

Hornet trap planned

To combat the Asian hornet which has been devastating honeybee colonies in France and now spreading elsewhere, Vita has commissioned and tested a patented hornet trap that it plans to have on sale later this year.

First identified near Agen in France in 2004, possibly having arrived in a consignment of pottery from China, the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*) has spread to at least 35 of France's 96 homeland departments and as far north as Paris, to the borders with Italy, and to Galicia in NW Spain. They contributed to the deaths of as many as 70% of honeybee colonies in Bordeaux, France in 2007 and continue to decimate colonies wherever they go. Last season's casualty figures are now being collected.

"We don't know how far or how quickly the Asian hornet will travel, but, according to prediction models from the French Museum of Natural History, it could spread to most European countries," explained Alexandros Papachristoforou, a researcher at Thessaloniki University. "At first we thought that southern Spain might be too hot, but a hornet alert has just been raised there. Scandinavia and the Alps may be too cold, but it may spread to countries like the UK and Germany. Queens could possibly even fly the English Channel."

The Asian hornet is proving to be a fierce predator killing not just honeybee colonies, but also pushing native hornets like the European hornet, *Vespa crabro*, out of their habitat.

"We know that *Apis cerana* (the Eastern honeybee) counter-attacks the Asian hornet by 'balling' them. In Cyprus, we have discovered that Cyprian honeybees have two defensive tactics against the native Oriental hornet, *Vespa orientalis*. But as yet *Apis mellifera* (the Western honeybee) shows no capacity to defend against the Asian hornet and we don't know how long it might take for a defensive behaviour to evolve," continued Papachristoforou.

Vita's new website
www.vita-europe.com

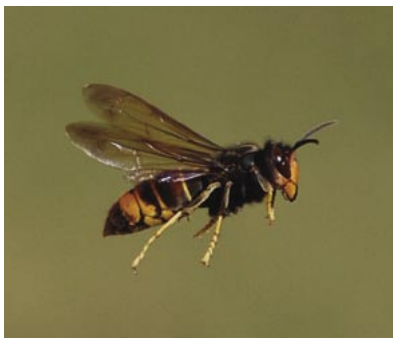
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Vita Europe Ltd



Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*)
Picture courtesy: Alexandros Papachristoforou

Vita has commissioned a hornet trap to fit underneath a hive and is currently talking to prospective manufacturers of the trap.

"We hope the trap will be ready towards the end of this season when the hornet attacks start," said Max Watkins, Technical Director of Vita. "We have thoroughly tested the trap and know that it is very effective. Its innovative design is patented and the challenge is now to produce one at the right price for beekeepers."

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Vita Gallery competition Winners announced!

The quality of entries to the Vita Gallery photo competition was so high that Vita is awarding four top prizes with runners' up prizes for the final 20 short-listed entries.

All those registered for the Vita Gallery can now access more than 100 additional images which have just been added to the gallery.

Registration to the Vita Gallery is free – see www.vita-europe.com



EDITORIAL



Here at Vita, we like to understand the needs of beekeepers across the globe. I have just returned from an apiculture conference and workshop held in Ludhiana in the North Indian State of Punjab where I learned about the enormous potential for beekeeping in India and the experiences of the Punjab.

Punjab is India's leading state in honey production and yet there are currently only 300,000 colonies (and 25,000 beekeepers) in an area that has agricultural crops and flora that could easily support four times that number – 1.2 million colonies.

Agricultural policy in Punjab is to diversify away from cereal crops towards fruits, vegetables, oilseeds and legumes – all crops that are partly or completely dependent on pollination by bees.

Apis mellifera has been pioneered in Punjab with the support of the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana since 1966. It produces far more honey than the native honeybee species. Now, migratory beekeeping has become a way of life for Punjab beekeepers who produce more than 10,000 tonnes of honey a year, about 30% of total Indian honey production.

So important is Punjab honey production that in 2009 the Indian Railways Ministry ran a dedicated train from Ludhiana to Mumbai, a distance of well over 1500 kms, exclusively carrying 200 tonnes of Punjab honey for export to more than 48 countries.

