18th August 2026

To: Belinda Phillipson
Head of Bee Health Policy, NBU/APHA

Dear Belinda,

I am writing as Chair of the BBKA about the recent confirmation of *Tropilaelaps mercedesae* in Turkey and the implications for UK biosecurity.

On 26 July 2026, Prof. Dr Aslı Özkırım, a senior academic specialising in bee health at Hacettepe University, publicly confirmed the presence of *Tropilaelaps mercedesae* in Turkish colonies. Her bilingual statement, and her standing in the field, make this a credible report. It follows earlier detections in Georgia (2024) and Russia (2025), showing a clear westward spread across the wider Caucasus and eastern Black Sea region.

The Apimondia alert* issued on 14 August highlights that the situation in Turkey sits within a broader regional risk affecting Bulgaria, Belarus, Romania, Greece and Cyprus. What is particularly concerning is that, in several countries, the first public statements have come from academics rather than government, and only once beekeepers were already seeing the mite. It suggests the spread is getting ahead of official reporting — something the UK cannot ignore.

The UK currently permits imports of Turkey-raised queens and beekeeping equipment. With this new confirmation and the regional spread, the BBKA believes precautionary measures are now needed.

We ask APHA/NBU to put in place the following actions:

1. Add Turkey to the same safeguard list as Ukraine.
2. Extend that list to Bulgaria, Belarus, Romania, Greece and Cyprus, as highlighted by Apimondia.
3. Escalate the question of a full import ban to the relevant UK Government departments, given the increasing uncertainty around early detection and reporting internationally

These steps would considerably strengthen the UK's biosecurity position and give beekeepers confidence that emerging risks are being dealt with promptly.

As Tropilaelaps poses a significant risk to UK honey bees, I would appreciate an urgent update on how these actions will be taken forward, and on any scope to speed up assessment, discussion and implementation. Clear next steps and indicative timelines would be appreciated. The BBKA welcomes guidance on how we can best support this work as it progresses.

Best regards,



Clare McGettigan
Chair of Trustees

Copy: Prof. Nicola Spence CBE; Chief Plant Health Officer and Deputy Director for Plant and Bee Health, Defra
FAO: Head of Imports & Enforcement or equivalent, APHA

* https://www.apimondia.org/news/tropilaelaps-alert-august-2026