

Disease Accreditation Scheme for Honeybees (DASH)

by **Jason Learner**, National Bee Unit

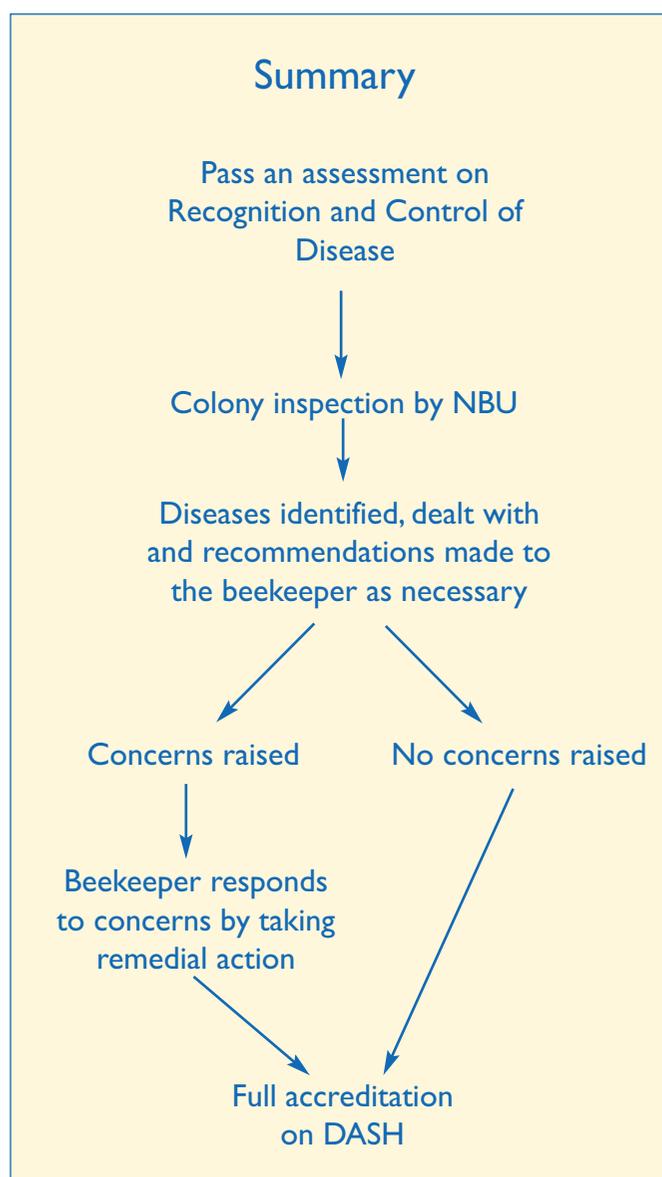
Statutory Regulation within the UK now allows for the possibility of 'Earned Recognition'. This means finding ways to reduce the administrative burden of regulation on those who have a strong track record of reliability and adherence to standards. This risk-based approach to inspections is happening now in a number of inspection regimes such as Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) inspections in the pig and poultry sectors and with livestock welfare and dairy hygiene inspections.

Over the last year, the National Bee Unit (NBU) and The Bee Farmers' Association have been working together to develop DASH, the Disease Accreditation Scheme for Honeybees. DASH will not necessarily involve a reduction in the number of national inspections, but rather, it gives an opportunity to improve the targeting of inspections by focusing the NBU's limited inspection time on those beekeepers not within the scheme. One of the key aims of DASH is to help improve the health of honey bee colonies by offering a supportive health improvement service, including audit visits, guidance on biosecurity and other aspects of bee health husbandry.

Initially, the scheme is only open to active, BeeBase-registered members of the Bee Farmers' Association. Admission to the scheme will be decided at the discretion of the NBU. In summary, the scheme operates as follows:

- Once the beekeeper has passed an assessment on the recognition and control of disease, his/her colonies will be inspected by the NBU. The inspections are carried out in the normal way, and any foul brood found will not prevent him/her from being on the scheme.
- Any disease found will be dealt with according to the normal protocols. Where relevant, the inspector will make recommendations on the beekeeper's husbandry techniques which will help with disease prevention and control; such as improved barrier management, removal of dead hives and cleaning of used equipment.
- Following the baseline inspections, the beekeeper would normally become fully accredited on DASH straightaway. However, in the event that there are major concerns arising from the inspections (for example, about biosecurity arrangements), the beekeeper would be notified of these and given the opportunity to take remedial action. The inspector would visit again within three months, and assuming the required remedial action had been taken, the beekeeper is then fully accredited.

Once the beekeeper becomes accredited, he/she is able to inspect his/her own colonies for foul brood. Should this be found, he/she will be empowered, under the scheme, to deal with the disease him/herself. This is the most fundamental change in DASH compared to current procedures. Upon finding disease, the available options for European foul brood (EFB) would either be destruction or shook swarm. Antibiotics will not be available under the DASH scheme as part of self-treatment. American foul brood



must, as now, always be dealt with by destruction. Should the beekeeper find any foul brood, it must be reported to the NBU who will then input the finding into BeeBase. This will trigger inspections of colonies in the surrounding apiaries, which do not belong to that bee farmer. If deemed appropriate, the NBU may, on request, issue a movement licence to allow EFB-infected colonies to be moved to a hospital site where they may be shook swarmed and monitored.

Accreditation lasts for three years, and while on the scheme, the beekeeper must maintain appropriate records, sufficient enough to enable him/her to trace colony movements should foul brood be discovered. At the end of the three-year trial period, there will be a formal audit to ensure that the beekeeper has complied with DASH protocols. ❀