Jeremy Owen
Sales Director
Vita (Europe) Ltd

NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

Vita R&D news

Vita Research award

Vita is again inviting entries for its 2011 research prize. Valued at up to €10,000, the award is made every few years to help fund honeybee health research. Any individual or organisation can apply.

The closing date is 31 July 2011 – email info@vita-europe.com for an application form.

Nosema research

Because of the threats posed by *Nosema ceranae* and *Nosema apis*, Vita has stepped up its efforts to find suitable treatments.

Initial tests in Greece have shown that Vita Feed Gold works as well if not better than any other current Nosema treatment. Colonies which were showing severe Nosema symptoms last summer were fed with Vita Feed Gold. These colonies are now showing high growth and vigour and have very low spore counts of both types of Nosema.

Research on new acaricide

The search for new varroa treatments is never ending and Vita has had very positive results using a new treatment with a novel active ingredient never before used to control varroa.

It is a second generation varroa treatment that is designed to be administered by strips in the brood box. Trials are showing that it can kill varroa without having any ill-effects on bees.

The next stage is to test its efficacy in a much wider range of beekeeping environments.

Boosting colony growth

Effective pollination and nectar gathering depends on colonies in peak condition. Vita is testing a pheromone combination that quickly brings

bees up to full foraging strength. It promotes specific bee behaviours such as stimulating nurse bees to become foragers.

It is designed to be used a few weeks in advance of an important nectar flow or pollination contract.

Naturally the product needs to be used with care to avoid stressing bees and to maintain colony sustainability, but Vita is very confident that by following some straightforward instructions such risks can be eliminated.

New bioassay coming

Bioassays – measuring the effects of a substance on living organisms – are central to Vita's research and development. So, in partnership with a university, Vita has been developing a brand new technique which is proving highly successful.

The new methodology is more accurate and much faster than previous techniques and is already revealing new facts about the biology of varroa mites.

This new bioassay, which requires specialist equipment, will soon be revealed in a leading biological journal.

Wax moth control progress

In the last issue, we reported on a pheromone-based wax moth control product that Vita was investigating.

Rigorous testing shows that the control works extremely well in warm climates where the wax moth threat tends to be greatest.

However, it seems less effective in cool climates and Vita is therefore continuing its R&D to ensure that the treatment works well in all beekeeping environments.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Sweden's dilemma

Honeybee colony losses in Sweden are increasing because of a change in Sweden's honeybee treatment regulations. Bengt Svensson, Vita's distributor in Sweden, Swedish beekeepers and Vita itself are lobbying for changes before the situation becomes much worse.

Bengt Svensson of beekeeping company Joel Svenssons VaxFabrik has been supplying Swedish beekeepers with Apistan since 1994 and with Apiguard since 2005. But in 2010, a new set of regulations meant that he could no longer sell the products – the treatments became registered as vet medicines and had to be supplied under licence by vets or pharmacists.

Suddenly, Apistan and Apiguard became difficult to obtain and their price almost tripled. Bengt Svensson explained, "The situation suddenly became very complicated. We were no longer permitted to supply Apistan or Apiguard. Beekeepers had to encourage vets to apply for a licence and then ask a pharmacy to import the product. This has led to small-scale agreements and huge price rises."

The only other option for beekeepers has been to use other acid-based formulations which are not as effective. As a result, Sweden is beginning to see an increase in colony deaths.

"The situation is very frustrating and I have great sympathy with Swedish beekeepers," said Max Watkins of Vita. "Our products have been registered in Sweden for many years and no-one doubts their efficacy or safety, but this sudden rule change has put our products beyond the reach of many.

"The Swedish authorities are sympathetic but honeybee treatments are an anomaly to them. They are newly characterised as veterinary medicines and there is no dispensation for this Minor Use in a Minor Species. At present Beekeepers are having to pay a



Bengt Svensson and Max Watkins meet to discuss the Swedish dilemma.

ridiculously high price for Apistan and Apiguard and must buy them through slow and unfamiliar channels.

