

Healthy Bees Plan

Summary note of 5th Meeting of the Science and Evidence Advisory Group (SEAG)

26th July 2011 - Nobel House, London

Present:

David Aston		Liz McIntosh	
Mike Brown		Belinda Phillipson	Secretary of group
Giles Budge		Wally Shaw	
Norman Carreck		Mark Tatchell	Chair
Bernard Diaper			
Stephen Martin		Bob Smith	PMB/CWG

Apologies from Dan Basterfield, Robin Dean and Francis Ratnieks. Chris Hartfield absent.

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed the group including Bob Smith from Project Management Board/Comms Working Group.

Summary and actions from the last meeting

The Chair introduced the summary and actions from the last meeting.

Actions 1, 2, 3 and 4 have all been completed.

Action 5 – where do new beekeepers get their bees ? David Aston had posed the question and the answer appears to be generally anywhere and everywhere. Should we be encouraging people to get training before they get bees ? Norman Carreck said that previously bees had been offered to people taking training but that currently demand outstrips supply. This should be borne in mind for the future.

Action 6 is parked.

Action 7 will be addressed under agenda item 5.

2. New ways of working.

The Chair introduced and said that one of the criticisms of Phase 1 was that the working groups felt disconnected from PMB and this had been accentuated by the individual workplans for each group.

Therefore it had been agreed that in Phase 2 there would be 1 work plan and the Chairs of the working groups would also sit on PMB.

A new workplan had been developed and circulated. SEAG has a role where science impinges on the HBP. The Chair highlighted items on workplan covered by SEAG including the knowledge transfer and dissemination activity, the indicators and the colony loss survey. There was then some discussion about the colony loss survey. The Chair drew the discussions to a close saying that this activity was not due for discussion until the next meeting. The principle concern is currently timing. If the survey on winter losses is discussed at the next meeting will there be time to put a survey in place ? The group agreed that this was workable.

3. Update on the Random Apiary Survey

Giles Budge gave an update on the Random Apiary Survey (RAS). The results to date highlight the differences between the priority inspections and the inspections carried out for RAS. Initial findings suggest that the priority inspections overestimate disease prevalence (as would be expected) and are very successful in finding European Foul Brood. The results for AFB are not so clear cut but the number of cases is very small and therefore before any conclusions can be drawn the second years data should be analysed. Giles also outlined the plans for disseminating the results. Bernard Diaper asked whether the data could be used to look at the differences between large and small scale beekeeping in terms of disease prevalence ? Giles said that the data from RAS could be used for this but as there are only a small number of disease cases in the samples collected for RAS, it would be better to do this using the priority inspections data. There was also some discussion about the meta data such as number of frames of adults, brood, cases of chalkbrood etc. associated with the RAS data

The group also considered key aspects about how the results from RAS should be communicated. Giles Budge said that one of the aims would be to publish in high impact journals as well as the beekeeping press. The group felt that it was important to consider what the key messages are and what the results really mean. This should be handled very carefully so that it doesn't get over blown. David Aston said that questions may be raised about the length of time taken to release the results following collection of samples in 2009/10. The Chair supported the view that ALL the data must be collected and analysed BEFORE key messages are put out. Giles Budge highlighted the fact that publication of peer reviewed papers can be impeded by early publication of data on BeeBase. The Chair suggested that this could be overcome using a Q&A approach outlining key results but without publishing any hard data and there was support from the group for this approach. Questions were also raised about when the results should be disseminated to the grey literature. The Chair took the firm view that information from half analysed data should not be disseminated and the group assented.

ACTION: Belinda Phillipson to circulate Giles Budge's presentation. The aim is to produce at least 1 peer reviewed publication. Key messages will also be identified from the molecular data. The aim is to discuss the results at the SEAG meeting being held late in year in parallel with Comms group discussions. The Chair stressed that SEAG must consider the science and not communications.

4. Introduction to the policy review

See separate paper.

ACTION: Belinda Phillipson to capture the views of the group with respect to the policy on AFB and circulate to the Policy Review team.

5. Review of Indicators

Belinda Phillipson introduced this item and highlighted some of the shortcomings such as the use of indicators for which numbers can be collected as these are easier to measure. These don't necessarily reflect the things that you want to change which could be qualitative or 'one-off' changes. The paper [Draft indicators of progress 110712.doc] drew attention to specific points about each of the indicators and the group considered each of the indicators in turn.

The group felt that the first indicator should be 'Improved beekeeping husbandry skills' and there are four different things to achieve.

1. Improved beekeeping husbandry skills
 - (1) Building capacity
 - (2) Basic level
 - (3) Advanced level
 - (4) Does it have any impact ?

The question is how to measure these. If we had a joined up survey could questions be asked as part of this ? The Chair asked whether it was our role to do this ? Could we ask the BBKA to survey their members to find out how many people have got Basic level training ? David Aston and Norman Carreck suggested that this might be difficult. Norman suggested that perhaps there should be targeting at a local level to encourage people to take exams ?

