

21 July 2026

Ref: OIA 26133

Claire Bleakley
President GE Free New Zealand
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Tēnā koe Claire

I refer to your request for official information received on 7 July 2026 for information about the Norroa “gene silencing” product for varroa mite: “We have just read that a new synthetic GE biological “gene silencing” product for varroa mite called vadesca marketed as Norroa is imminently due for release in New Zealand after successful trials.

1. When did the EPA approve the Norroa bee trials?
2. How long were they approved for?
3. Where the trials were held?
4. Were they held in a containment facility?
5. Were they held outdoors, if so in what regions?
6. In how many hives were used for the trials?
7. What was the isolation distance from other bee areas?
8. How efficacious were the trials in killing the varroa mite?
9. Was there any resistance to Norroa found?
10. When will it be open for public submissions?”.

An application for Norroa has been lodged with the Environmental Protectional Authority (EPA), however, at this stage we do not have any information we can provide to you for your questions about that application.

However, we note that you refer to Norroa as a GE biological. To clarify, RNA is a biological molecule, but not an organism. The active ingredient in Norroa is a double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) molecule pesticide that is regulated under the Hazardous Substances provisions of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO Act). Norroa functions by inducing small interfering RNA (siRNA)-mediated gene silencing.

The EPA has previously determined that eukaryotic cells and organisms treated with externally applied dsRNA molecules for the purpose of inducing small interfering RNA (siRNA)-mediated gene silencing are not genetically modified organisms as a result of the treatment. This was in the context of an application submitted by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research in March 2018, decided in May 2018 and reissued in 2021 following a request by the Sustainability Council of New Zealand and Prof Jack Heinemann (APP203395). The Committee’s decision was that eukaryotic cells treated with dsRNA **are not** genetically modified organisms in accordance with section 2A(1)(d) of the HSNO Act.

Details about this application are publicly available here: <https://www.epa.govt.nz/database-search/hsno-application-register/view/APP203395/>

The recent media coverage which you have referenced in your request, most likely relates to the field trials and research being undertaken on how to control the varroa mite.

In August 2022, the EPA approved a containment application for an '*Experimental dsRNA for Varroa destructor control and to protect honeybees in containment*' (APP204363).

Details about this application are publicly available here: <https://www.epa.govt.nz/database-search/hsno-application-register/view/APP204363/>.

We have answered the remainder of your questions based on APP204363 and the information provided in the application:

1. *When did the EPA approve the Norroa bee trials?*

The application was decided by the EPA on 2 August 2022.

2. *How long were they approved for?*

The containment application was granted until 2 August 2025.

3. *Where the trials were held?*

The application states that the trials were to be held in Victoria University laboratories and on privately-owned properties with restricted access.

4. *Were they held in a containment facility?*

Yes. More information about the proposed containment is available on page 11 of the [application](#).

5. *Were they held outdoors, if so in what regions?*

The application states that the trials were to be held in different regions of New Zealand.

6. *In how many hives were used for the trials?*

The application states that the researchers proposed to feed dsRNA to bees within the laboratory but also to a small number of hives (20 -200) in the field environment.

For questions 7-10 of your request, we do not hold this information, and we have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another agency, therefore this part of your request is refused under 18(g)(i) of the Official Information Act (OIA).

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision under section 28(3) of the OIA. You can contact the Ombudsman on 0800 802 602, or by email at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us via ministerials@epa.govt.nz

We may publish your request and our response on our website, www.epa.govt.nz. We make OIA responses available so others can read more about the work we do and the questions we are asked. Any information that might identify you will be removed to protect your privacy.

Nāku noa nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fernando Torres-Vélez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fernando Torres-Vélez

General Manager, Hazardous Substances and New Organisms