

Annual Bee Report 2012 – Northern Region

(Covering Greater Manchester, Merseyside and the Wirral, Lancashire, Cumbria, Tyne and Wear, County Durham, Northumberland and Cheshire)

Foul brood Disease

There has been no American Foul Brood found in the Northern region in 2012.

European Foul Brood (EFB) has been found in the following 10km squares:-

- NZ 31 Darlington East – 1 colony, 1 apiary(North East)
- SD 38 Newby Bridge – 4 colonies, 1 apiary(Cumbria)
- SJ 79 Altrincham – 4 colonies, 1 apiary(Greater Manchester)
- SJ 79 Carrington - 5 colonies, 1 apiary(Greater Manchester)
- SJ 75 Alsager – 1 colony, 1 apiary(Cheshire)
- SJ 57 Frodsham – 1 colony, 1 apiary(Cheshire)
- SJ 66 Winsford – 1 colony, 1 apiary(Cheshire)
- SJ 78 Altrincham – 1 colony, 1 apiary(Cheshire)
- SJ 55 Bunbury - 1 colony, 1 apiary(Cheshire)

As National Bee Unit protocol, we have completed 3 km inspection sweeps around the infected apiaries and no further disease was found.

Varroa

Levels of Varroa in most beekeepers colonies were low during the 2012 season. I think this was probably due to good winter controls with organic acids and thymol treatments by beekeepers and the fact that most colonies swarmed early giving a natural brood break. The poor summer weather reduced brood rearing and thus Varroa reproduction was low. As stated in my report last year, Varroa monitoring is very important and should be done regularly and throughout the year (at least 3 to 4 times).

Unfortunately the new Varroa product I mentioned in my last year's report, the MAQS (Mite Away Quick Strip), is not available for use in the UK yet. It is still going through the VMD (Veterinary Medicines Directorate) registration process and will hopefully be available sometime in 2013.

For more information on Varroa, please visit our website www.nationalbeeunit.com or read the 'Managing Varroa' leaflet produced by the NBU. This can be downloaded from the website. Please remember Varroa and its associated viruses are still the biggest killers of honey bee colonies here, in Europe and throughout the World.

Approved Bee Medicines

For your assistance, I list the current authorised bee medicines below. Please check the VMD website regularly (www.vmd.defra.gov.uk) or ring the VMD to confirm that products are still legal and currently in use.

<u>Product name</u>	<u>Active Substances</u>
Apiguard Gel (25% Thymol) for Beehive Use	Thymol
Apilife Var Bee-Hive Strip for Honey Bees	Camphor Racemic, Eucalyptus Oil, Menthol
Apistan 10.3% w/w Bee Hive Strip	Tau Fluvalinate
Bayvarol Strips 3.6 mg	Flumethrin
Thymovar 15 g Bee-hive Strips for Honey Bees	Thymol

Please note: - Fumidil B's licence has not been renewed by the VMD and therefore is **NOT** registered for use in the UK.

Treatments are approved for use in honey bee colonies in this country by the VMD (Veterinary Medicines Directorate) and not by the National Bee Unit.

Please note it is a legal requirement to record all treatments used, i.e. when and where purchased, type and amount of treatment or product used, batch number and expiry date if applicable, when applied and when withdrawn. The product, again if applicable, should be disposed of as per the manufacturers' instructions. This information should be kept for 5 years.

Other treatments from Europe are available for use under the 'Cascade' system. Please visit the VMD website for information and import regulations, at www.vmd.defra.gov.uk

The 2012 honey season

2012 has been by far been the worst honey gathering season since records began. This, as I am sure you know, was due to the very poor summer and autumn weather. Surveying 38 beekeepers across the Northern region, the average main crop yield was 21lbs per honey producing colony. As last year, the rape secreted well due to the good spring weather, although for some beekeepers, this was the only type of honey their bees produced.

A few beekeepers reported 40 to 50lb as their average crop, but this was due to their proximity to the Himalayan Water Balsam.

Crops in Cumbria were very low between 0 to 10 lbs. Crops through the Ribble Valley and on the Wirral were around the same at 10 to 15lbs. Heather crops were generally poor with an average crop of around 10lb per colony.

Honey prices remained around the same as 2011, flower honey retailing between £2.50 to £5 per lb dependent on demand and location.

Staffing and area changes

Doug Jones retired as Seasonal Bee Inspector in September 2012. Doug was well known and well respected by beekeepers in the Northern region. He covered Merseyside, Wirral, parts of Lancashire and Greater Manchester. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Doug for all his hard work over the years and wish him a long and happy retirement.

