



### The 2017 Season – an overview

Every year is different and 2017 has been no exception! It has been different for me, moving from Seasonal Inspector with a remit for Herefordshire and the Forest of Dean to Regional Inspector, with responsibility for the Western team, covering from Stoke in the north, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire in the south, Shropshire in the west, Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the east.

Luckily, I have a strong team with me, keeping things as fully supported as possible on the ground. Keren Green completed another season covering Worcestershire and some of Warwickshire, Liz Gardner covering

Gloucestershire and Noel Parker completing his first full season looking after the West Midlands and Staffordshire. Clive Rogers made an excellent start to the season in Shropshire, but decided to retire fairly early in the season and we wish him a long and happy retirement. We were able to recruit Colleen Reichling to take over from Julian Routh (retired 2016), Colleen is active in east Staffordshire and Warwickshire.

It is with more than a touch of sadness that I have to mention that Keren Green has left us at the end of the season, she and her husband have moved to Cornwall. Keren has been a very reliable, cheery, and highly valued colleague for the last 5 years and I (and the rest of the Western Team) are going to miss her greatly. I hope we will see her in an NBU bee suit again in the future. Very fortunately, Gordon Bull, a seasoned inspector currently with Southern Region is going to join our team next season to cover Keren's old area. We have positions to fill in Herefordshire and Shropshire and these positions are being recruited for now. Do contact me if you know of someone who might be interested now or in the future.

The season for the bees, overall, was not outstanding, the bees themselves are mostly in good form (despite all the nasties out there) but honey crops were poor. I have to mention the weather, albeit briefly; it wasn't particularly bad; a cool spring, early summer, sunny and hot, but it wasn't always what we wanted at the time! In spring, the bees did passably well, but natural mating following the main swarming period was not good. When it came to summer, we seemed to have the best weather, but good nectar flows were just not there. Good nectar yielding plants like blackberry were over too quickly. So in general, the summer crop was pretty poor. Those raising new queens, reported better summer mating. With a mild autumn, activity went on late and the bees certainly made the best of the ivy.

Notifiable disease levels were below average, although there were one or two hot spots. We often saw high varroa loads, especially late in the season. Levels of the minor diseases were average or below.



With the Small Hive Beetle (SHB) risk, exotic pest inspections and import checking of packages of bees and queens, has become more and more important and a greater part of our work. With this in mind, an Exotic Pest Contingency exercise – in effect, a dry run of a SHB find - was run in Leicestershire. All of the Western team were involved in what was the 5<sup>th</sup> practice run of this type.

Tetbury - site of the Asian Hornet (AH) *Vespa velutina* incursion of 2016 – is in Western Region and we set traps in the area, both in response to reported sightings of AH and also for precautionary reasons, in case there should have been anything hanging over from 2016. Our thanks go to the beekeepers who helped us with apiary sites for traps and for help in monitoring.

It was only towards the end of the season, the end of September, that a vigilant beekeeper noticed AHs at his hives in Woolacombe, Devon. The local NBU team were on the scene straight away, some of the Western Team were called in to help, post-nest find, mainly to make sure the area was clear of AH.

## **Update on Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle in Europe**

### **Asian Hornet**

As mentioned in my introduction, surveillance for the Asian hornet, was resumed and traps deployed in the Tetbury area and North Somerset following last year's discoveries. No further hornets have been found in those areas but an insect caught flying inside a large distribution warehouse near Glasgow, Scotland in March 2017 was confirmed as an Asian hornet.

This is a stark reminder that Asian hornet (and other exotic pests) could arrive almost anywhere in the UK given the vast volume of traffic and goods arriving in the UK from across the Channel and other countries where exotic pests are endemic. The Scottish incursion could well have been a mated queen emerging from hibernation and if released into the open, may have been able to establish a nest.

Further sightings of Asian hornets have been confirmed this year in the Channel Islands. A primary nest was discovered quite early in Jersey but several more nests in various stages of development have been found there and destroyed right through the season.

