

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum  
19<sup>th</sup> Meeting – 8 December 2016  
Nobel House, London**

**Present:**

Richard Watkins (Chair)	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Kevin Beattie	
Willem Roelofs ☎	
Louise Mount	
Mike Brown	Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
Marie Holmes	
Julian Parker	
Nigel Semmence	
Giles Budge	Fera Science Ltd (Fera)
Margaret Murdin	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
John Hendrie	
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
Ivor Davis	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Jane Jones	Welsh Government (WG)
Irene Allen	
Norman Carreck ☎	International Bee Research Association (IBRA)
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government
Anna Burrows	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
Chris Hartfield ☎	National Farmers' Union (NFU)
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
John Bowles	
John Hill	British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA)

**Apologies:**

Kirsty Stainton	Fera
John Heard	BFA
John Mellis	
Ken Basterfield	NDB

**1. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were given by each member of the Forum. Willem Roelofs from Defra Plant Health Evidence and Analysis team would be dialling in at the hive count section to explain the methodology.

**2. Minutes of last meeting & Highlight report**

Actions arising from the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting were discussed.

*Update on action 1 – Investigate whether a working group was still required for EU Animal Health law.*

A framework was being developed and the technical legislation would inform the work. The disease list would be the first work stream due to commence in spring 2017. The Chair stated there would be the opportunity for BHAF members to be included in 1 to 1 sessions with Dianna MacDowall to gather views to feed into the negotiations. This would be the first in a series of work streams led by the Commission.

*Update on action 2 – Provide a timetable for Apiculture Programme discussions including key dates in the process.*

Policy aimed to circulate a proposed timetable by the end of the year.

**ACTION 1:** Louise to circulate apiculture programme timetable.

*Update on action 3 – Investigate number of bumblebees imported each year.*

There were 261 bumblebee consignments in 2016, these could each consist of anything between 200 and 500 boxes of nests.

*Update on action 4 – Report resistance to VMD as an adverse event.*

No adverse events were reported to farm traces since the last meeting.

#### Highlight report

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

*Risk 1 – Insufficient project team resources.* No comments.

*Risk 2 – Lack of progress with extending range of authorised medicines.* Oxuvar had been authorised but wasn't on the open market yet. It was suggested that Nosema was potentially on the increase and a query was raised to whether any medicines were planned. Anna advised that upcoming medicines couldn't be discussed in specifics but it was thought that the main upcoming medicines were aimed towards Varroa management. However, Anna offered to ask colleagues regarding Nosema and would report back at the next meeting.

**ACTION 2:** Anna to investigate whether there were any upcoming Nosema treatments which could be shared.

#### Issues

*Issue 1 – Apiculture programme matched funding –* Policy were looking at ways to improve apiculture programme spend and education. Policy colleagues would contact BHAF during February 2017 for input. Welsh and Scottish governments would look to inform each other and make sure there were common themes between all governments.

### **3. Update from associations on progress with 2016/17 education contracts**

BBKA – 2016/17 programme included training beekeepers in general and advanced husbandry. 84 candidates had enrolled on the general programme and 20 on advanced. There were 3 articles published on the training in BBKA news in addition to advertisements of the courses. 152 expressions of interest were received with 115 places offered, to date 80 had signed up. Eligibility criteria included the requirement to be able to undertake the assessment in 2017/18 and be registered on BeeBase. As there was a lot of interest BBKA would increase spend on the programme. All trainers were required to have undertaken previous training and/or be master beekeepers. A standard training programme was produced for tutors to ensure consistency of advice delivered across the regions.

**ACTION 3:** Margaret to send written report on progress to Marie.

BFA – The first 6 apprentices were due to qualify and BFA would be holding an event in London to mark that occasion. Second year students were progressing well, 3 were in Australia training for the winter, feedback had been very positive and a worthwhile link was fostered with Australia and New Zealand. UK bee farmers would reciprocate by hosting students from Australia and New Zealand.

Regarding this financial year 3 apprentices were appointed with a further 4 due at the beginning of the season. BFA had found that many beekeepers had contacted them who wished to further their professional beekeeping but didn't fit the apprenticeship scheme. In light of this a programme was being developed for those who wished to take up bee farming. Presently there hadn't been the requirement to advertise the course as uptake from general contacts was sufficient.

There was a discussion around publicising the positive successes of the apprenticeship scheme and how this should be in the mainstream media as well as the beekeeping press.

