

American Foulbrood (AFB)

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American Foulbrood (AFB) Latest News

Beekeepers have been warned to increase the biosecurity of their hives after an outbreak of American Foulbrood disease (AFB) was recently confirmed in Scotland.

About American Foulbrood

- It is a **fatal infectious disease of honey bee larvae** caused by a **spore-forming bacterium** called **Paenibacillus larvae**.
- While it **only attacks larvae**, AFB **weakens the colony** and can quickly **lead to its death** in only three weeks.
- **Cause:**
 - Paenibacillus larvae **produce spores when subjected to stress** such as lack of nutrients.
 - It's these spores that actually cause and are the source of the disease.
 - **Spores enter the larva** through feeding of **contaminated food**.
 - The bacteria **kill the bee larva** by completely consuming the body tissues.

- The **spores** are **highly resistant to extremes** of temperature, chemical attack, and other adverse conditions and can **remain viable for over 50 years**
- Once hardship has passed, for example, when nutrients become available again, the bacterium will germinate and reproduce.
- The cycle will repeat if hardship occurs again. This means that it is **difficult to eliminate the spores from colonies**.
- **Transmission:**
 - Although AFB is **not highly contagious**, bacterial **spores** can easily be **spread between hives and apiaries through beekeeping practices** such as the exchange of equipment and movement of infected combs.
 - Though **adult bees** are not affected by AFB, they can **spread spores** within and between infected and clean hives through robbing and drifting.
- **Treatment:** The disease is **not able to be cured**, meaning that **destruction of infected colonies** and hives or **irradiation of infected material is the only way** to manage AFB.

Source: HS

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/what-is-american-foulbrood/>

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