



# The Danish Beekeepers Association

Over the past several decades the varroa mite has spread all over Europe. This means that beekeepers today operate their beekeeping in such a way that the population of varroa mites is kept low. It is not possible to eliminate the varroa mite like other diseases.

It is therefore important that beekeepers have the widest range of options to choose between different operating methods to keep the population of varroa mites under control. If the beekeepers cannot regulate the varroa mite optimally, it will not only cause problems for the beekeeper, but also have secondary consequences for the pollination of agricultural products.

In most European countries, beekeepers have a long tradition of varroa control using organic acids in the pure form, following the rules for organic beekeeping. This practice has been developed and adapted over 30 years and beekeepers have been educated in these methods. The experience shows that this practice works well for beekeepers and bees.

With reference to article 4 all treatment of varroa must be carried out with registered veterinary medicines for the following reasons:

- Honeybees are covered by the law.
- The Varroa mite is a parasite and is considered a disease.

Since the varroa mite is not a parasite that can be completely controlled in the bee colonies, and therefore must be regulated through operating methods, it is recommended that the control of varroa be exempted from Chapter 4, or at least that beekeepers can use methods based on organic acids in pure form.

Only very few registered products on the market are based on organic acids and these products cannot stand alone. A product can legally only be used as stated in the instruction. Several products have not been tested in more countries and they are not prepared for different conditions and beehives. Varroa control is complicated - multiple treatments are needed. Experience says that we need a varroa strategy, not just individual treatments. There may be a shift towards more use of synthetic pesticides in beekeeping.

The organic acids, oxalic acid and formic acid, are found naturally in honey. The acids are pure, naturally occurring substances. Because oxalic acid and formic acid are found naturally in honey, a MRL (Maximum Limit Value) for these acids is not required. The typical treatments with organic acids are carried out after the last honey harvest. The bees that are treated are the generation of so-called winter bees that hatch in August-September. This generation lives 6-7 months and disappears in the early spring after ensuring the wintering of the bee colony. The winter bees are not honey-producing.

The acids are applied in several different ways, which enable the beekeeper to use precisely the methods that work best in his or her beekeeping. The effectiveness of the various substances varies with temperature, humidity and the brood situation of the bees.

Beehives are treated by evaporation or dripping of the organic acids to achieve a direct contact effect on the varroa mites. There is no need for the treatments to be absorbed into the bees. It is important to emphasize that treatments are only suppressing the mite population. There is no eradication.

Organic acids are accepted within organic beekeeping (Annex II, Part II, 1.9.6.3, Letter e of Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labeling of organic products and on the repeal of Council Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007). The regulation on organic beekeeping refers to varroa control as health care.

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