The late September, Woolacombe sighting was confirmed by photograph. Once this confirmation was made, the NBU Contingency Plan was activated and Bee Inspectors were deployed in the area. Aided by lessons learned during the outbreak in Tetbury last year and perhaps also somewhat easier terrain to survey (it was much less wooded than Tetbury) the nest was quickly discovered and destroyed. The nest wasn't in a typical position, high up in a tree as in Tetbury, but hidden within a tall hedge. Cutting away the cover revealed a nest of about 50 cm diameter. Surveillance in the area after destruction of the nest has shown no further hornet activity.



Initial laboratory examination and analysis of the nest indicate that this was a fresh incursion from the French Asian hornet population and not directly related to the nest discovered in Tetbury. DNA tests on the brood show that reproduction had reached the stage of drone eggs only. As with other *Vespa* species, drones are produced before gynes (virgin queens) and so we can be fairly certain that this nest was destroyed before it reached the stage of releasing queens capable of setting up new colonies next spring.

Many reported sightings have reached us for investigation but fortunately, they have turned out to be European Hornets, which the public are often not very familiar with. With this lack of familiarity and sometimes just a fleeting glimpse of a flying insect, the reporter sees it as alien and makes a report. I show a European Hornet nest below (left picture) – you can see overall it has a lot of colour, red/brown thorax and first segments, yellow with fine black lines and small diamond shapes running down the back.



The Asian Hornet (right) is much blacker, has just the 1 yellow band and the yellow legs are distinctive.

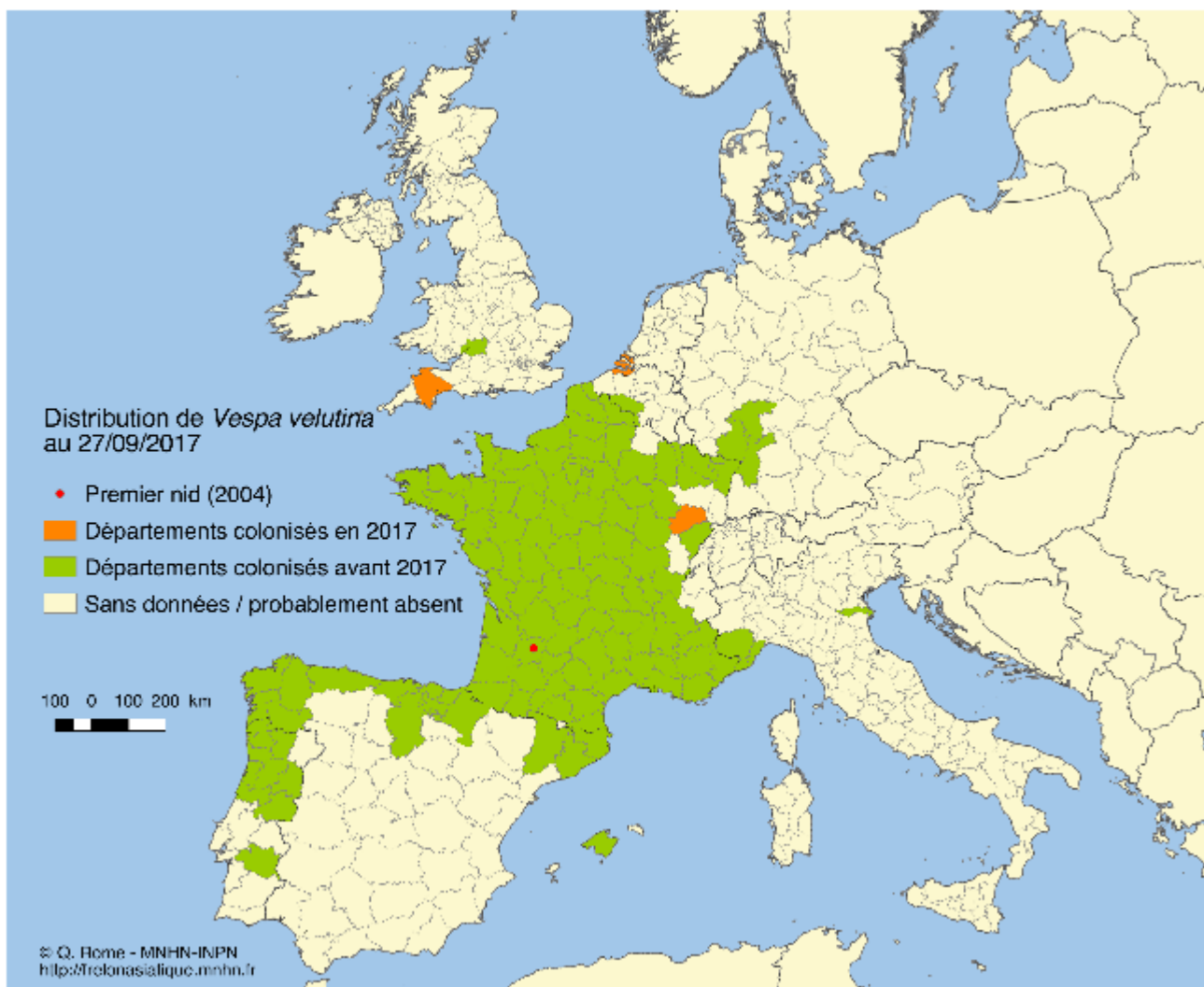
Reports of suspect sightings should go to the Non Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) who check and validate them as much as possible, before it is decided to investigate 'on the ground'. Until April, you could also contact me and after that, your local Inspector. An excellent App, 'Asian Hornet Watch' developed by the NNSS has some excellent pictures and is available for free download.