**ACTION 4:** Margaret to send written report on progress to Marie.

NDB – Committed to deliver a number of Short Courses, and to develop/pilot a new course title, during financial year 2016-17. 17 courses with 166 students were delivered with a further 3 courses scheduled for 30 students. Feedback was routinely gathered (rated from 1 to 5) with the average score being 4. It was harder to quantify whether courses were delivering a wider group of beekeepers to become better qualified.

The pilot swarm control course was affected by the summer due to key writers being fully occupied. However, this would be completed by Christmas, and all 7 locations specified in the bid were targeted.

**ACTION 5:** Ivor to send written report on progress to Marie.

Q) Had associations analysed any overlaps between each other? Yes, key contacts in each organisation were regularly in touch. BBKA prepared and encouraged beekeepers to take qualifications and NDB provided the background and understanding and provided beekeepers the

opportunity to gain qualifications where the expectation was to become teachers to beekeepers. Additionally BBKA advised their advanced candidates to take the NDB short courses to complement their learning.

BFA were geared towards City & Guilds and how they trained other rural crafts. There were many elements in the programme not specific to beekeeping such as; basic business practices, health and safety and first aid so less overlap was experienced between BFA with BBKA/NDB.

WBKA were focusing efforts into getting all beekeepers up to a minimum standard as this was previously discussed at the now disbanded Science and Education Advisory Group as a priority. Wales didn't experience the same amount of churn as England so this was a worthwhile effort.

Scottish Government supported a train the trainer programme with the aim to raise standards of training via local associations throughout the country.

The Chair summed up by noting there was a need to further develop the communications around all the successes, and suggested associations investigated writing a case study/life experience piece from candidate(s).

**ACTION 6:** Associations to aid business case development for funding of HBP post 2019, by providing to Marie success stories and communications around completed work.

#### **4. Asian hornet and plans for 2017**

Nigel Semmence, the NBU's Contingency Planning and Science Officer presented an update on the Asian hornet (AH). Key points included:

- Morphology of the AH – yellow legs when alive which dull when dead, black in colour in flight.
- Map of geographical confirmed presence within Europe and UK.
- French nest data – able to fly >40 km/day; prefers urbanised habitat; 70% of nests were >10m above ground; 87% in trees/shrubs 12.8% on buildings and 0.2% underground; mature nests can produce up to 13,000 individuals per season, an average nest has 400 workers and colonies produce an average of 200 and maximum of 563 founder queens.
- UK incursion – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September, a beekeeper caught a suspect hornet hawking at their hives in Tetbury, Gloucestershire. An RBI visited and saw a second hornet, the contingency plan was enacted and a Local Disease Control Centre set up. The NNSS who receive sighting reports received 500+ on the first day.
- Methods used to find hornets and nest – visits to apiaries; deploying traps; sighting of hornets on forage; triangulation, thermal imaging and leafletting local members of the public. Line of sight was particularly beneficial as workers returned directly to the nest.

- Lessons learned - Most AH were not seen feeding on honeybees at hives; line of sight works; any restricted entrance on traps reduces efficiency; best bait for traps was shrimp/fish mashed in water; AH was only seen within 500m radius of nest, infrared technology was only effective from the visible side and should be used complementarily and not exclusively. Many efficiencies were identified such as; local inspections and forage sites would be the main focus and not >20km that was first inspected.
- Nest summary - 1 AH nest found; primary nest not present this was a secondary; total of 2359 cells in comb which was normal size for the time of year; no difference between worker and queen cells, 70 adults in nest and all life stages present.
- Preparations for 2017-
  - December - NBU were issuing communications to beekeepers, associations and others in increased risk areas requesting vigilance and to look for nests.
  - February – Communications to beekeepers to put up traps across country and those within increased risk area would have traps issued.

The following questions were raised during discussions:

Q) Were the NBU confident they possessed most up to date contacts of secretary's in associations? Yes, RBI's were in daily contact with association secretaries.

Point of note: Welsh Government noted that more communications would need to be bilingual. It was understood that in an emergency outbreak it wasn't possible but emphasized to plan and work with WG policy immediately who would be able to provide assistance. This early involvement would also aid with briefing Ministers and target resources.

Q) What was the active ingredient in the Ficam D nest destruction? Bendiocarb.

Q) Why were AH bad for the environment? AH predate honeybees and other useful pollinators. Research streams were ongoing within Fera and in France.

Q) What should beekeepers use to bait their traps? A leaflet would be provided with full guidance. A sweet bait (beer and sugar) in the spring and protein rich fish bait in the summer/autumn.

Q) Did our native hornet survive in Scotland and therefore provide an indicator that AH may establish throughout the UK? Yes. A PRA and climate model suggests that the UK climate is suitable for AH to establish.

