



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

National Bee Unit

Animal and Plant Health Agency

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Mandatory preparations for destruction and shook swarm of foulbrood infected honey bee colonies

Foulbrood has been confirmed in one or more of your honey bee colonies. In order to proceed with destruction and/or shook swarm of the infected colonies, as agreed with the Appointed Bee Inspector (ABI), you must make the following preparations and ensure you have all of the equipment required for the applicable procedure(s). Please read all of the instructions carefully.

HONEY SUPERS

By prior agreement with your ABI, a **Movement Licence** may be granted in exceptional circumstances to allow extraction of honey from supers from European foulbrood infected colonies. However, this will only be granted if it is demonstrated that you are able to take biosecurity measures to prevent further transmission of disease.

Honey extraction must be complete in advance of the shook swarm/destruction, so that the empty super frames are available for destruction and the super boxes, and any equipment used for clearing or transporting the supers, may be disinfected on the same day as the shook swarm or destruction procedure(s). Retain the cappings from extracted supers so that these also can be destroyed.

Extracted supers and the empty combs and boxes must be returned to the site and **securely stacked in a way that bees cannot access it**. This is vital as robbing of these supers can spread disease to other colonies.

In some cases, it is preferable to destroy the honey to prevent the risk of further disease transmission. Your ABI will discuss this with you.

DESTRUCTION OF COLONIES

If the ABI has issued you with a notice to destroy the infected colony/colonies, you will need to euthanise the bees using 500 ml of petrol per hive. Please perform the procedure below **before the date agreed** for the ABI's next visit.

- If you have been given permission to extract the honey, clear the super(s) from the affected hive(s) and remove it from the colony once it's clear of bees. Ensure that they are kept in a **bee-proof** location before and after extraction.
- Ensure that the infected hives are on solid floors. If you have open mesh floors, you need to replace them with solid floors. If you do not have a solid floor, then you can use a spare roof (upturned) or any solid, flat piece of wood as long as it is positioned to prevent leakage.
- Bees in polystyrene hives will need to be transferred into wooden hives before they can be euthanised, as petrol can damage the polystyrene.
- In the evening, when the flying bees have returned to the hive, block up the entrance securely using foam or old rags. Tape is not recommended as it may not adhere to the wood or may become unstuck on contact with petrol.
- Ensure there are no gaps between any hive parts; use rags or foam and gaffer tape, if necessary, to secure it all together.
- Once the hive and floor are properly sealed, pour 500 ml of fresh petrol in through the hole in the crown board and quickly cover the hole and replace the roof. The bees should die within minutes.
- If a wooden hive is not available, the bees may be euthanised using soapy water as follows: block the entrance in the evening and strap up the hive or nucleus box tightly. Have a plastic potting tray or similar available to catch the leaking liquid and invert the hive so that the roof is at the bottom. Pour 5 gallons/ 23 litres of water, well-mixed with 100 ml washing up liquid, into the hive. Ensure that the contaminated water/honey is disposed of in a hole in the ground or down the drain.
- Leave the hive closed until the ABI returns.



SHOOK SWARM OF COLONIES

If the ABI has issued you with a notice to shook swarm the infected colony/colonies, you must have the following clean equipment prepared **before the date agreed** with the ABI for the shook swarm. The following equipment is essential to proceed and if it is not ready at the agreed time, treatment will default to destruction. For **each colony** to be shook swarmed, you will need:

- Hive stand
- Floor
- Entrance block
- Brood box
- Queen excluder
- Crown board
- Roof
- Assembled, new/un-used brood frames with foundation (enough to fill the brood box)
- Feeder
- 1 gallon/ 4.5 litres of strong sugar syrup

All equipment must be clean for the shook swarm. Wooden parts should be scraped and scorched, while polystyrene can be bleached. Please follow the instructions on how to thoroughly clean equipment in [our hive cleaning fact sheet](#).

DISINFECTING EQUIPMENT

Equipment that is in good working order will be scraped and disinfected or scorched. You are expected to assist the inspector to scrape and scorch wooden and metal hive parts. Equipment with an excess of propolis may need to be scrubbed in soda solution, which helps dislodge propolis from surfaces. If this is required, you will need to provide soda solution (1 kg soda crystals in 5 litres of water).

If you have polystyrene hives, you will need to provide household bleach and a large garden tray or similar; large enough to submerge equipment. The bleach is diluted to 0.5% in water and used to soak affected equipment for 20 to 30 minutes. This set-up must be shown to your bee inspector on the treatment day. If polystyrene/plastic equipment cannot be disinfected, it will be taken for incineration.



BURNING AND DISPOSAL OF CONTAMINATED MATERIAL

Frames and dead bees from affected colonies will need to be destroyed by burning. To prepare for this, you must dig a hole for the fire pit **before the date agreed** with the ABI. If there is no appropriate location for a fire pit, your ABI will discuss the alternatives with you.

- Select a location for the fire pit to be dug. It must be located away from overhanging obstructions, potentially flammable materials or enclosed spaces where bordering foliage or property is present. It should not be in an area where smoke from the fire will interfere with road traffic.
- Dig a hole of 1 metre x 1 metre and 60 cm deep.
- Keep the soil piled up nearby so that it can be used to fill in the fire pit when the fire is spent.
- On the day of the burn-up, affected hive contents that cannot be disinfected will be burned.
- Any polystyrene or plastic equipment that is not sufficiently cleaned or disinfected and cannot be safely burned may be sent for incineration. The ABI will supply the packaging materials for this.
- Inform your ABI of any stored equipment. Reinfection can occur if any contaminated supers, frames, nuc boxes or other equipment in storage that may have come into contact with foulbrood are not decontaminated.



INSURANCE

In order to claim under Bee Diseases Insurance, all colonies owned must be covered by your insurance policy. If your colonies are in a shared apiary, all colonies must be adequately covered by their owners. For more information on what is covered, please visit <https://www.beediseasesinsurance.co.uk/join/bdi-premiums-and-cover>.

Please have your British Beekeepers Society Association ID number ready in advance; this is a specific number in the form of '123.123.123' and is distinct from your BeeBase or local association IDs. You can find this on your BBKA account.

AFTERCARE

After the procedure(s), please ensure that your bee suit and boots are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

If your colony/colonies have been shook swarmed, please follow the aftercare instructions on our fact sheet '[care of colonies after a shook swarm](#)'. In particular, do not remove the queen excluder from underneath the colony until there are eggs and larvae in the colony.

To better understand disease transmission pathways and how to minimise spread of bee diseases, please review our guidance on our [apiary hygiene and quarantine](#) fact sheet.

The ABI will confirm a date for a follow-up visit with you after six weeks have passed or, if late in the year, the following May.

KEY RESOURCES

- For more information on shook swarms: read our [shook swarms](#) fact sheet.
- For guidance on disinfecting after disease: read our [hive cleaning](#) fact sheet.



Fact sheets in the links above can be found at: www.nationalbeeunit.com/resources-for-beekeepers/leaflets-guides-and-videos/fact-sheets



Visit www.nationalbeeunit.com/resources-for-beekeepers/leaflets-guides-and-videos/ to learn more about foulbrood and the NBU statutory disease programme.