All beekeepers are advised to monitor for Asian hornets using a suitable trap and to make regular and frequent trap checks. Traps can be home-made and there are links to a leaflet (and a YouTube video) describing how to make one on BeeBase.

(see <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208> )

Monitoring traps are advised in areas away from a confirmed outbreak as it is clear from the last 2 years, AHs can turn up in the most unlikely places. Regular inspection of monitoring traps will allow other beneficial insects to be released unharmed.

The map below shows the individual hornet incursions within the UK and the continuing spread of Asian hornet in Europe, north into the Netherlands and east across northern Italy.

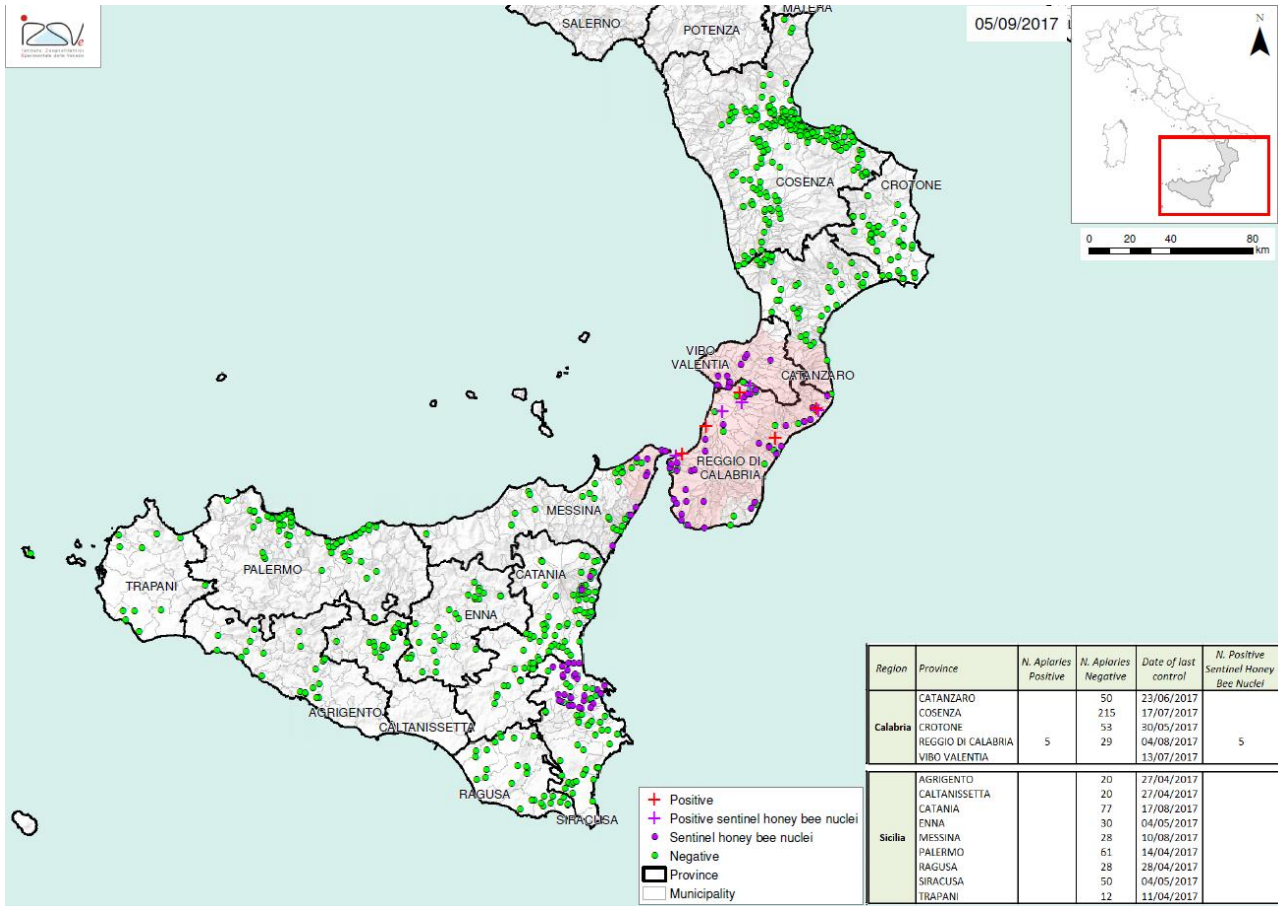


<http://frelonasiatique.mnhn.fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/07/Carte-Vespa-velutina-Europe-Q-Rome-MNHN-e1469556132917.png>

