



APICULTURE NEW ZEALAND

Update on Mycoplasma bovis – Important notice for beekeepers

Further to our update on Friday and following the Government's announcement on Monday to attempt to eradicate Mycoplasma bovis, here's more information and detail from both MPI and Federated Farmers on advice for beekeepers in having good biosecurity measures in place.

While the disease is not able to be spread by bees, nor is it windborne, farmers, whether affected by Mycoplasma bovis or not, are naturally concerned about vehicles coming onto their property from other properties.

While MPI has stated that that it is absolutely safe for tradesmen, truck drivers, contractors, and beekeepers, to move from infected farms to other properties, and that vehicles do not need to be disinfected unless they have been on an infected property, we know from beekeepers around the country, that farmers are understandably being extra cautious at this time.

For that reason, we recommend you take the advice of Federated Farmers – **as an extra precaution, beekeepers should carry general disinfectant and spray vehicles, shoes, and other equipment with visible organic materials, for use on entry and exit of farms, whether affected or not.**

Beekeepers have been asking what disinfectant to use – the disease is weak, and vets have been using citric acid solution as disinfectant, which poses no food risk.

If you decide to use citric acid solution as the disinfectant, MPI has suggested a ratio of 1 tsp citric acid to 1L of water. It is a crystal form, so it will need to be mixed up into a solution with water then sprayed onto equipment. Citric acid is readily available at most stores, including chemical supply outlets and sells for around \$22 to \$23 per kilogram. Other suitable disinfectants are: 1% Virkon (made by mixing 50g standard sachet) Virkon with 5 litres water), Trigene, or any appropriate disinfectant used to the manufacturer's instructions. Disinfectants won't work through dirt, so it is important to remove all visible dirt and dung from gear and vehicles that have been in contact with stock before using disinfectant solutions.

Federated Farmers and MPI both stress that open communication with each landowner is paramount. Keep in touch with them when you are about to go on their land, outline the precautions you are taking as above – we have included the exact wording from MPI's website below.

We want to provide you with the best information possible to assist you to continue working with beef and dairy farmers during this difficult time. We will keep our members updated as needed if developments regarding our industry arise. We also appreciate any further questions or concerns you may have to keep our information current.

The following is MPI's wording from its website: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/mycoplasma-bovis/advice-for-farmers-rural-contractors-and-transporters/>.

Farm service providers

Farmers should be using routine on-farm biosecurity practices to minimise risk to their animals. Comply with the farm's cleaning and disinfection requirements to help minimise risk.

- Don't arrive unannounced. Let the farmer know you plan to visit their farm and ask what their requirements are.
- Work with the farmer to comply with any farm biosecurity requirements.
- Clean and disinfect footwear, protective clothing and equipment before coming on the farm and again before leaving the farm.
- Be proactive – assure farmers of your hygiene practices.

Safe to move vehicles to other farms

It is absolutely safe for tradesmen and truck drivers to move from infected farms to other properties.

All infected farms are under strict legal controls under the Biosecurity Act. These controls include a comprehensive cleaning and disinfection protocol which MPI provided to them. This makes sure vehicles have a very small biosecurity risk.

All vehicles are cleaned and disinfected before leaving properties. Vehicles carrying animals – for example, transporters to the meat processing premises – are disinfected on exit, going directly to the meat processor (not to other farms) and then thoroughly cleaned and disinfected at the plant on completing the job.

Vehicles from neighbouring farms are not required to clean vehicles leaving their properties as the biosecurity risk is considered by MPI to be very small.

If you have any more questions about Mycoplasma bovis, contact MPI - email info@mpi.govt.nz, call 0800 00 83 33 or visit their website [here](#). You can also contact us on info@apinz.org.nz or 04 471 6254.