2. Transition of evidence .

The group discussed whether the HBP really influences the number of articles from peer reviewed journals cited in popular beekeeping press or whether this is more a reflection of the individual authors writing articles for the beekeeping press. The group debated whether other beekeeping journals should be considered, for instance American Bee Journal ? Should CWG try and influence BBKA news to include more scientifically digested articles ? The Chairman agreed with this suggestion. Bee World (produced by IBRA) could also be considered. Could this be measured by counting the number of subscriptions ? Rather complicated. Bob Smith suggested it would be nice to have a target.

3. No increase in number of exotic pests and diseases

The group suggested that this should be divided into 2 aspects with a number of different measures;

- (1) No introductions; for example tell beekeepers not to buy off the net, don't bring home 'souvenirs' from holidays, provide best practice for where to source bees from, dissemination and uptake of advice

- (2) Not becoming established;

The number of sentinel apiaries.

The number of potential 'SHB' samples submitted.

The number of photos submitted to Open university iSpot website

4. Reduced incidence of foulbrood in the UK

Leave as is.

5. Improved relationships between the various groups. For instance Bob Smith asked whether the Bee Farmers feel that that the Healthy Bees Plan is worthwhile ?

6. Increased/improved confidence in beekeeping data/ numbers of beekeepers/hives
This is covered under agenda item 7 and the proposed joined up survey on colony losses.

David Aston suggested that just indicators 1, 2 and 3 could be used. There was a feeling that the indicators could be redrafted but additional input from PMB would be useful. The Chair offered to take the indicators back to PMB but also suggested that the group need to do their part.

ACTION: Belinda Phillipson to re draft indicators, circulate to SEAG and then send to PMB.

6. Knowledge synthesis.

The Chair introduced outlining the work that had been done to date and the specification that had been produced for the 'Management and control of Varroa'. He explained that there is an opportunity for the first piece of work to be done at Fera. He suggested that the group comment on the specification and asked what we think the outputs should look like. Norman Carreck said that we need to avoid doing a literature review which covers both 'good' and 'bad literature. The chair said that substantive literature could be used to identify key messages and that an 'informed' reviewer should do the work. There was agreement for this approach.

There was extensive discussion about the questions listed in the specification, in particular the issue of geographical variation for thymol treatment. Some of the group felt this was important while others thought that the temperature within the hive is more important than the local temperature. However the group concluded that there probably wasn't sufficient information to provide regional advice and it would be better to consider more seasonal issues such as when the last harvest is taken off, when is varroa treatment carried out and feeding bees before the for winter.

In support of better Varroa management Mike Brown mentioned the best practice leaflet on working with Varroa that Richard Ball had produced. Wally Shaw suggested that we should hold workshops on managing Varroa for more active dissemination of information. He agreed to submit the material that he uses so that it could be drawn on as part of the knowledge synthesis and dissemination work.

ACTION: the sub-group are to continue to fine hone the questions in the specification.

ACTION: Mike Brown is to replace Giles Budge.

ACTION: Belinda Phillipson to submit the specification to the next call for Horizon Scanning and Technology Implementation projects at Fera.

7. Coverage of beekeepers registered on BeeBase

Giles Budge outlined the work that had been done following the discussion of this issue at the 3rd SEAG meeting on 22nd September, 2010 Bee Inspectors had been asking local associations for lists of their members so that they can be registered on Bee Base for disease control. Two thirds of the county association had shared data with the inspectors while one third hadn't. From the information that had been shared to date of the 20 000 BBKA members, 15 000 of these are estimated to be on BeeBase, Of the 23 000 beekeepers registered on BeeBase, 8 000 of these are not members of a local association. He suggested that in total there are likely to be at least 30 000 beekeepers.

The Chair suggested that this should be an indicator as it is key for disease control. Actions had been agreed by CWG to overcome data protection fears.

8. Dates of next meeting and items for the agenda

The Chair suggested that the next meeting should be held in September at which the survey on colony losses and the policy on EFB would be discussed. The final results from RAS would be discussed in the following meeting to be held in November or December. Liz McIntosh said that there were plans for SEAG to join PMB to consider Contingency Planning in November or December.

ACTION: Belinda Phillipson to circulate a doodle poll with dates for the next meeting.

Action Number	Action	Person(s) responsible
1	To send a summary of the 5 th SEAG meeting to the Devolved Administrations and to arrange for the summary to be posted on BeeBase	Belinda Phillipson
2	To circulate Giles Budge's presentation for the update on the Random Apiary Survey to the rest of SEAG.	Giles Budge/ Belinda Phillipson
3	To circulate the groups' first thoughts about the policy on AFB.	Belinda Phillipson
4	To re draft indicators, circulate to SEAG and then send to PMB.	Belinda Phillipson
5	For the knowledge synthesis and dissemination, to fine hone the questions in the specification on the Management and Control of Varroa.	Sub-group with Mike Brown substituting for Giles Budge
6	To submit the specification to the call for Horizon Scanning and Technology Implementation projects.	Belinda Phillipson
7	To circulate a doodle poll for a meeting date in September	Belinda Phillipson