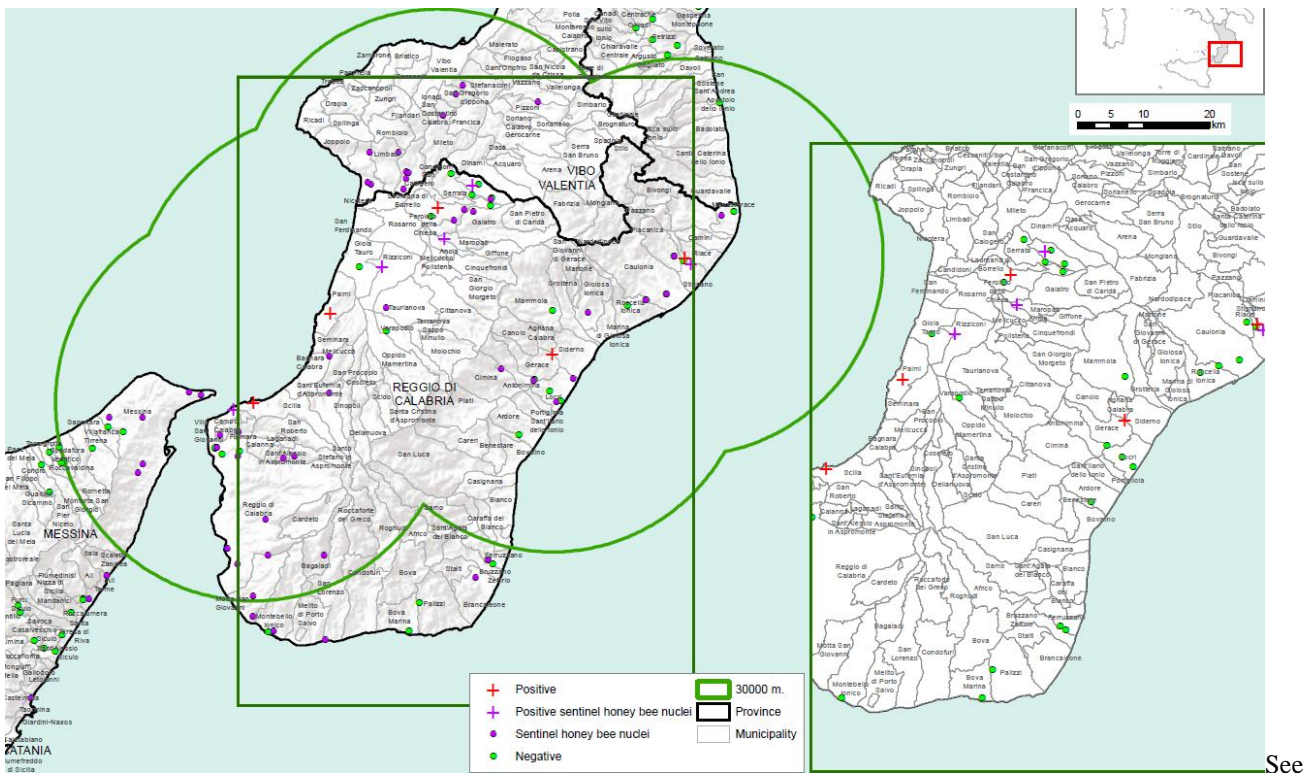
Please check BeeBase News items for regular updates and the dedicated page at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208> for further information including the Asian Hornet i.d. sheet, videos and useful links. Any suspect sightings of the Asian Hornet should be reported to the Native Species Secretariat at [alernonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernonnative@ceh.ac.uk) and the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector.

### Small Hive Beetle





The Italian web site has very recently been updated, but the situation has not changed much this year. Close to 1 in 4 inspections have been positive for SHB. Surveillance inspections in Sicily (326 apiaries) and in the more Northern Regions of Cosenza, Crotona and Catanzaro (318 apiaries) have all been clear. This indicates the secondary outbreaks in Sicily in 2014 and Cosenza last year (the latter due to the illegal movement of colonies) may have been eradicated. On the basis of information from the Italian authorities relating to their experience with small hive beetle in Southern Italy the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2017/2174 of 20 November 2017 has been passed. This amends Annex E to Council Directive 92/65/EEC as regards the health certificate for trade in bees and bumble bees such that in respect of SHB, as well as meeting other measures, honey bee queen exports must originate from an area at least 30 km distance from the limits of a protection zone of at least 20 km in radius around confirmed occurrence(s) of the small hive beetle. The previous 100km exclusion zone remains in place in respect of *Tropilaelaps* sp. mites.



See

<http://www.izsvenezie.com/aethina-tumida-in-italy/>

The map above indicates that SHB is now present right across the region of Reggio di Calabria with three new positives in two of the eastern provinces.

I would again like to thank all the beekeepers in the Western Region and beyond who actively volunteer through the Sentinel Apiary Programme to help with the NBU exotic pest surveillance in the UK. The Italian experience does suggest that early detection and immediate action before SHB becomes established may enable a small localised outbreak to be eradicated and once again I would encourage all beekeepers to make themselves aware of the signs of SHB and monitoring techniques as described in the NBU leaflet, 'The Small Hive Beetle – a serious threat to European apiculture'. See the dedicated pages for SHB on BeeBase

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=125> for links to the leaflet, a video and much more detailed information.

The image gallery on BeeBase <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/gallery/index.cfm> contains several pictures of Asian hornet and Small Hive Beetle as well as other pests and pathogens and general beekeeping topics. All images are subject to © Crown copyright 2010 but may be used free of charge in any format for non-commercial research, private study or internal circulation within your organisation. When reproducing images, please associate the phrase "Courtesy The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Crown Copyright" alongside each image.

