

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

# GUIDANCE ON IMPORTING BEES INTO ENGLAND

May 2015 (Updated June 2018)

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## **IMPORTANT NOTES**

This note has been produced to provide informal, non-statutory guidance that aims to clarify the requirements that apply to imports of bees into England from both within and outside the European Union (EU). It does not provide comprehensive coverage of all conditions laid down in European and national legislation and has no legal force. Similar legislation is in place in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

**The aim of the legislation is to prevent the introduction and spread of bee pests and diseases, particularly the Small hive beetle. If you are importing bees *whether for your own use or to sell on*, it is important that you comply with all the import conditions in order to protect the health of honey bees in the UK.**

**The key requirements are:**

- 1. You must notify all imports in advance to the relevant authority and ensure that consignments are accompanied by a health certificate which has been obtained by the exporter.**
  - **In the case of imports from another EU member state, the relevant authority is the National Bee Unit (NBU), part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) (see further details in paragraphs 2 to 4 on pages 3 to 4).**
  - **In the case of imports from any country outside the EU, the relevant authority is the approved Border Inspection Post (BIP). Consignments must enter the UK through a BIP (see further details in paragraphs 8 to 17 on page 4 to 6).**
- 2. You cannot import packaged bees from any country outside the EU (except New Zealand – see further details in paragraph 12 on page 5).**
- 3. You must comply with the post import controls applying to consignments imported from countries outside the EU (see further details in paragraphs 18 to 20 on page 6).**

**In addition, we would encourage you strongly to keep records of beekeepers to whom you have sold any imported bees. This will enable beekeepers to be contacted quickly by the National Bee Unit (NBU) in the event of any notifiable pests and diseases being found in the imported consignment.**

**Please note that you must satisfy yourself that consignments of bees are imported in accordance with all the relevant legislative conditions. Failure to comply with the requirements laid down in the Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations 2011 and the Bee Diseases and Pests Control (England) Order 2006 may lead to prosecution.**

If you have any queries about the import requirements for bees, please contact:

Bee Health Policy

Room 11G35

Defra

Sand Hutton

York

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## Legislation

1. If you wish to import bees into England you must comply with the following legislation:
  - The **Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations 2011** ('the TARP Regulations') which lay down the controls that apply to imports of *Apis mellifera* (honey bees) and *Bombus spp.* (bumble bees) from other member states and from countries outside the European Union (EU).
  - The **Bee Diseases and Pests Control (England) Order 2006** ('the Order') which lays down the enforcement provisions for the post import controls that apply to all imports of bees from countries outside the EU.
  - **Commission Regulation (EU) 206/2010** which lists the countries outside the EU from which bees may be imported (subject to para.5 below), health certification requirements and the post import controls.
  - **Commission Decision 2006/855/EC** which lays down the health certification requirements and the post import checks (packaged bees) for bees imported from New Zealand.
  - **Council Directive 92/65/EEC** (commonly known as the "Balai" Directive) which lays down the health certification requirements for bees moving between member states of the EU.

The national legislation is available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/> and the European legislation at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

## Imports of Bees from Other Member States

2. A list of EU member states is at Annex A. Consignments of bees (colonies/queen honey bees or bumble bees) must be accompanied by an original health certificate (photocopies are not acceptable) modelled on Annex E part 2 of Council Directive 92/65/EEC which has been issued to the exporter by the relevant member state authority. The health certificate should be issued immediately before dispatch and is valid for 10 days. You must retain it for at least 3 years. The health certificate conditions are at Annex B of this document.
3. You must notify the National Bee Unit (NBU) in writing (including by fax or email) of an import at least 24 hours prior to its arrival in the UK using either:
  - (i) An Importer Notification Form, or

- (ii) The beekeeper pages of BeeBase and the 'Import Notifications' link from the left hand index.
4. You may receive an inspection visit from the NBU if you have imported bees from another member state.

