

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum
16th Meeting – 10 December 2015
Nobel House, London**

Present:

Richard Watkins (Chair)	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Kevin Beattie	
Matthew Dray	
Rosie Hamer	
Louise Mount	
Marie Holmes	Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
Nigel Semmence	
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
David Aston	
John Mellis ☎	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
Ivor Davis	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union
Jane Jones	Welsh Government (WG)
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government (SG)
Norman Carreck	International Bee Research Association (IBRA)
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
John Bowles	
Anna Burrows	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
John Hill ☎	British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA)

Apologies:

Mike Brown	APHA
Andy Wattam	
Mike McGuinness	
Ken Basterfield	NDB
Margaret Ginman	BFA

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were given by each member of the Forum. The Chair also welcomed Anna Burrows of Veterinary Medicines Directorate who would be replacing Denise Burge on the Forum. Welcomes were also extended to Rosie Hamer of Defra who was a guest discussing the latest on EU Animal Health Law and to Matthew Dray of Defra's Rural Evidence Statistics Analysis team who would be in charge of the Apiculture programme count.

2. Highlight report

Actions arising from the 15th meeting were discussed. All were complete.

Highlight report

The Chair invited comments on the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Risk 1 – Insufficient project team resources. The impact on bee health wasn't yet known. The residual risk should move to amber to reflect this until more was known on the impact on bee health funding.

Risk 2 – Lack of progress with extending range of authorised medicines – No movement suggested on the risk rating. It was queried whether Nosema should have a licensed medicine. It was up to companies to go through the licensing process, government were encouraging companies to bring medicines through for Nosema but this couldn't be forced. Typically this was a small market so companies weren't incentivised to license and market products.

Q) *Was the NBU planning to disseminate the MAQ strip data collected to the public?* No, this was on behalf of the manufacturer, NBU were the best placed to act as a conduit to report back.

Risk 3 – Lack of suitable indicators to measure progress of the Plan. Review of indicators next meeting.

Risk 4 – Delay in commencement of 2016/17 education programmes. When budgets post spending review were confirmed Marie would report back to the Forum on HBP funding and the impact (if any) on the whole budget and stakeholder education element.

Risk 5 – Risk to continuation of HBP and BHAF due to NPS. Residual risk to remain the same.

Issues

Issue 1 – Stakeholder aspirations exceeding budgetary constraints - no comments.

Issue 2 – Lack of corporate funding when IPI and other work are moved into practical beekeeping. Policy to circulate a list of published practice notes.

Issue 3 – Bumblebees imparting pathogens to honeybees. Policy to provide a list of available papers on disease transmission.

ACTION 1: Louise to send Marie a list of practice notes (issue 2) and available papers on disease transmission (issue 3) for circulation to Forum.

Issue 4 – Oxalic acid regulations – remove from issues log as now closed.

New issue proposed around apiculture programme matched funding.

ACTION 2: Marie to add new issue to issue log.

3. EU Animal Health Law

The Chair welcomed Rosie Hamer who provided an update on the Animal Health regulations. Key points included:

- In 2013 the Commission adopted the proposal for a single, comprehensive animal health law to replace the complicated animal health rules currently in place.
- Trilogue was concluded in June where European Parliament and the council reached an agreement on the animal health proposal in the ordinary legislative procedure.
- Negotiary legislation phase followed and was currently going through vote processes with the expectation being for base regulations in April 2016. The implementation phase would last for 5 years. 3 years for negotiations on tertiary followed by 2 years of domestic regulations.
- By 2021 the legislation would be complete and enforceable.
- Outreach engagement was taking place. Tertiary timetable was pushed back by Commission whilst priorities were decided.

This Forum needed to consider opportunities on what could be retained or disposed of and priorities we would like to take forward from April.

It was suggested to visit automatic mutual recognition of approvals with other Member States.

A similar situation had arisen within the crops sector. Horticulture could be regarded as minor use and legislation wasn't being developed resulting in adaptation of broad acre crops legislation. There was an EU level initiative to coordinate mutual recognition across Europe. The EU had a consultation regarding the proposal resulting in a task force overseeing how it could work. A Caveat to this was member states were required to match fund which had the drawbacks with differing countries priorities for their own budgets. It would be helpful if the bee sector could do something similar. Rosie would take this away to look at it.

ACTION 3: Rosie to consider whether bee sector could mirror horticulture sector with mutual recognition across Europe.

There were 4 packages and bee health would fall under the first 3. Registration of beekeepers could be raised at this stage.

1. Intra EU movements
2. Entry into EU (3rd country trade)
3. Disease control notification
4. Aquatics

Trilogue voted against handling of the disease list being put into an annex where EU parliament would have a say on the list. This shouldn't affect outcome of diseases and should be considered as a placeholder. Notifiable diseases weren't anticipated to be removed from the list.

Rosie asked if there were any volunteers from the Forum who would like to join the technical working group as a coordinator of views from the Forum and act as a conduit.

ACTION 4: All, reply to Rosie if Forum members would like to join the working group.

4. National Apiculture Programme

Louise Mount provided an update to the Forum on latest developments with the National Apiculture Programme. Policy had met with beekeeping associations and DAs to discuss. The requirement was to put together a package of information to provide to the Commission on common market regulations to help the beekeeping industry.

The immediate priority was to develop a methodology of counting the number of hives which was repeatable, accurate and value for money.

Presently approximately £335k was awarded (2% of overall budget) this figure was match-funded by UK government.

Matthew Dray was the count coordinator and was considering the following methods for the hive count.

