

Government Relations Update



by Gene Brandi, ABF Vice President

Re: ABF Legislative Fund Appeal

Dear ABF Member,

The American Beekeeping Federation continues to work in Washington D.C. and around the country to further the legislative and regulatory related priorities important to ABF members. ABF President, Tim Tucker, and ABF Past President, George Hansen, have already made one legislative trip to Washington in conjunction with the Varroa Summit they recently attended.

The legislative priorities of the ABF in 2014 include:

- **Funding for Research.** There is no question that the bee industry continues to sustain major colony losses throughout the country. Given the recent passage of the Farm Bill, we will work with Congress in an effort to obtain the necessary appropriations so that vital research into the many problems which negatively impact honey bee health can continue. In addition to USDA-ARS, we plan to work with other public and private research sources that can provide meaningful research opportunities for our industry.
- **Maintaining ARS Lab Funding.** The ABF continues to urge that USDA-ARS honey bee research facilities be fully funded in order to maintain and enhance their research efforts.
- **Protecting our Honey Market.** There continues to be a great deal of discussion concerning the state of our honey market. The discussions come down to two priorities: 1) establishing a national standard of identity for honey; and 2) stopping illegal imports, particularly transshipment of Chinese honey through intermediary countries. We are being told that our honey market is in precarious shape. We need to take strong steps to shore it up.

The FDA has thus far refused work on the honey standard of identity submitted by the industry, led by the ABF in 2006. However, there is language in the recently passed Farm Bill which requires that the USDA address the need for a national standard of identity for honey within 180 days. The standard of identity will give state and federal enforcement officials a better tool to use to

stop those who are adding cheaper sweeteners to our honey. In addition, several persons accused of being involved in honey transshipment have been arrested and convicted. The ABF, along with representatives other honey industry groups, has developed a modified proposal for a national honey standard that we would like to see adopted by FDA.

- **Pesticides.** We are losing our bees at unsustainable rates, and it is increasingly clear that pesticides play a major role in colony decline. The verification that neonicotinoids have been implicated in honey bee losses during corn planting in the US and Canada is a reminder that this is an area that cannot be overlooked, no matter the pushback from entities with vested interests. The fact that neonicotinoids and other pesticides applied to a variety of crops continue to have negative effects on honey bees throughout the country is of extreme concern to the ABF. The ABF, on its own and with the National Honey Bee Advisory Board (NHBAB) have developed a working relationship with the EPA as a stakeholder in the efforts to revise registration and labeling of pesticides. It is clear that the incident reporting system and the policing of compliance issues are broken. ABF leaders and members have already devoted considerable time and effort toward these issues in recent years but there is a great deal more work which must be done if real progress is to be made in protecting honey bees from the negative effects of pesticides.
- **Promoting and protecting Honey Bee Habitat.** Lack of sufficient clean foraging resources for honey bees in many parts of the country is having a profoundly negative effect on hive health and productivity. We are committed to working with government agencies, agriculture allies, and other stakeholders to develop policies and programs to enhance, protect, expand, and provide access to suitable pollinator habitat. ABF Vice-President, Gene Brandi and Past President, Zac Browning recently met with representatives of Pheasants Forever and Project Apis-M to discuss potential partnerships in bee forage/habitat projects.

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