

AMERICAN FOULBROOD NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN

NEW POLICY ON DECA APPLICATIONS

AFB PMP Management Agency

Policy Number: AFB/22/0/11 - 007

Policy Title: Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement (DECA)

Legislation: Clauses 37 and 38 of the Biosecurity (National American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan) 1998, as amended by clause 17 of the Biosecurity (National American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan) Amendment Order 2013 (SR 2013/311)

Scope: The Disease Elimination Conformity Agreement or DECA, is a formal agreement between the beekeeper and the Management Agency. The agreement sets out a 'code of beekeeping practice' to ensure the incidence of AFB in hives will reduce to the lowest possible level.

The DECA is tailored to meet each beekeeper's particular circumstances and can be reviewed as changes take place.

It is the Management Agency's goal to ensure as many beekeepers as possible hold a DECA.

Current Policy: A beekeeper, irrespective of how long he/she has been beekeeping, can take the AFB Recognition Course, sit the test and, if successful, apply for a DECA. The beekeeper can elect not to attend a course but take the test as a 'one off' by way of a proctor arrangement and, if successful, to apply for a DECA.

New Policy Statement

The beekeeper must have kept bees for a period of no less than 12 months before applying for a DECA. The beekeeper, in that 12-month period, is encouraged to attend local beekeeping club open days, and also sit and pass AFB Recognition Course/ Exam during that time.

The DECA status will allow the beekeeper to inspect his/her own hives only.

At the completion of two years of practical beekeeping, the beekeeper will be expected to sit a refresher course, thus enabling him/her to undertake COI inspections for other beekeepers' hives.

An exemption to these requirements may be granted under certain circumstances.

Effective Date: This policy will be effective from 1 June 2015.

Review Date: 31 March 2016

Explanation

The Plan rules state:

"the management agency is **satisfied**—

- (i) that the practices and procedures set out in the agreement are, if carried out, sufficient to reduce or maintain at zero the overall annual rate of American foulbrood cases in beehives owned by the beekeeper; and
- (ii) the beekeeper is likely to implement the practices and procedures set out in the agreement; and
- (iii) **the persons named in the agreement as responsible for disease**

management are sufficiently familiar with and are suitable persons to supervise or carry out the practices."

The Management Agency (MA) has enough evidence to support the fact that many new entrant beekeepers, despite passing the disease recognition exam, are not actually that confident in correct AFB diagnosis. The MA is also not confident that they have sufficient experience/skill to carry out their obligations until they have some actual field experience. Having a year's practical experience managing their own hives, plus having another person do the COI on their behalf in that first year, should ensure the person has the required skill.

Signing a COI on behalf of another beekeeper puts the onus of ethical and statutory responsibility onto that person. The MA requires that the certifying beekeeper must be sufficiently experienced to undertake this role. This is why the MA has instigated a two-year stand-down period and a refresher course to ensure that the person has sufficient knowledge and skills to sign a statutory declaration on behalf of others with integrity.

This would be analogous to the graduated driver's licence process.