

National Bee Unit Eastern Region Associations. 2013 Update

Inspection Work:

The following Inspections have been carried out in Eastern Region for the Beekeeping Season 2013

Activity	2012	2013
Apiaries Inspected	1378	1194
Colonies Inspected	6856	6513
Beekeepers Visited	838	716

Current known Beekeepers within Region: 5247 as at 01/02/2014.

654 New Beekeepers have been identified in Eastern Region since spring 2013 of these 219 are beekeepers who have self-registered.

Further surveys of Beekeepers will take place this winter to continue the updating of regional records, which was commenced in 2005 and is now on-going each winter.

Foulbrood:

Disease	Colonies 2012	Colonies 2013
European Foulbrood	169	108
American Foulbrood	12	2

Incidences of European Foulbrood for the 2013 season are down on the 2012 season. This could be attributed to high winter losses in some areas of the Region and also the total number of field inspections being slightly lower, it is worth noting however that cases of EFB in Lincolnshire have increased substantially see Page Two.

The issue of the disease status of nucleus suppliers, nationally, continues to be a concern where stock is sold on which is subsequently found to have Foulbrood. Any beekeeper selling stock must keep records as to where the stock has gone - as when disease is found the original supplier will be our first port of call as part of the tracing process. The real worry is that these colonies often go to beginners, then, in some cases are lost in the winter, becoming a source of disease in areas previously not at risk

2013 Eastern Region - County Totals for Notifiable Disease:

County	EFB Colonies	EFB Apiaries	AFB Colonies	AFB Apiaries
Norfolk	39	18	0	0
Suffolk	6	3	0	0
Herts	7	3	0	0
Camb	2	1	2	1
Essex	3	2	0	0
Beds	0	0	0	0
Lincs	51	17	0	0
Leics	0	0	0	0
Rutland	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	108	44	2	1

2013 Top Five Counties EFB 'League Table'

Lincolnshire 51 cases.
Norfolk 39 cases
Herefordshire 35 cases.
Devon 30 cases.
Hampshire 29 cases.

Exotic Pest Surveillance:

Eastern Region has a higher risk status than many with its concentration of Ports and Military Bases, linked to other risks such as Imported Wax Refiners and Wholesale Fruit Merchants. No Exotic Pests have been found and further surveillance work and liaison with Risk Premises will continue next season.

Samples of floor debris were also collected from various Apiaries around the Region for analysis at the National Bee Unit for Exotic Pests - all were negative. These samples are gathered by Beekeepers who are part of the 'Sentinel Apiary' programme, and also by Inspectors during their inspection visits.

Exotic Pest Surveillance	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013
Eastern Region Apiaries Visited	161	223	220

Import Inspections:

Import Inspections of full colonies and also Queens from within the EU have been carried out this year. These constitute either full colony inspections, or inspection of Import Health Certificates which accompany the bees. Within Eastern Region this constituted 24 Import Inspections of which many have been completed, with some paper checks being completed at present.

Regional Bee Inspectors Overview of the 2013 season:

The 2013 Season:

The 2013 season turned out again to be a very frustrating and for a lot of beekeepers, disappointing after what seemed to be the longest and coldest winter for several years. Anecdotal reports from bee inspectors and beekeepers pointed to high winter losses around the region, Also bee inspectors were indicating they were seeing a large number of very small colonies at the start of the season, colonies that were going to find it hard to build up sufficiently to produce a crop of honey from, and / or successfully overwinter.

Disease Levels and Inspections:

Statutory Disease levels in Eastern region was down in the 2012 season aside from Lincolnshire, where considerable increase was noted - particularly in the area South of the Humber. Beekeepers need to be aware that they should keep an eye on their stocks and not to become complacent. Any suspect disease should be reported to their Bee Inspector. Particular attention should be paid to colonies which don't build up with signs of patchy brood, and unpleasant smells. Colonies that die out over the winter should be reported to me if you suspect disease. Colonies which die out should have the frames either melted down and cleaned in Washing Soda Solution - preferably boiled or burnt, and boxes scorched out prior to restocking - this being good barrier management and a way of keeping disease down to a minimum.

Contacts for Bee Inspectors can be found here:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/Contacts/contacts.cfm>

Note: Seasonal Bee Inspectors work from the beginning of April to the end of September each year - outside of those times please contact your Regional Bee Inspector.

Winter Legacy and the need for 'Feed Vigilance':

The result of all the bad weather both in the Summer of 2012 and the winter 2012/13 manifested itself in the number of colonies that died in the winter both from Queen failure as a result of Poor Mating in the wet summer, as well as from starvation, again I would urge beekeepers to monitor weights of their colonies by hefting over the winter months and to feed fondant over the brood nest, using an eke and a hessian sack to conserve heat. Fondant can be obtained from some local Beekeeping Associations, Beekeeping Equipment Suppliers and also Bakeries.