## Imports 2017

Import or export of bees, (including queens, packages and colonies) is permitted only if accompanied by an Official European Union (EU) or Third Country health certificate issued by the competent authority where the bees originated. It is a **legal** requirement that you notify the **National Bee Unit** of imports of bees from outside the UK. You can do this by completing the [Importer Notification Form](#) and posting, faxing or emailing it to us. Alternatively, if self-registered, you can log in to the Beekeeper pages of BeeBase and click the 'Import Notifications' link from the left hand index. It is of course illegal to import bees, queens or any bee-related products from

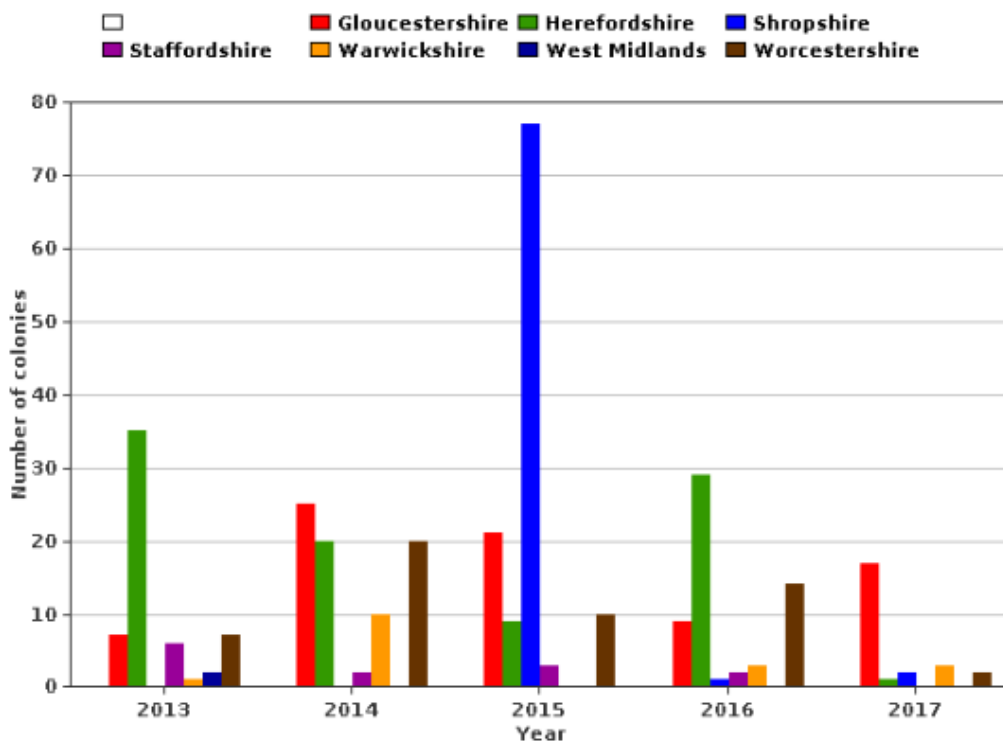
within the SHB exclusion zone around the affected areas in southern Italy. Further details can be found on the Imports/Exports pages of BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=47>

Full details of imports can be found on the Disease Incidence pages of BeeBase. In summary;

- From the EU (2016 figures in brackets)
- Queens 15210 (13801) of which 1884 (939) were from Italy
  - Packages 1776 (1924) of which 1301 (1354) from Italy
  - Nucs 19 (23)
- From 3<sup>rd</sup> Countries
- Queens 525 (335) all from Argentina

