August 1, 2021

It has been a tough season for farmers. Extraordinary heat and dryness have dramatically compromised crops and pastures right across the prairies. The federal and provincial governments have stepped in to provide some assistance through AgriRecovery, specifically for cattle producers who are short on animal feed.

Beekeepers rely on many of those same crops and pastures to provide our hives with nectar and pollen to produce a honey crop and to feed our colonies. Although drought conditions influence circumstances around the honey bee industry much differently than that of the cattle industry, these drought-like conditions can also dramatically compromise the well being of our hives.

In response to the potential hardship due to this year’s drought, the Manitoba Beekeepers’ Association (MBA) has asked the province to conduct a survey of registered, commercial beekeepers on the impacts that the extreme hot, dry and smoky conditions have had on honey production in Manitoba. This survey, which will be pooled at the municipal and/or regional level will gauge how much honey was generally produced during July of this year thus collect into needed data to capture a drought related problem. This survey is expected to be sent out through our Provincial Apiarist, Rheal Lafreniere, during the first week of August.

From this information the MBA will identify regions that have experienced a reduced honey crop which may lead to financial hardship as extraordinary feeding measures will need to be taken earlier in the summer. Once identified, we will reach out to those producers and help put together a case for an assessment to qualify for financial help through AgriRecovery. AgriRecovery is intended to financially assist producers manage extraordinary conditions to cover extraordinary costs. We are specifically looking for producers who are experiencing extraordinarily dry conditions which have dramatically reduced their honey crop and thus will need to take extraordinary measures to feed their colonies to prepare them for winter. Please watch for the survey and respond to it in a timely manner.

Another thing producers need to serious consider is to participate in the Over Winter Honey Bee Mortality Insurance program. The possible lack of late season flowers may lead to the risk of malnourished colonies this fall. This could present a scenario which leads to higher winter losses if winter and spring conditions do not suit. You must apply for Overwinter Bee Mortality Insurance by **August 31**. Once your colonies are placed in overwinter storage, you have until November 30 to file a**Declaration of Overwinter Colonies Report** to declare and confirm the number of colonies placed in winter storage. More information can be found here:

<https://www.masc.mb.ca/masc.nsf/program_overwinter_bee_mortality.html>

Please contact me directly at stepplerfarms@hotmail.com if you have any comments or concerns.

Ian Steppler

Chairperson,

Manitoba Beekeepers Association