1. Estimate the number of beekeepers and hives from BeeBase data (an exercise encouraging members to update their records would happen in early 2016).
2. Look at the proportion of beekeepers associated with national beekeeping associations, especially those not already registered on BeeBase to compare and contrast.
3. Consider other relevant data sets by plugging holes and avoiding double counting by looking at key suppliers lists, BDI data and beehive count surveys from BBKA.

From this it would be possible to obtain an estimate. To account for gaps Matthew would look at distribution of hives from beekeepers on BeeBase. It was anticipated Northern Ireland would provide an estimate from their database which would be included in the count.

Q) *Would the methodology be scrutinised by the Commission?* Each member state was required to send their methodology to the Commission, it was uncertain how closely these would be investigated but those with most money claimed would be closer scrutinised on a proportionate basis.

John Mellis said the BFA were working on a response to the consultation programme and would forward to Louise once complete.

Defra were liaising with APHA communications team on an approach for publicising the pilot including how to reach the 'unknown unknowns'. It was suggested to state what the Commissions definition of a hive was.

Policy/APHA would share communications/messages with Forum before sending to ensure these concerns were met.

ACTION 5: Louise to distribute to Forum communications lines for input.

5. Asian hornet contingency exercise

Louise Mount provided an update to the Forum on the Asian hornet contingency plan and recent exercise.

The most likely event to initialise a response would be from a sighting from a member of the public. With information from the Non-Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) the NBU would conduct an initial inspection to conclude whether it was Asian hornet, once confirmed wildlife teams would deal with it as a pest.

BBKA noted they had numerous members reporting potential sightings. The usual procedure of contacting the NNSS for confirmation applied alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk. Nigel Semmence also offered to look at enquiries and could provide a common list of sighting types if required.

Q) *When was Asian hornet likely to arrive?* Not yet present in UK, but it was considered likely to arrive soon. The places it was most likely to be found were in southern parts of England (it may be able to cross the channel from France on the wing) or amongst goods which it could be accidentally imported (such as soil with imported pot plants, cut flowers, fruit and timber). Active months were between April and November (peak August/September). Inactive over the winter, so the most likely time to see this species would be early next year. Research suggests a migration front of 60k per year taking approximately 4 years to spread throughout the UK.

Q) *Were insect growth regulators considered as a treatment option?* Derfa and Fera were in constant talks with the French authorities. These regulators were fed to the young which inhibited their growth.

Q) *Were any physical exercises planned?* The NBU conducted physical exercises twice yearly, and Policy conducted desk-top exercises twice yearly. It was requested that associations were notified when exercises were happening to help with handling lines to likely enquiries raised.

6. Neonicotinoids appendix

There was a debate in Westminster on the impact of neonicotinoids, this was due to a petition signed by 90,000 people. George Eustice provided an update on the information presently available. The debate was mainly around dosage and at what level it had an impact on bees via seed dressings. The debate concluded more research and information was required, a separate APPG meeting also concluded further research would be beneficial. It was suggested that research which detailed mixed results was difficult to get published in journals, whereas studies showing strong or negative results were more likely to be published and therefore peer reviewed which was a key component when considering evidence.

BBKA had been keeping their members informed on the neonicotinoid debate and requested a line from Policy when addressing their membership.

ACTION 6: David to send an email to Richard detailing questions.

7. AOB

Northern Ireland AFB/EFB outbreak

BBKA were approached by Institute of Northern Ireland beekeepers who had reported 40 cases of AFB. Previous year's had approximately 12 instances of AFB. EFB hadn't been detected for 20+ years and last year there were 3 cases rising to 5 this year. It appeared to be distributed by infected nucs and beekeepers selling them didn't recognise they were infected. DARD were looking at actions to be taken in the springtime and were having meetings in the meantime.

It was queried whether DARD had sufficient resource to deal with the outbreaks and whether there was any potential for NBU to help.

It was suggested England Minister should recommend Northern Ireland Minister to act with inspectors on recommendation from this Forum.

API-Bioxal recommended dosage

It was raised that using the manufacturers recommended dosage may potentially have a negative effect on the hive/queen. The recommended dosage was thought to be approximately 33% higher than current use in the UK and was based on dosage in hotter climates which wasn't appropriate for cooler climates. VMD recommend to follow the manufacturer's instructions and if it was felt there was a safety issue or an adverse event than this should be reported through the [yellow form system](#). It was stressed that VMD could only act on issues reported via the system and could only analyse evidence supplied by the company and not on studies conducted in other countries.

It was queried whether Apivar could be treated under the same procedure that API-Bioxal was brought through? The company that had the Apivar license would need to submit for authorisation and costs would depend on how many countries an application was submitted to. The licensing cost was based on the application, mutual recognition was considerably cheaper. As an example it was asked whether VMD could provide approximate costs for bringing one product from Poland on that basis.

ACTION 7: Anna to request approximate costs from Finance team and send to John Mellis when known.

Other news

The BBKA Spring Convention would be held on 8th to 10th April – all were welcome.

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and valued input.

Date of next meeting: Date's for 2016 tbc via doodle-poll. Next meeting is likely to be early March in Nobel House, London.

Table of Actions

No.	Action	Assigned to
1	Send to Marie a list of practice notes (issue 2) and available papers on disease transmission (issue 3) for circulation to Forum.	Louise Mount
2	Add new apiculture programme matched funding issue to issue log.	Marie Holmes
3	Consider whether bee sector could mirror horticulture sector with mutual recognition across Europe.	Rosie Hamer
4	Reply to Rosie if Forum members would like to join the working group.	All
5	Distribute to Forum communications lines on apiculture programme pilot for input.	Louise Mount
6	Send an email to Richard detailing questions from BBKA members regarding neonicotinoid debate.	David Aston
7	Request approximate costs from Finance team and send to John Mellis when known.	Anna Burrows