## Imports of Bees from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man

5. The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are not part of the UK: they are 'Crown Dependencies'. Health certificates are required for movements of bees from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man to the UK.
6. The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are also not EU member states; however, EU legislation sets out the EU arrangements applicable to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man for trade in agricultural products (such as live animals). This legislation provides that veterinary and animal health legislation applies in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man under the same conditions as in the UK for products imported into the Islands or exported from the Islands to the EU. Similarly, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man must impose the same import requirements as the UK when receiving bees from countries outside the EU.
7. **However, in February 2015, under Commission Implementing Decision 2015/266, the Isle of Man was officially recognised as free of Varroosis. In accordance with this Decision, the introduction to this territory of bees in any stage of their life cycle, used hives, skeps or any receptacle used to house bees, is strictly prohibited.**

## Imports of Bees from Outside the EU

8. Bees are only allowed into the EU from those countries listed in Part 1 to Annex II of Commission Regulation (EU) No 206/2010 provided that the 3 notifiable diseases/pests of bees in the EU – American foul brood, *Aethina tumida* (Small hive beetle) and *Tropilaelaps* spp. (*Tropilaelaps* mites) – are confirmed as notifiable diseases/pests throughout the exporting country and the export area is free of these pests/diseases. We are only aware that Argentina, Australia and New Zealand are able to meet these requirements. Imports from Hawaii were suspended from 5 May 2010.
9. If you wish to import bees from any of the other countries listed, you should check with Defra's Bee Health Policy Unit or the NBU (see page 2 for contact details), or alternatively with the relevant authority in the country concerned, that it is able to comply with the EU's import requirements.

10. Imports of honey bees are restricted to consignments of queen bees and attendant workers only (except New Zealand). Each queen bee must be contained in a single cage and accompanied by no more than 20 attendant worker bees. Packages or single colonies of bumble bees (a maximum of 200 adult bees per container) are permitted provided that they are bred under environmentally controlled conditions within recognised establishments.
11. Each consignment must be accompanied by an original health certificate (photocopies are not acceptable) modelled on 'Model QUE' (honey bees) or 'Model BEE' (bumble bees) which are contained in Commission Regulation (EU) No 206/2010. The health certificate must be issued no more than 24 hours prior to despatch by the relevant authority in the country of origin, and is valid for 10 days from the date of issue. The health certificate conditions are at Annex B of this document.
12. Commission Decision 2006/855/EC permits the import of queen honey and bumblebees and packaged honey bees and bumblebees (a queen bee accompanied by approx. 15,000 attendant workers) into the EU from New Zealand under the EU/NZ Veterinary Agreement. Consignments must be accompanied by an original health certificate modelled on Annex VI of the Decision issued by the New Zealand authorities. The health certificate conditions are at Annex B of this document.

### ***Border Inspection Posts***

13. All bees imported into England from countries outside the EU **must** enter through an approved Border Inspection Post (BIP). Details of border inspection posts in the EU are available on the European Commission's website:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/bips/approved\\_bips\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/bips/approved_bips_en.htm).
14. You must give at least one working day's notice, in writing, of the consignment's anticipated arrival date to the Local Animal Health Office of the appropriate BIP (contact details are on the Commission's website:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/bips/bips\\_contact\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/bips/bips_contact_en.htm) ). A Common Veterinary Entry Document (CVED) (at Annex I to Commission Regulation (EC) No. 282/2004) must be submitted with part 1 completed either manually or via TRACES<sup>1</sup> (Trade Control and Expert System). Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/using-traces-to-trade-in-animals-and-animal-products>. Please copy the documentation to the NBU.

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<sup>1</sup> TRACES is the system used for notifying member states of movements of live animals and certain other commodities into or through their territories. TRACES helps competent authorities in each Member State to meet their EU animal and public health obligations.

15. Please note that consignments arriving by airmail are sent to the Parcelforce depot at Coventry and then returned to the BIP for the necessary veterinary checks to be carried out. In order to avoid these transit delays, consignments should be sent by cargo as these will be transported directly to the BIP on arrival at the airport.
16. On arrival at the BIP, the original health certificate will be retained and part 2 of the CVED will be completed by the official veterinarian confirming that all the veterinary checks have been carried out. The consignment will then be released. A copy of the completed CVED should accompany the consignment to its destination.

### ***Charges for veterinary checks***

17. The costs of the checks carried out on imports of live animals from third countries are recovered from the importer under the provisions of Council Regulation (EC) No 882/2004. The APHA fee for checks on imported bees is detailed on the gov.uk website.

