



Testimony in Opposition to SB 785 and the -1 Amendment

7-15-17

The Oregon State Beekeepers Association (OSBA) opposes SB 785 and the -1 amendment. Section 1(1)(b) defines "food-producing animal" as "any animal of the type that the Oregon Department of Agriculture identifies by rule as livestock typically used to produce food for human consumption." OSBA is concerned that SB 785 encompasses managed honeybees and would limit the use of important disease management tools that are required to maintain honey bee colony health.

Honeybees suffer from disease pressures, like other food-producing animals. American Foulbrood (AFB), and European Foulbrood (EFB) are both bacterial infections that spread like wildfire if not managed. They are very hard to get rid of and dormant spores can be reactivated decades later. Antibiotics eliminate clinical signs of the disease, but if the treatment is stopped in affected hives, the disease can recur. This could lead to an outbreak that could infect other hives if not actively prevented. The only other solution to these two diseases is to burn the entire hive, bees and all.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s recent efforts to combat antibiotic resistance have changed the regulatory landscape for beekeepers, particularly as it relates to antibiotic use. The Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) puts veterinarians in charge of an uncommon patient: honeybees. Because beekeepers do not utilize the services of a veterinarian, they are struggling with how to comply with this new law while managing the health of their bees. For instance, as of January 2017, the antibiotics that beekeepers use to combat bacterial infections are not available over-the-counter and require a VFD order from a veterinarian to be administered. This is a challenge given the lack of expertise in the veterinary community concerning honeybees. FDA's new rule will have real impacts on beekeepers.

When layered over already stringent federal law, the OSBA is concerned that SB 785's prohibition on antibiotics for disease prevention would increase honeybee mortality and make beekeeping cost prohibitive. Under federal law, honeybees are considered food-producing animals and are subject to the same antibiotic regulations as dairy cows, sheep and other animals raised for food production. SB 785 would likely apply the same restrictions to managed honeybee colonies, impacting the health of pollinators.

In light of all of the serious problems that honey bees and beekeepers face, The Oregon State Beekeepers Association respectfully asks this distinguished Senate Committee to oppose this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 785 and the -1 amendment.

Thank you,

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