### Foulbrood Disease 2017

#### EFB – 5 year trend



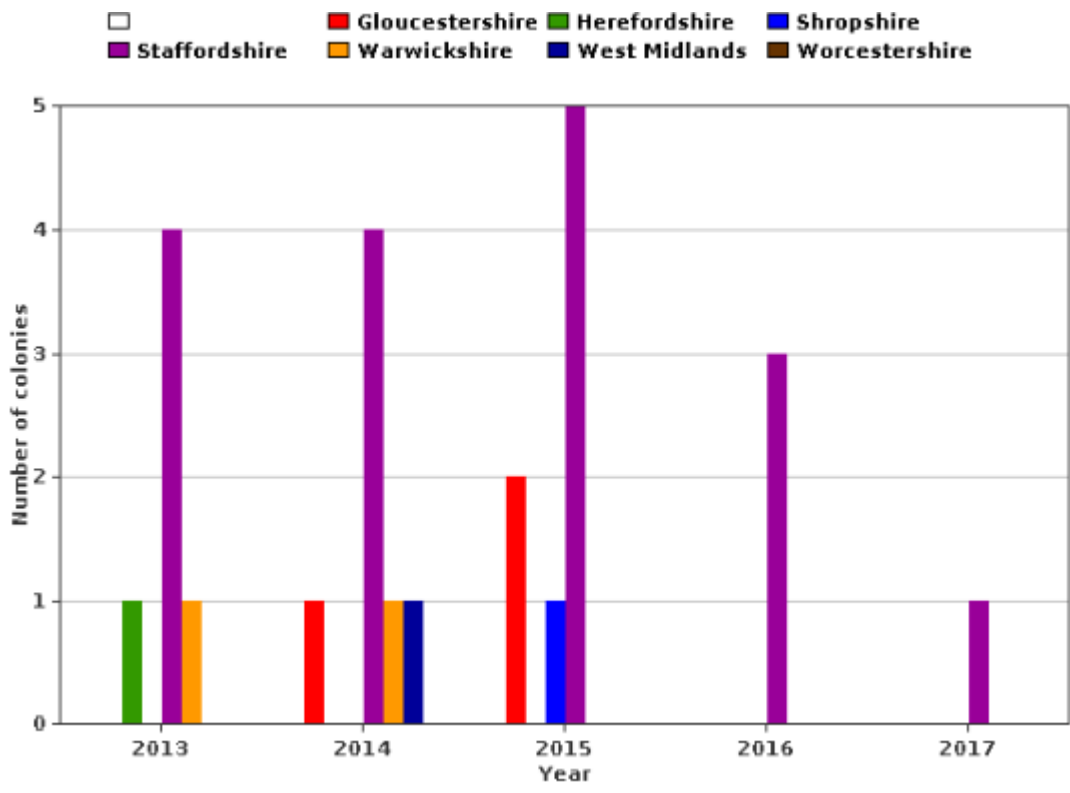
#### EFB – Western Region

18 colonies (57 in 2016)

EFB - Nationally

496 (426)

## AFB – 5year trend



## AFB – Western Region

1 colony (3) (2016 figures in brackets)

AFB - Nationally

77 (86)

Further statistical information is available on BeeBase under the Disease Incidence heading. Information is also available (on BeeBase) on the Ordinance Survey squares in which disease has been found. The following link will take you to Western Region details.

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/regionalDiseaseCharts.cfm?series=Western%20England>

## Update on Varroa Treatments

Varroa is undoubtedly our greatest problem; its indirect effects can be highly detrimental – as a vector for viruses against which we have no defence. Varroa is, however, something we can control and all beekeepers should be encouraged to monitor and treat for varroa, using the approved Veterinary Medicines – and please – don't overlook to keep proper records of treatments.



There have been 3 products newly approved this year;

Polyvar Yellow from Bayer, Apivar Strips – active ingredient - a pyrethroid (not suitable if mites show resistance)

VarroMed from BeeVital Liquid – active ingredients – oxalic and formic acids – for use in brood less periods. Avail. In 2 sizes.

Apivar 500 from Veto pharma Strips – active ingredient - Amitraz

These add to the fairly extensive list of approved treatments already available to us - full details can be found on the VMD Product Information Data Base – go to the Species dropdown and select Bees;

<https://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/Default.aspx>

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions and do check the European Medicines Agency where there is guidance and additional information on individual products.