<https://www.gov.uk/importing-live-animals-or-animal-products-from-non-eu-countries>

### ***Post-import Controls (for bees from outside the EU)***

18. These controls are aimed at reducing the risk of the introduction and spread of exotic bee pests, in particular the Small hive beetle and *Tropilaelaps* mites (which are notifiable). When you receive a consignment of imported queen honey bees you must:
  - (i) Transfer the queens to new (queen) cages before they are introduced to any local colonies.
  - (ii) Send the original (queen) cages, attendant worker bees and other material that accompanied the queen bees from their country of origin to the NBU within 5 days of receipt for examination for the presence of the Small hive beetle and *Tropilaelaps* mites.
19. Bee packages from New Zealand are subject to a percentage check (depending on the quantity imported) at the destination apiary.
20. You must destroy the container in which any colony of imported bumble bees was transported and all material that accompanied the bees either during or immediately at the end of the lifespan of the imported colony.

## Other Information

### ***Packing precautions***

21. When sending bees and other material to the NBU, please use matchboxes or small cardboard containers, as bees travel well in such containers and arrive in good condition for examination. Tin boxes, polythene bags or other airtight containers cause the sample to sweat and lead to rapid decomposition of the bees making an examination difficult.

### ***Sales of Bees***

22. It is good practice to keep records of beekeepers to whom you have sold any imported bees. This will enable them to be contacted quickly by the NBU in the event of any pests and diseases being found in the imported consignment. Beekeepers registered on the NBU's BeeBase database ([www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)) can record a purchase, sale or gift of bees within their BeeBase records.
23. A suggested form for keeping records of sales/purchases of bees is also included in the Healthy Bees Plan's Advice Note for Obtaining Bees which is available on the [advisory leaflets page of BeeBase](#).



## ANNEX A – Countries Eligible to Export Bees to the UK

### MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Austria	Estonia	Italy	Romania
Belgium	Finland	Latvia	Slovakia
Bulgaria	France	Lithuania	Slovenia
Croatia	Germany	Luxembourg	Spain
Cyprus**	Greece	Malta	Sweden
Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	The Netherlands
Denmark	Ireland	Portugal	

**ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE EU AS LISTED IN COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) NO 206/2010 (subject to the 3 notifiable diseases/pests of bees in the EU – American foul brood, *Aethina tumida* (Small hive beetle) and *Tropilaelaps* spp. (*Tropilaelaps* mites) – being notifiable diseases/pests throughout the exporting country. We are only aware of Argentina, Australia and New Zealand being able to meet these requirements.)**

Albania	Israel
Algeria	Kenya
Argentina	Macedonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of
Australia	Madagascar
Bahrain	Mauritius
Belarus	Mexico
Belize	Morocco
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Namibia
Botswana	New Caledonia
Brazil	New Zealand
Canada	Panama
Chile	Paraguay
China, People's Republic of	Nicaragua
Colombia	Russian Federation
Costa Rica	Serbia and Montenegro
Cuba	South Africa
El Salvador	Swaziland
Ethiopia	Switzerland
Falkland Islands	Thailand
Greenland	Tunisia
Guatemala	Turkey
Hong Kong	Ukraine
Honduras	United States of America
Iceland	Uruguay
India	Zimbabwe

\*\* northern Cyprus remains outside the EU for import purposes.

## **ANNEX B – Certification Requirements – as per Council Directive 92/65/EEC**

### **FROM OTHER MEMBER STATES**

**Either:** (a) the bees/bumblebees come from an area which is not the subject of a prohibition order associated with an occurrence of American foul brood (AFB) (the period of prohibition has been continued for at least 30 days following the last recorded case and the date of which all hives within a radius of three kilometres have been checked by the competent authority and all infected hives burned or treated and inspected to the satisfaction of the competent authority);

**Or** (a) the bumblebees come from an environmentally isolated structure recognised by and under the supervision of the competent authority of the member state which is free of American foulbrood and was inspected immediately prior to despatch and all bumblebees and breeding stock show no clinical signs or suspicion of disease;

**And** (b) the bees/bumblebees come from an area of at least 100 km radius which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with the suspicion or confirmed occurrence of the Small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) or the Tropilaelaps mite (*Tropilaelaps* spp.) and where these infestations are absent;

