



# The British Beekeepers' Association

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NEWS RELEASE

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## DEFRA IGNORES THREATS AND REFUSES EXTRA FUNDING FOR BEE HEALTH RESEARCH – NATION'S HONEY BEES COULD BE WIPED OUT IN 10 YEARS.

At a recent meeting with representatives of the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA), to discuss the serious threat currently confronting honey bees, Lord Rooker, Minister of State for Sustainable Farming, Food and Animal Welfare, while not denying that bee health is seriously at risk said in a Lords debate on 27 November 2007, there was “no way in which the government could find additional money to put into bee research”.

Tim Lovett, Chairman of the BBKA, said: “Despite his statement in the Lords, Lord Rooker has rejected the modest proposal the BBKA put to him to provide up to £8 million over five years to carry out the necessary programme of research. Over this same period bees will contribute more than £800 million to the economy.

“This is unacceptably complacent of the Government. Beekeeping pays its way. Through pollination bees annually contribute £165 million to the agricultural output yet the Government currently puts a paltry £200,000 into bee health research. “

There was however agreement on the vital importance of honey bees to the environment, again through pollination of seeds and fruits for wildlife and enhancement of species diversity.

Mr Lovett continued, “This refusal must be viewed against the many £100millions of compensation paid out by DEFRA in recent months for Foot and Mouth, Avian Flu, Blue Tongue, Bovine TB and payments to Hill Farmers.

“Again, DEFRA has been alerted to, and has recognised a potential disaster but chooses to take no action to avert it.

“The British Beekeepers Association has alerted the government and we want action. BBKA will launch a campaign to make sure this action happens.”

**Ends**

**Further press information contact: Christine Gray, Press Officer, British Beekeepers' Association.  
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**NOTES TO EDITORS** The BBKA is a charity set up in 1874 by the gentry and the clergy to help poor cottagers. Today it supports and promotes bees and beekeeping and educates the public of the importance of bees in the environment. Membership through its 70 affiliated associations has increased by 10 per cent over the last 12 months to nearly 12,000 members. Members benefit from public, product and bee disease insurance, a telephone helpline, local support and mentoring legal advice and an examination and assessment programme. Representation and lobbying of government, European and statutory bodies is a key role for the BBKA. Members report any concerns about bee diseases to regional bee inspectors working for the National Bee Unit, a DEFRA funded organisation.