

# Small hive beetle

## – What you need to know

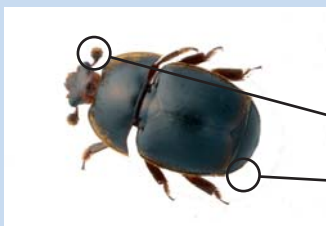


### Background

The Small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*), is a potential threat to UK beekeeping. This beetle, indigenous to Africa, has recently spread to the USA, Canada, Mexico, Jamaica and Australia with all the indications being that it will be a very serious pest of the European honey bee should it ever reach the UK. There is a serious risk of its accidental introduction into the UK and all beekeepers need to be aware of the fundamental details of the beetle's lifecycle and how it can be recognised and controlled.

### How to recognise Small hive beetle

Many types of beetle, insect eggs and larvae may be found in bee hives. Check to see if any you find match the key identification points below:



- **Adult beetles**  
size: 5-7 mm  
colour: black  
behaviour: hides from the light  
clubbed antennae  
short wing cases



- **Larvae**  
size: 10-11 mm  
colour: beige  
spines on dorsum  
3 pairs legs at the head end  
absence of silk webbing and droppings on combs



- **Eggs**  
size: 1.5 x 0.25 mm (two thirds size of honey bee eggs)  
colour: white  
location: masses of eggs e.g. in hive crevices or hive floor



## What to do if you think you may have Small hive beetle

- Suspect Small hive beetle adults or larvae should immediately be sent to Fera's NBU for examination.
- Use a sealed container, such as a plastic tube or stiff cardboard box.
- Please provide as many details as possible – your name, the apiary locations (including, where possible, the Ordnance Survey map reference).
- Do not send live beetles in the post. Kill them first by keeping them in a freezer overnight or by putting them in 70% ethanol.
- A simple to use sampling form is available to download directly from the NBU's BeeBase website [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) (on the honey bee pests and diseases pages).

If you have any concerns about the health of your bees please contact the National Bee unit (NBU) on 01904 462510, who will put you in touch with your local Bee Inspector.

## Don't put your bees at risk Are you registered on BeeBase?



BeeBase is a FREE online service provided by the National Bee Unit (NBU) to help protect you and your fellow beekeepers from colony threatening pests and diseases.

If there is a disease outbreak in your area, the NBU team uses BeeBase to contact local beekeepers and arrange for precautionary inspections to check for any signs of infection, and to advise on what to do.

**Register today through one of these easy methods:**

**w. [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)**

**t. 01904 462510**

This leaflet was produced as part of the Healthy Bees Plan. The Healthy Bees Plan aims to address the challenges facing beekeepers in sustaining the health of honey bees and beekeeping in England and Wales. It has been jointly developed by Governments, beekeepers, their associations and other stakeholders.

For more information on the Healthy Bees Plan visit:

**<http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/healthybeesplan>**

## Reducing the risk

There is a serious risk that Small hive beetle could be accidentally introduced into the UK. Studies have shown that some of the routes by which it could be transported are:

- Fruit imports – in particular avocados, bananas, grapes, grapefruit, kei apples, mangos, melons and pineapples.
- Freight containers and transport vehicles.
- Import of honey bees.
- Trade in hive products e.g. raw beeswax and honey in drums.

Beekeepers are asked to be particularly vigilant and to make sure they only import bees through proper channels and with appropriate health certification.

## Contingency planning

The Food and Environment Research Agency's National Bee Unit (NBU) has developed a Contingency Plan. This is an operational document that details the response to an exotic pest and disease outbreak in the UK. Fera's NBU has also produced a detailed advisory leaflet on the Small hive beetle that goes into more depth about the biology of the beetle and how it can be managed. Both the Contingency Plan and advisory leaflet can be found on BeeBase [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com).

Make sure your details are recorded on BeeBase. It is extremely important that all beekeepers register on BeeBase. If Fera's NBU doesn't know where risk colonies are located, then its ability to monitor effectively for the arrival of Small hive beetle, or achieve control in the event of an invasion is seriously jeopardised. It is vitally important that all beekeepers recognise the role they play and the responsibilities they have in preventing Small hive beetle becoming an established pest in the UK.

To register as a beekeeper on BeeBase, please visit [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com).



**The Food and Environment  
Research Agency**