Sandra Kinchin who is an experienced bee inspector from the North East will be in post from April 2013 covering the area Doug was responsible for. Sandra will be based in the Warrington area.

I have been asked to take over management of Bee Health in Cheshire, so this will now become part of the Northern region (it was part of the Western region previously). This means that another experienced Seasonal Bee Inspector, Terry Ashley, will be joining the Northern Inspection team. I would like to wish Sandra and Terry a warm welcome.

Imports

There was a total 7957 queens imported into the UK in 2013. These came from Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. The largest number 3130 came from Greece, whilst Slovenia exported 1567 and Denmark 1066. 250 nucs were imported - 185 from Spain, 65 from Czech Republic and 20 packages from Poland.

From Third countries (Third countries are countries other than Europe who are allowed to export queens to the UK), 590 queens were imported, 490 from New Zealand and 100 from Argentina.

Beekeepers who import queens, will normally receive a visit from a bee inspector. This is to check that the queens and nucs have arrived with the correct paperwork (health certificate etc.) and that the queens have established healthy colonies.

If you wish to import queens into the UK from the EU or Third countries, then guidance notes and notification forms are available on our website at www.nationalbeeunit.com, select Bees & the Law and then select Imports and Exports from the menu. You can also now submit electronic import notification on BeeBase. Select 'Add new Import' once logged in to the beekeeper pages.

Please note it is a legal requirement that you inform your nearest Animal Health Office if importing queens or bees.

BeeBase registration

There is a common misunderstanding that beekeepers who are members of Beekeeping Associations are automatically registered on BeeBase. Unfortunately this is not the case. Generally, you are registered on BeeBase, if you have been inspected by an Appointed Bee Inspector, been added to the data base by an Appointed Bee Inspector or the office staff at the National Bee Unit in York (with prior permission from the beekeeper or Beekeeping Association) or registered on-line yourself.

We are currently trying to encourage as many beekeepers as possible to register on BeeBase. This means that we can contact beekeepers for example to undertake exotic pest surveillance work, to offer management advice and inspect their colonies for notifiable disease.

When notifiable disease is found, the BeeBase 'sweep system' is used to search the area around the disease outbreak (normally 3km). This enables us to visit the beekeepers in the surrounding areas to make sure that their bees have not contacted the disease.

We then use our email disease alert system to make beekeepers aware that notifiable disease has been found in their area. To be alerted you must have a current email address on BeeBase. If you are not already registered on BeeBase please register as soon as possible.

If you are unsure whether you are registered, or are having difficulty registering, please contact the NBU office on 01904 462510

If you are registered on BeeBase, please make sure that your details and email address are up to date.

Please note the National Bee Unit does not pass any of your personal information to third parties.

To access the site, please visit: www.nationalbeeunit.com

Proposed Changes to managing and controlling pests and diseases

DEFRA has launched a public consultation on bee health following a review of our current policies on managing honey bee pests and diseases.

The review was undertaken by FERA (Food and Environment Research Agency), on behalf of Defra and the Welsh Government, with the NBU (National Bee Unit), representatives from commercial and amateur beekeeper associations and an independent scientist.

This consultation is **seeking your views** on the proposals which emerged from the review. The closing date for the consultation is the 9th March 2013. For further information and how to respond please visit: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2013/01/10/bee-health-1301/>

Seasonal Bee Inspector Contacts

Merseyside/Wirral/ Parts of Greater Manchester

Sandra Kinchin, (available April to end of September)
Works mobile: 07775 119440(works 2.5 days per week)
E mail: sandra.kinchin@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Cumbria/North Lancashire

Stewart Beattie (available April until end of September)
Works mobile: 07775 119443(works 4 days per week)
E mail: stewart.beattie@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Lancashire and some parts of Greater Manchester

John Zamorski (available April until end of September)
Works mobile: 07775 119446(works 3 days per week)
E mail: john.zamorski@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland

Mr Ian Wallace (available April until end of September)
Works mobile: 07775 119445(works 5 days per week)
E mail: ian.wallace@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Cheshire

Mr Terry Ashley (available April to July/August)
Works mobile: 07775119472
E mail: terry.ashley@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Details of disease incidence, research and news updates are regularly placed on the NBU website on www.nationalbeeunit.com

If there are any items in this report you would like to discuss, please feel free to contact me. Just to remind you, I am available for lectures and demonstrations throughout the year.

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