

OVERVIEW OF BEEKEEPING LISTENING SESSIONS

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Richard Ball conducted three listening sessions for beekeepers in the fall of 2018 to solicit feedback on the issues and needs facing the apiary industry and to provide an overview of the NYS Pollinator Protection Plan. Invitations and copies of the Pollinator Protection Plan were sent to over 25 bee clubs to assure diverse representation from across the state and amongst the beekeeping community. To obtain additional input, Commissioner Ball participated in meetings of the Catskill Mountain Bee Club on August 14 and Empire State Honey Producers on November 2.

The listening sessions in Fall 2018 were held:

- November 19, Capital Region - Albany, NY. Approximately 10 beekeepers attended this session.
- November 29, Central/Western Region - Geneva, NY. Approximately 12 beekeepers attended this session.
- December 6, Hudson Valley – Elmsford, NY. 10 beekeepers attended this session.

Commissioner Ball started each session by thanking the beekeepers for participating and giving a general overview of the Pollinator Protection Plan and progress made in conserving and promoting pollinators in NYS. The Commissioner also highlighted the partnership the Department has with Cornell University in the establishment of the Tech Team and its progress in improving best management practices in the bee industry. He shared the findings of the Cornell research program thus far. Commissioner Ball asked the participants for constructive suggestions on how to modernize the state's apiary inspection efforts and how the department can improve apiary inspections.

Plant Industry Director Chris Logue provided an overview of Agriculture and Markets Law, Article 15 "Bee Diseases" and a synopsis of the state's inspection efforts, National Honeybee Survey results, and the incidence of American Foulbrood in the state.

The format of the remainder of each of the sessions was a roundtable discussion. The following suggestions were made during the three listening sessions:

Statutory and Programmatic Actions

- Law should be looked at as a historical document intimating that the law is no longer relevant as written. (Geneva session)
- Law should address the destruction of Africanized and/or aggressive bees. (Geneva session)
- Need a law to deal with AFB, change the law to allow for treatment versus burning. No sale of Nucs with AFB. (Geneva session)
- The Department should have more apiary inspectors. Inspector resources might be more effective if they were deployed more widely in the state (All sessions). Long Island

participants felt that due to the travel challenges associated with getting on to Long Island, an inspector stationed on the island would be more efficient. (Hudson Valley session)

- Almost universal acknowledgment that NUC colony sales are a potential pathway for disease and NUC production might be an efficient place to deploy some inspection resources. (All sessions)
- The Department indicated that registration information would be helpful when delimiting disease presence, especially American Foulbrood. In addition, registration would allow the state an easier means of communication with the industry. Beekeeper concerns over registration include: privacy, disclosure to localities that might result in zoning infractions, and the need for the state to clearly articulate the “value” of registration. (All sessions).

Outreach and Education Actions

- Interest in ways to better influence the state to put more resources into extension and research on managed pollinators. It was suggested that this would be best accomplished by becoming more involved in the governance of local Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations, participating in the Empire State Honey Producers and connecting with local and state Farm Bureau leaders who have been supportive (Hudson Valley session).
- Need for better dissemination of information (Cornell research, mite presence, etc.) from Cornell to bee clubs (Geneva and Albany sessions).
- Department should provide information on AFB detects in a report, along with a map, to bee clubs. (Albany session)
- Cornell training and a certificate program on disease detection and best management practices should be considered for bee inspectors, master beekeepers, etc. (Geneva session)
- Consider inspector demonstrations at bee clubs. (Geneva session)

Other Entities, Government Actions

- Municipalities should notify the public of areas before spraying.
- Need a progress report from Department of Transportation and Department of Environmental Conservation regarding mowing the roadsides. Concern about eliminating woody plants, canopy. (Albany session)
- Need to revisit the need for pollinator plants with Department of Transportation and NYS Thruway. (Albany session)
- Concern with local zoning laws that prohibit people from keeping bees and suburban land management practices that may adversely impact pollinators in the more urban and suburban areas of the state. (Hudson Valley session)
- Concern with the veterinary feed directive and how it will impact beekeepers and the possibility of using professional veterinarians for some of the inspection and health certificate work. (Albany session)