

AHB TMG Minutes

Meeting Four of the Asian Honey Bee Transition Management Group (AHB TMG)

Teleconference held on Wednesday 29th February, 2012

Attendees: Colin Grant DAFF (Chair), Glynn Maynard DAFF, Tegan Honing-Wassenburg DAFF, Neil O'Brien DEEDI, Rick Symons DEEDI, Stephen Ware AHBIC, Trevor Weatherhead AHBIC, Greg Fraser PHA, Rod Turner PHA, Sharyn Taylor PHA, Sam Malfroy PHA (Secretariat) and Amy Forbes PHA.

Apologies: Lois Ransom DAFF, Kareena Arthy DEEDI, Lindsay Bourke AHBIC and Jenna Taylor PHA.

Item 1 – Welcome by the Chair

The Chair welcomed the Members of the Asian Honey Bee Transition Management Group (AHB TMG) to the teleconference.

Item 2 – Action items from previous meeting

The action items from Meeting 3 were tabled and discussed. The TMG members stated that all of the action items from the previous meeting had been initiated and were progressing well. The Chair commended the TMG on their role in progressing the AHB T2M.

Item 3 – Update on Project Activities: PHA

Plant Health Australia (PHA) provided an update to the Members of the TMG on the Asian honey bee website. It was discussed that PHA had uploaded AHB documents to the website, minutes from previous AHB SAG and AHB TMG meetings as well as information regarding the TMG and SAG which were all available to be accessed by the general public and industry.

PHA also stated that the minutes from Meeting 3 of the TMG and minutes from Meeting 3 and 4 of the SAG had been distributed to members of the TMG for approval and placement on the Asian honey bee website. The Members of the TMG endorsed the draft minutes that were distributed and the Chair acknowledged that these minutes were ready for placement on the Asian honey bee website.

Item 4 – Update on the SAG: Rod Turner (Chair of the SAG)

The Chair of the SAG provided an update to the TMG regarding the recent teleconference the SAG held on the 15th of February.

The Chair of the SAG outlined the 9 Recommendations to the TMG that were provided by the SAG at this meeting. These included:

Recommendation 1: The SAG agreed with the Asian honey bee odour detection dog review conducted by DEEDI and recommended that the dog no longer be used within the AHB T2M program.

Recommendation 2: That the draft pathway analysis document prepared by DAFF in 2008 be updated to include a domestic pathway analysis, and a specific section relating to pathway analysis of the current AHB incursion, as well as the potential introduction of other pest *Apis* spp..

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Recommendation 3: The SAG recommends that the nectar analysis outlined in AG Project 2 be dropped from the AHB T2M program.

Recommendation 4: That the dropped nectar analysis be replaced by the pollen analysis that is currently being conducted in a joint external project between UNE and CSIRO which will identify pollen resources used by AHB nests collected in areas with different plant communities.

Recommendation 5: For PHA to follow up with RIRDC in regards to the approved 'call for research proposals' and for these to be distributed to relevant researchers in a timely manner.

Recommendation 6: For the SAG to be allowed to comment on the research proposals received by RIRDC.

Recommendation 7: For the SAG to be directly involved in re-designing the Fipronil remote poisoning experiment based on the DEEDI document, including the testing of variables such as concentration of Fipronil, how many foragers are present on the bait station and distance to the hive etc.

Recommendation 8: For DEEDI to conduct experiments on minimising the impact of Fipronil remote poisoning on non-target organisms with direct scientific input from the SAG.

Recommendation 9: For the beginning of the Fipronil experimental document to be rewritten to include how and where Fipronil is used to provide context of how widely used this chemical is in order to provide information for the general public and stakeholders.

All Members of the TMG acknowledged these recommendations; however, the Chair stated that the role of the SAG is to provide specific technical and scientific information, not to be approving any changes to the AHB T2M. The Chair of the SAG acknowledged this, but added that these were recommendations by the SAG for consideration by the TMG and that they were based on scientific and technical aspects of the AHB T2M. The Members and Chair of the TMG accepted these recommendations and it was agreed that they were to be followed up out of sessions by the relevant parties.

DEEDI stated that the SAG had provided valuable input in the experimental design of the Fipronil trial, however questioned the level of input that the SAG could provide on specific details of the experiment and operational activities. The Chair stated that it is not appropriate for the SAG to be commenting on specific details regarding operational activities of DEEDI staff in Cairns, and that the SAG should focus on providing advice on the overarching scientific principals and experimental design of the trial.

Item 5 – Discussion: Sharepoint

PHA provided an update on the setup of Sharepoint for the Members of the TMG. It was discussed that documents for comment by the TMG, such as draft minutes from meetings would continue to be coordinated through email with the secretariat. PHA explained that all Members of the TMG would gain read only access to the Sharepoint site, and that this would contain all documents relevant to each meeting such as agenda's and attachments, as well as finalised minutes and action item lists from each meeting.

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Item 6 – Update from DEEDI: Neil O’Brien

DEEDI stated that 29 nests so far this year had been detected in the Cairns area and that nests were still being destroyed at the edge of infestation area, while detections of AHB foragers were not being followed up in the KIA, in accordance with the AHB T2M.

One nest had been detected within the National Park at Lake Barrine. DEEDI informed the TMG that discussions had been held with Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) about whether this nest could form part of the Fipronil remote poisoning experiment. DERM gave permission for the AHB nest to be destroyed using localised insect spray, however, objected to the use of Fipronil in remote poisoning. It was stated that these discussions with DERM are ongoing.

It was discussed that the Fipronil trials had begun, and that it is about a week process to identify, beeline, train onto a feeding station, record forager activity and ultimately destroy an AHB nest. So far, one nest had been destroyed in the Fipronil remote poisoning experiment, and DEEDI stated that more would follow in the coming weeks, depending on weather conditions.

A question was asked about whether DEEDI would still appreciate the beekeeping industry sending up volunteers to assist in the AHB T2M, specifically the Fipronil trials. DEEDI stated that they would be happy to receive industry volunteers and that this would greatly aid in the advancement of the T2M.

It was also stated that interviews would start shortly for the mapping and information position, as well as the junior and senior scientist, as well as the senior community engagement officer shortly.

Item 7 – Future Meetings

The Chair outlined that these meetings would be hard to complete in the thirty minute timeframe that was proposed at Meeting 3 of the TMG, and instead the Chair proposed that the next meeting which is scheduled for the 27th of March be conducted for 1 hour. All members of the TMG agreed with this proposal.

Item 8 – Summary and Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked all Members of the TMG for their hard work in continuing to progress the AHB T2M program and closed the meeting.