of above mentions zones are from the responsibility of Apicultural Organizations recognized as management entities by the Veterinary Authority. These Organizations have, among their competences, the implementation of one program to recover annual samples of honeybee in all of apiaries existing in these areas, which are processed in the existing reference laboratories in our country. At the Bee Pathology Laboratory, samples of honeybee and brood are processed according to the routine methodologies used by the LNIV. During the year of 2007 and until March of 2008, have been diagnosing as the principal honeybee diseases, the Varroosis, Acarapodosis, AFB, Nosemosis and Chalkbrood with the prevalence of Varroosis and Nosemosis.