"We are giving what support we can to Bengt Svensson and Swedish beekeepers to try to get a resolution to this unnecessary situation."

The Origins of Joel Svenssons VaxFabrik beekeeping supplies

Joel Svenssons VaxFabrik was set up as a beekeeping suppliers in 1887 by Svante Krook, a friend of Bengt Svensson's grandfather.

Svante was a resourceful farmer and an innovating beekeeper. He was quick to adopt the new moveable frame hives and set about making his own wax foundation by hand-carving worker cells in sheets of oak.

Demand for his products soon exceeded his production capabilities, so he sailed off to New York and travelled on to Ohio to learn how to make foundation with a modern rolling press. His six-month trip paid off and on his return the beekeeping supplies business flourished.

Weathering the difficulties posed by two world wars and new bee diseases, the business passed to Bengt's father, and in 1976 to Bengt himself. Today, Joel Svenssons VaxFabrik is Sweden's premier beekeeping supplies company.

BUZZWORDS

Cane toad with wings

Australians are fearing the invasion of *Apis cerana*, the Eastern honeybee in Queensland, calling it a cane toad with wings.

The poisonous cane toad (*Bufo marinus*) was introduced to combat beetle pests in Australian sugar cane fields, but fared rather too well at the expense of native reptiles and failed to subdue the beetle pests.

Apis cerana is an accidental introduction that threatens to bring with it varroa (Australia is still thought to be varroa-free) and to out-compete *Apis mellifera*. The *Apis cerana* eradication program which to date has eradicated about 350 invading colonies since 2007 is expected to be halted in April 2011. Beekeepers are lobbying for its continuation.

Smartphones to predict swarming?

Scientists say they can detect pre-swarming vibrations in a hive about two weeks before the swarm departs.

The researchers at Nottingham Trent University used accelerometers (vibration detectors) to identify ten different types of vibration in a hive. Two of these vibrations increased in amplitude up to two weeks before swarming.

Some have speculated that it might be possible to set up a phone to send a text message to a beekeeper warning of an impending swarm.

<http://tiny.cc/dsyby>

RESOURCE

Vita Gallery and photo competition

The Vita gallery Photo competition attracted entries from across the globe and the winners have just been announced – see panel on right. You can see all the winning entries on the new Vita website www.vita-europe.com and over 100 of the entries are now in the Vita gallery: www.vita-europe.com/vitagallery.

Jeremy Owen, Sales Director of Vita, said, “We have been so delighted with the quality of the entries that we have decided to award many more prizes than we first announced. All the shortlisted entries will be receiving a special gift and we are awarding three main adult and two junior prizes. I’d recommend that anyone logs on to our new website to see more of the entries.”



Bee and the Bubble – winning entry from P Perry, Uxbridge, UK.



A rising star: one of the under 16 entries of emerging bees by Ben Bowers (14) of the USA and a stunning landscape from Franc Sivic of Slovenia.

Photo Prize Winners

- 1st P Perry, Uxbridge, UK
- 2nd Rose Zak, Minnesota, USA
- 3rd John Baker, Pennsylvania, USA
- 4th Franc Sivic, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Junior prizes:

- Ben Bowers III, Pennsylvania, USA
- Peter Clough, Cheshire, UK

The Judging Panel

Along with Jeremy Owen (ably assisted by his wife) and Max Watkins of Vita, the judging panel comprised Nicola Bradbear of Bees for Development, Claire Waring of Bee Craft, Gordon Stokes, a semi-professional photographer and Stephen Fleming of Palam Communications. Jeremy and Max would particularly like to thank Nicola, Clare and Gordon for their assistance.

Vita products**Apistan**

Varroa control strips (pyrethroid)

Apiguard

Varroa control gel (thymol)

EFB Testing Kit

European Foulbrood hiveside test

AFB Testing Kit

American Foulbrood hiveside test

B401

Biological wax moth control

Vita Feed Green

to strengthen colonies

Vita Feed Gold

to help prevent diarrhoea and strengthen weak colonies

**NEWS
MITE**

The newsletter for distributors of Vita (Europe) Ltd. mite control products.

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