### **Education and Training for 2018**

Five very successful apiary Safaris and 2 other apiary training events were held across the Region this year. Next year, 2 Healthy Bee Days are planned – these are arranged by Associations, usually at a County level, where a number of inspectors provide talks and lectures, with the opportunity to see diseased combs at close quarters.

These events can only be offered when the County is confident that attendance will be around 60 – 100. We have a pencilled booking list for future years – we need to move them around the region, but please do get in touch if you are interested in promoting such an event in the future.

### **Western Region Contact Details**

#### **Seasonal Bee Inspectors**

Normally working between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> September

Elizabeth Gardner	Gloucestershire	07867 351610	<a href="mailto:elizabeth.gardner@apha.gsi.gov.uk">elizabeth.gardner@apha.gsi.gov.uk</a>
Gordon Bull	Worcestershire	07867 351626	<a href="mailto:gordon.bull@apha.gsi.gov.uk">gordon.bull@apha.gsi.gov.uk</a>
Noel Parker	West Mids/Staffs	07900 404245	<a href="mailto:noel.parker@apha.gsi.gov.uk">noel.parker@apha.gsi.gov.uk</a>
Colleen Reichling	Warks/Staffs	07990 138898	<a href="mailto:colleen.reichling@apha.gsi.gov.uk">colleen.reichling@apha.gsi.gov.uk</a>

For Shropshire and Herefordshire, for the time being, please contact me directly.

The regions given above are guides only, if you are unsure who your local inspector is, please use the BeeBase “Find my nearest inspector” facility, or this link <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/Contacts/contacts.cfm>

My contact details are;

Colin Pavey 01989 740864

07775 119471

colin.pavey@apha.gsi.gov.uk

## **BeeBase Registration and Association Membership Lists**



This is my personal plea to you to register your own colonies on BeeBase and to get all the beekeepers you know to do the same. Once you have done this, please keep your apiary details up to date. For effective disease (and pest) control we rely on three ways of detecting colonies; voluntary registration on BeeBase, association membership lists, and being told about neighbouring apiaries during visits

Voluntary registration is very important and can be done online at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) or by calling our office on **0300 303 0094**. This should be followed by periodic updating of BeeBase records. To do so you will need a username and password and this can be obtained when registering or by calling the office. If you are registered on BeeBase and we have your current email address then you will receive an automated disease alert when notifiable disease is found within 3km of your apiary.

Your association can send us their list of members if they wish, but can only do this if they satisfy the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The easiest way to do this is to amend the membership renewal form to contain the following phrase;

*“Please note that a condition of membership is your agreement to membership details being held on a computer. This information will be used for the efficient running of the association by its officials, for the distribution of the BBKA magazine, for BBKA Insurance, for Bee Disease Insurance, and passed to the Regional Bee Inspector for inclusion on BeeBase to aid them in the control of notifiable bee diseases”.*

These lists are very useful to us as they allow us to identify new beekeepers and to update contact details for existing beekeepers. **Secretaries** – if you currently have this in place, please email me your current membership list, so I can ensure our records are as accurate and complete as possible. This is something that will be incredibly important if we are unfortunate enough to find Small Hive Beetle or Asian Hornet in the UK in the coming season.

### **In closing**

I have had an enjoyable, if busy, first season as RBI for the Western Region. I have more to do in getting around and meeting more of you out there. I’m looking forward to that. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank the Western Region Seasonal Inspectors and the NBU office team in York for all their help and support to me this year.

Thanks are also due to the beekeepers and bee farmers who the SBIs and I have worked with over the season. Thanks for your help and co-operation. I have really enjoyed sharing, our mutual enthusiasm for the honey bee and striving towards healthy colonies everywhere. My best wishes to you for an enjoyable season in 2018.

**Colin Pavey**  
**Regional Bee Inspector, Western Region**

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