

## **South-East Honey Survey 2009**

As usual, I would like to start my report by thanking all the beekeepers that have taken the trouble to respond to my request for honey crop and price statistics. Again, I have had the most responses ever, 244, making the statistics much more reliable. As is normal, a number of the replies do not give sale prices for the honey, so these are correspondingly less representative.

The average take per colony was much less than last year at 35lbs per colony. The early nectar flows were reasonable but in many areas there was continual summer rain stopping the collection of main crop honey and causing colonies to eat through any spring-collected honey. Also, I experienced a very short season; my own bees stopped collecting nectar at the end of the first week in July, whereas previously the flow would have continued until the first week in August, a whole month later! Many beekeepers I have asked also reported this sudden stoppage.

In the discussion below, I have made comparison with the final results from the previous survey asking the same questions about the 2008 season, so that you can compare this directly to last year's survey.

### **Results 2009**

- **Average Honey Yield**  
125 replies ranging from 0.0lb to 121.3lb per colony  
2009 average = 35lb                      (2008 = 45lb)
- **Direct Sales Price (Flower):**  
144 replies ranging from £2.50/lb to £8.40/lb  
2009 average = £3.96/lb              (2008 = £3.57/lb)
- **Wholesale Honey Price (Flower):**  
34 replies ranging from £2.50/lb to £6.00/lb  
2009 average = £3.50/lb              (2008 = £2.67/lb)
- **Bulk Honey Price (Flower):**  
2 replies ranging from £2.30/lb to £2.50/lb  
2009 average = £2.40/lb              (2008 = £2.30/lb)
- **Cut comb:**  
17 replies were received ranging from £4.00/lb to £10.70/lb.  
2009 average = £7.78/lb              (2008 = £6.95/lb)

## **Discussion**

These results are compiled from beekeepers owning between 1 and 39 colonies with total yields between 0lbs and 1852lbs. Interestingly the largest crop did not come from the beekeeper with the largest number of colonies. (1852lb from 20 cols – 92.6lb/col) The highest yield per colony (121.3lb) came from a beekeeper with 3 colonies, the total crop being 364lb. There is a wide variation in reported average honey yields – from 0 to 121.3 lbs per colony. The average yield, 35lb is a substantial decrease over the previous year's figure (45lb), which was mainly due to the poor weather in the summer and the short season, as mentioned above. However, this year average prices are higher than last almost breaking the £4.00 per lb. Again I received some surveys indicating that no honey had been collected (9 responses, 3 of which were 'new starters' this season)

Direct sale to customers is the commonest method of honey sales - 144 respondents provided a figure for this. As usual there is little agreement over price. The average price this year is the highest it has been at £3.96, which is a much better average, although I feel that £4.00/lb should be the minimum asking price, taking into account the cost and time involved in producing honey. Using figures from this survey, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £138.60 when sold direct at average price. (2008 = £160.65)

34 replies indicated selling honey wholesale to a retailer. At the average wholesale price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £122.50. (2008 = £120.15)

2 contributors sold honey in bulk. At the average bulk price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £84.00. (2008 = £103.50)

Approximately 7% of replies indicated selling cut-comb honey and it is assumed that the majority of this cut-comb is sold direct. The price of cut-comb honey is roughly 2.00 times that of extracted honey sold direct. At average cut comb price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £272.30 (2008 = £312.75)

Overall, direct sales honey prices in 2008 have recovered by approx 6.88% over 2007 prices to equal 2006 levels. Both the wholesale and bulk honey prices have kept reasonable although it is clear that many beekeepers do not sell through retail outlets or to honey packers.

This year, as last year, I have obtained figures for other regions so that you may make a comparison. These regions are the administrative regions of the National Bee Unit and can be found on the NBU website:

[www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com), click on Bee Health Inspectorate in the menu.

Region	Flower Wholesale	Flower Direct Sales	Flower Bulk Sales	Cut comb	Maincrop yield (lb)
	£/lb	£/lb	£/lb	£/lb	
<b>Western</b>	£2.60	£4.55	£3.18	£8.18	44
<b>Wales</b>	£3.48	£4.74	£2.96	£8.48	20
<b>Northern</b>	£3.87	£4.17	£3.60	£6.82	26
<b>South East</b>	£3.50	£3.96	£2.40	£7.78	35
<b>Southern</b>	£3.00	£3.50	£2.50	£8.00	75
<b>Eastern</b>	£3.00	£3.90	£2.09	£5.46	66
<b>South West</b>	£3.09	£4.32	£1.82	£7.27	33
<b>North East</b>	£3.17	£3.87	£2.45	£6.22	57
<b>Average</b>	<b>£3.22</b>	<b>£4.13</b>	<b>£2.78</b>	<b>£7.28</b>	<b>44.00</b>

Last year the SE had the highest average yield per colony (45lb) but the crop was sold for the lowest average price, both direct to the public and wholesale. This year the SE has a higher average price for direct sales being approximately in the centre of the price band. I feel that there is still scope for higher prices in the SE as a general rule, as both nationally and worldwide, honey crops are reducing, making locally sourced honey a premium product.

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