



£100,000 COMMITTED TO BEE HEALTH RESEARCH CAMPAIGN

The major stakeholders in the UK beekeeping industry (BBKA, BFA, NFU and Rowse Honey Ltd) have held crisis talks on the declining bee population. Rowse Honey Ltd has today confirmed its commitment to invest £100,000 in honey bee health research over the next three years.

Discussion ranged across a number of issues. The group has united in the view that

- Pests and diseases are the key priority
- There is an urgent need to fill gaps in our knowledge and find solutions to the problem.
- The importance of Defra prioritising research funding for disease control to support of the sector's / industry's own action and initiatives.

The group strongly endorsed the campaign of the BBKA for increased Defra funding for bee health research.

The BBKA and BFA have already committed funds to support research into bee health.

The NFU expressed its concern regarding the serious impact on the environment and agricultural output if the honey bee population continues to decline.

Rowse Honey is greatly concerned by the shortage of British honey, which will run out in the supermarkets by Christmas.

The group has agreed to meet regularly in the months ahead to campaign, monitor and act in concert in the face of critical declines in the bee population. It calls on Defra to reconsider its position with urgency, and agree to fund the necessary research.

Issued on behalf of

British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA) www.britishbee.org.uk/
Bee Farmers Association (BFA) www.beefarmers.co.uk
National Farmers' Union (NFU) www.nfuonline.com
Rowse Honey Ltd www.rowsehoney.co.uk

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- The value of UK agricultural pollination provided by honey bees was estimated at £165m by DEFRA in 2006. This is a conservative figure.
- The BBKA Beekeeping Research Campaign calls for Defra funding of £8m over 5 years. This is less than 1% of the £825 million value of pollination provided to British agriculture by honey bees over the same period.
- Honey bees also provide significant benefit to the environment, pollinating a wide variety of plants. It is likely that honey bees provide over 50% of pollination of naturally occurring plants on which wild birds and mammals depend.
- It has been estimated that there are 44,000 beekeepers in the UK, with a total of 274,000 hives. Of these some 300 are commercial beekeepers (members of the BFA) with 50,000 hives. The remainder are keen amateurs.
- 100 years ago there were around 1million bee hives; this had reduced to 400,000 in the 1950s and further reduced to the 274,000 today.
- The feral honey bee population has been largely wiped out by disease in the last 15 years.

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