Bee Paralysis Virus crops up again:

Chronic bee paralysis was also reported again this year by both inspectors and beekeepers and hopefully research to be carried out this year by the NBU may shed light on this debilitating condition for which there is effectively no immediate treatment - with colonies either dying out, or eventually recovering.

Photographs and video footage of Bee Paralysis can be found on Beebase here:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageId=275>

Beekeeper Training & Extension Events:

The format of beekeeper training is gradually being changed in the Eastern Region, and right across England and Wales. This is as a result of the 2013 Review of Bee Health and subsequent consultation. For full details follow the link below - the evidence profiles shown are free to download and are a very useful reading resources for all beekeepers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-honey-bee-health>

Beekeeper Training and Extension Events are being refocused to concentrate upon the core work of the Bee Health Inspectorate - Disease prevention, recognition and control, Advice on Varroa management and good biosecurity.

We have in England and Wales, as time has passed been 'pulled' into activities with Beekeeping Associations to carry out training which falls outside of our core - remit - for example Honey Extraction and Queen Rearing, work on Basic Beginners Courses which can quite feasibly be covered by experienced beekeepers within the Association - particularly those with Qualifications, and not by Bee Inspectors where doing so ultimately takes them away from Inspection activity and Disease Control work.

Our intention is to carry out with beekeepers more County based events, with wherever possible hands on apiary demonstrations combined with a diseased comb workshop as well as Varroa Control and barrier management workshops.

Four of these larger scale events have already been arranged for 2014 in Hertfordshire , Lincolnshire and West Norfolk.

It is accepted that there will be some smaller scale events where the Bee Health Inspection Service will require some input and you should discuss this with me (contact details shown at base of newsletter).

Seasonal Bee Inspectors will continue to be involved in Apiary Tours or Safari's in areas where these have become a popular mode of combined inspections and learning, and again if you are considering one of these - please have a look at our factsheet which you can find here:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageId=167>

Scroll down to 'Fact Sheets' and you will see Bee Safari's is the first on the list.

Varroa Control:

Last year saw the introduction of another approved Varroacide to the UK market - Mite Away Quick Strips or MAQS for short. Beekeepers reported varied results, personally I used it on 80 of my own colonies, and did not experience any problems, with a good mite drop and no known Queen failures, but I know that some beekeepers reported colony problems - such as losses of bees and Queen failures. It is very important to note from the product instructions that there are warnings that this can happen when this product is used.

Useful information on MAQS can be found here:

<http://www.maqs.co.uk/>

I must emphasise the importance with all Varroacides to follow the instructions on the packaging or data sheet and take into account weather conditions, state of the colony, time of year etc, if these are likely to have an effect - IE: For MAQS or Thymol based treatments.

Another approved Varroacide which is available for beekeepers to legally obtain and use via the Veterinary Cascade is Api Bioxal. As this is an EU registered product for the control of Varroa this should be obtained and used by beekeepers in preference to ordinary Oxalic Acid. It is marketed by the same company as ApiLife Var.

Another product Ecoxal is also authorised for the same purpose. Information on the Veterinary Cascade and record keeping can be found on the website of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate here:

http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/public/bee_cascade.aspx

http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Bee_Europe.pdf

<http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/pdf/vmgn/VMGNote14.pdf>

When any Veterinary Medicine is purchased or administered the keeper of the animal has a legal duty to maintain a Record of Veterinary Medicines. These are freely available to download from Beebase, the link below contains lots of useful information:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageId=353>

Important Thanks and Acknowledgements:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank both beefarmers and smaller scale beekeepers, as well as the Beekeeping Associations for their continuing support over the last year and also the Seasonal Bee Inspectors in Eastern Region who play a very important part in finding and dealing with disease, as well as giving much support to beekeepers in the Region and to myself.

I will also like to thank Bob Mould. Bob has worked as a Seasonal Bee Inspector in Lincolnshire since 2002 and at the end of the 2012 season decided it was time to hang up his ministry hive tool and hand back his infamous laptop to concentrate on his own bees and spending time with his family. I am sure that Bob will be missed by the beekeepers in Lincolnshire for his wealth of knowledge and experience which he has passed on to them over the years, and will be very much missed by the team of bee Inspectors he leaves behind.

Having spoken about a member of the Eastern Team leaving the Inspection Service I would also like to mention an addition to the team. Stewart Spinks became a Seasonal Bee Inspector in 2013 and is gradually getting known by the Norfolk beekeepers. He works the area previously covered by Mike Willis which had been covered by myself and other inspectors since his retirement, so welcome Stewart to the Eastern Team.

Finally I wish everyone in Eastern Region a much better season in 2014 with plenty of honey and sunshine.

Keith Morgan - Regional Bee Inspector.

Useful Telephone Contacts for Inspectors:

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