**Or** (b) the consignment consists only of cages of queen bees each containing one single queen with a maximum of 20 accompanying attendants and comes from an area of at least 100 km radius which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with the suspicion or confirmed occurrence of the Tropilaelaps mite (*Tropilaelaps* spp.) and from an establishment that fulfils all the following requirements:

- It is situated at least 30 km distance from the limits of a protection zone of at least 20 km in radius around confirmed occurrence(s) of the Small hive beetle, and
- It is situated outside of a zone restricted by protective measures established by the Union due to the occurrence of Small hive beetle, and
- It is situated in an area where annual surveillance for the detection of Small hive beetle by the competent authority is ongoing to provide a confidence level of at least 95% of detecting Small hive beetle if at least 2% of the apiaries were infested, and
- It is inspected every month by the competent authority with negative results to provide a confidence level of at least 95% of detecting Small hive beetle if at least 2% of the hives were infested, and
- Where each cage or the whole consignment is covered by a fine mesh of maximum 2 mm pore size immediately after the visual examination for the health certification;

**Or** (b) the bumble bees come from an environmentally isolated structure recognised by and under the supervision of the competent authority, which is free of Small hive beetle;

**And** (c) the bees/bumblebees as well as their packaging have undergone a visual examination to detect the occurrence of the Small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) or their eggs and larvae, or other infestations in particular the Tropilaelaps mite (*Tropilaelaps spp.*) affecting bees.

## ***FROM OUTSIDE THE EU***

### **Queen honey and queen bumblebees must:**

Come from a territory in which AFB, Small hive beetle and *Tropilaelaps* mites are notifiable throughout the whole territory;

Come from a breeding apiary which is supervised and controlled by the competent authority;

Come from an area which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with an occurrence of AFB and where no such occurrence has taken place within at least 30 days prior to the issue of the present certificate. Where an outbreak has occurred previously, all hives within a 3 kilometre radius must have been checked by the competent authority and all infected hives burned or treated to the satisfaction of the competent authority within 30 days of the last recorded case;

Come from hives (or colonies in the case of bumblebees) from which samples of the comb have been tested and found negative in the last 30 days for AFB as laid down in the OIE Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals;

Come from an area of at least 100km radius which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with the occurrence of the Small hive beetle or the *Tropilaelaps* mite and where these infestations are absent;

Have undergone detailed examinations to ensure that all bees and packaging do not contain the Small hive beetle or their eggs or larvae, or other infestations in particular *Tropilaelaps* mites affecting bees;

Come from hives (or colonies in the case of bumble bees) which were inspected immediately prior to despatch and show no clinical signs or suspicions of disease including infestations affecting bees;

The packing material, queen cages, accompanying products and food are new and have not been in contact with diseased bees or brood combs and all precautions have been taken to prevent contamination with agents causing diseases or infestations of bees.

### **Bumblebees must:**

Have been bred and kept under a controlled environment within a recognised establishment which is supervised and controlled by the competent authority;

The establishment referred to above was inspected immediately prior to despatch and all bumblebees and breeding stock showed no clinical signs of suspicion of disease including infestations affecting bees;

Have undergone detailed examination to ensure that all bumblebees, brood-stock and packaging do not contain the Small hive beetle or its eggs and larvae, or other infestations, in particular *Tropilaelaps* mites affecting bees;

The packing material, containers, accompanying products and food are new and have not been in contact with diseased bees or brood combs, and all precautions have been taken to prevent contamination with agents causing diseases or infestations of bees.

## **BEES FROM NEW ZEALAND**

### **Honey bees and bumblebees must:**

Come from a breeding apiary, which is supervised and controlled by the competent authority;

In the case of honey bees, hives come from an area which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with an occurrence of AFB, and where no such occurrence has taken place within at least 30 days prior to the issue of the present certificate. Where an outbreak of AFB has occurred previously, all hives within a radius of three kilometres have been checked by the competent authority and all infected hives burned or treated and inspected to the satisfaction of the competent authority within 30 days following the last recorded case;

Are from hives or come from hives or colonies (in the case of bumble bees) which were inspected immediately prior to despatch (normally within 24 hours) and show no clinical signs or suspicion of disease including infestations affecting bees;

The packaging material, queen cages, accompanying products and food are new and have not been in contact with diseased bees or brood combs and all precautions have been taken to prevent contamination with agents causing diseases or infestations of bees.



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