

AN BEACHAIRE

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Dear Editor,

We were disappointed with content given on the APIVAR product in the December *Beachaire* pg718 and 719.

While the writer Mary Coffey copied most of the information from the manufacturer, however the most important point of all was lost in the dissertation.

Namely to rotate the medications and change out the combs.

When Varroa was discovered in Ireland, the only licenced medication allowed by the Department was Bayvarol. When alternative medicines were also available the importance of rotating medications was not stressed adequately (the use of Bayvarol was a simple matter of inserting 4 strips for 6 weeks), even this was abused, and resistance to flumethrin occurred far sooner than it should! As research on viruses and their interaction with Varroa became known the benefits of comb rotation took greater importance,

This time round we are requesting the CFLS, Beemasters and those delivering lectures familiarise themselves with the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) and stick to that. The SPC are the terms the product is licensed for use in the country and they do not allow for any variation. We hope that message got across to those that attended the upskilling day in Tullamore.

VetoPharm the manufacturer of APIVAR recommend the rotation of this product with others. They also emphasise changing out of all the combs in the brood box. The offending article did not incorporate this important information yet the SPC clearly states it..

The bee-health committee has done extensive work on APIVAR in the last three years. The recommendation from our medicine experts and the vet that we use; is that if you use it in the current year that it should not be used again for another 2 years and that you change out all the brood combs to slow down any build-up in the hives.

The beekeepers need to act responsibly this time. There are no other alternatives to fall back on.

We are asking the beekeepers to use this product responsibly rotate the medications and change out all the brood combs. Use should be limited to 2 year intervals to help prevent resistance build up.

Sincerely,
Bee Health Committee

ApiVar: A Response to the Bee Health Committee's Report
By Mary F Coffey

This short communication is in response to the recent email/report drafted by Bee Health Committee which criticised my article on ApiVar which was published in the December edition of the magazine (pg 718-719). This email/report was subsequently circulated to all local secretaries and at the time of writing it is my understanding that the same email/report will be published in the January edition of the magazine.

In this email/report the Bee Health Committee referenced my article as an "an offending article", and suggested that as the author I had copied the information directly from the product literature provided by the manufacturers of ApiVar, and strongly indicated that I was unable to identify the key aspects in this information, because I omitted to include two general recommendations that this product should be used as part of an integrated approach and brood frames should be changed. The email/report ended with a recommendation from the Bee Health committee and I quote "We are asking the beekeepers to use this product responsibly, rotate the medications and change out all the brood combs. Use should be limited to 2 year intervals to help prevent resistance build-up"

The aim of my original article was to familiarise beekeepers with the most recent authorised varroacide, ApiVar and summarise the instructions supplied by the manufacturers on how the product should be administered safely to the colony. To ensure the instructions given were unambiguous, as correctly mentioned in the email/report, the information was predominantly taken from the product information leaflets, with reference to the SPC (Summary of Product Characteristics) which is freely available on HPRA Veterinary web page. Advantages and disadvantages of the treatment were highlighted and the potential risk of the Varroa mite developing resistance to the active ingredient, Amitraz, was clearly outlined. According to the SPC, ApiVar should be used as part of an integrated control programme with treatment rotations applied and all brood combs should be replaced with new foundation at least every 3 years. Clearly, these are very broad recommendations and are applicable to most varroacides especially chemical based treatments such as ApiVar. Since beekeepers in Ireland are very familiar with the importance of adopting an integrated approach to Varroa control and are presently change >30% of frames annually (based in COLOSS data, 2016/2017), I chose not to include this general recommendation in the original article which was solely drafted to provide beekeepers with simple instructions on how to administer this new product to their colonies safely. Therefore, I was very surprised to see such a negative outburst and derogative assessment of my article by the Bee Health Committee and more surprised with their recommendation that

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ApiVar should only be used at **2 year intervals** and **all brood comb should be changed out**, (time frame not specified), while at the same time recommending to CFLS, Bee Masters and all lecturers and I quote “to *familiarise themselves with the SPC and stick to that*”.

Nowhere in the Veto-Pharma product literature or in the SPC is it recommended to administer ApiVar at 2 year intervals or is there a recommendation to change out all brood frames (I can only assume that changing out brood frames means changing all brood frames in one season). Instead in the SPC, ApiVar is recommended to be **administered as part of an integrated approach with rotation treatment applied** and beekeepers should aim to change all frames over a **three year period**. Such a recommendation is similar in most chemical treatments.

This apparent contradiction in a very short report is difficult to comprehend and begs the question: Was the primary aim of this Bee Health Committee email/report to provide clarity to beekeepers or just merely an opportunity to criticise the on-going work in the National Apiculture Programme?. If providing clarity to beekeepers was the key concern of the Bee Health Committee, then I would have expected that the Bee Health Officer would have contacted me directly with the concerns raised by the committee, but instead without any contact, the committee circulated this defamatory email/report to all secretaries in early December and at the time of writing I understand that it has now also been submitted for publication in this edition of the magazine. The fact that the Bee Health Officer failed to contact me as author of the original article raises its own concerns, but discussing such political issues in an open forum is inappropriate and unhelpful.

However, for now my priority is to ensure that all beekeepers are well informed regarding the administration and use of this new product, ApiVar. If beekeepers have any queries in relation to original article or the use of ApiVar in general, please feel free to contact me at Mary.Frances.Coffey@ul.ie

[Editor’s Note: We have also been contacted by Ulrike Marsky, Technical Director with Veto-Pharma. She and her team have read Mary Coffey’s letter and have let us know that they completely agree with her. They feel there is no further need for them to comment.]

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