Q) If a nest were discovered on private property could entry be refused? Yes, initial access could be refused, in such cases a warrant would be obtained by the NNS who have legislation with statutory powers. However, this is a last resort and appropriate/respectful approaches were always favoured.

## **5. Hive count**

The Commission required countries to arrive at a hive count number that was taken between 21<sup>st</sup> September and 22<sup>nd</sup> December. BHAF were consulted in September and December 2015 and again in March 2016 where an update was provided on the proposed methodology.

Willem Roelofs of Defra Evidence and Analysis team presented an update on the hive count methodology. Key points included:

- The count figure calculated was an experimental statistic. This was a statistic published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.
- A count was required due to EC delegated and implementing regulations. If Defra were unable to submit a methodology that met the approval of the Commission the UK would be ineligible for aid from the European CAP scheme.
- To estimate numbers the following formula was used:
  1. Estimate number of hives/beekeepers in GB
  2. Estimate number of beekeepers in GB
  3. Multiply (1) with (2) to obtain number of hives in GB, add NI figures
- The problems encountered were limited data sources i.e. number of hives and beekeepers only available from BeeBase – how up to date was information, how representative was the information, and not every beekeeper was registered on BeeBase or BBKA.
- Emails were sent to 24,804 BeeBase members – where 52% opened up the email. 1,796 texts were sent.
- An estimated number of overwintering hives per beekeeper was arrived at, this number was 5.05. An estimated number of British beekeepers registered on BeeBase or an association was estimated to be 37,897. Northern Ireland estimated overwintering hives to number 966. This information was provided by DARD as BeeBase wasn't available for NI beekeepers to register.
- $(5.05 \times 37,897) + 966 = 192,346$  estimated overwintering hives belonging to UK registered beekeepers.

Q) How were the NI figures estimated? 966 was provided by DARD. The Forum felt this number was too low and asked whether this could be investigated further.

**ACTION 7:** Willem to check how NI government arrived at 944 overwinter hives.

To further inform the figures Giles requested whether BBKA would be able to identify from their new members those that were totally new to beekeeping and those that were returning beekeepers. It was thought this may be possible as each member was allocated a membership number which remained with them and wasn't re-issued even when members had left. John said this would need to be investigated by a member of staff who wasn't present at the meeting but would investigate feasibility and report back.

**ACTION 8:** John to investigate whether new memberships could be identified as completely new or returning members to BBKA.

Concern was raised regarding the repeated request to beekeepers to update their records. Use of BeeBase for anything other than its original purpose as an inspection tool may cause survey fatigue and weaken the link between beekeeper and inspectorate. A solution was offered for national associations to gather data on hive numbers and location. WBKA was exploring the means of conducting an annual, in-house annual hive census and requested BBKA did the same. Margaret offered to trial it in one of their larger association areas next year.

Willem understood the caveats but in absence of better data or ways to overcome the issues there was little that could be done to improve what was arrived at and welcomed any offers of support to bolster the data.

Experience of other Forum members of getting quality data from memberships was accuracy and participation only happened when there was a legal compulsion to provide accurate data or when underpinned by a legal requirement could confidence be placed in the data.

## **6. AOB**

News:

Policy were invited by the Commission to a meeting on bee health in January 2107. The Forums views were welcomed on controls and how we would like SHB and AFB legislation to progress.

**ACTION 9:** All – please forward any views for Louise to rise at the Commission meeting by 6<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

Q) What was the current SHB situation in Italy? It had spread 50km north from the outbreak site. An unregistered bee farmer had moved their hives from the outbreak zone. Positive apiaries were still being discovered and a destruction policy with compensation was carried out.

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

**Date of next meeting:** Doodle-poll with dates for 2017 will be circulated in January. Proposed months for meetings are March, June, September and December. Three meetings will be in London with one being held in York.

### Table of Actions

No.	Action	Assigned to
1	Circulate apiculture programme timetable	Louise Mount
2	Investigate whether there were any upcoming Nosema treatments that could be shared	Anna Burrows
3	Send Marie written report on education contract progress	Margaret Murdin
4	Send Marie written report on education contract progress	Margaret Ginman
5	Send Marie written report on education contract progress	Ivor Davis
6	Associations to aid business case development for funding of HBP post 2019, by providing success stories and communications around completed work to Marie.	All
7	Check how NI government arrived at 944 overwinter hives	Willem Roelofs
8	Investigate whether new memberships could be identified as completely new or returning members to BBKA.	John Hendrie
9	Forward any views on controls and how we would like SHB and AFB legislation to progress for Louise Mount to raise at the Commission meeting by 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2017.	All