

National Bee Unit

Eastern Region Review 2020

The 2020 Season



The 2020 Season is going to be remembered for all the wrong reasons, mainly the impact that Covid-19 (SARS CoV-2) has had on all our lives and my condolences must go out firstly to the many beekeepers out there who have had to deal with the illness or have lost loved ones. I know a few of those who have passed away this year from Coronavirus and their loss will have had a large impact on their families and beekeeper friends.

A large impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic was the Lockdown, which at times disrupted our inspectors carrying out their Statutory Disease Inspection Programme. Inspectors were sometimes unable to gain access to colonies via Beekeepers' houses. It also prevented the interaction between the beekeeper and Inspector and halted the important education that goes on within the Apiary. Further impact was the felt when we were unable to run 'Disease Days' or attend any 'Association Safaris' within the Region.

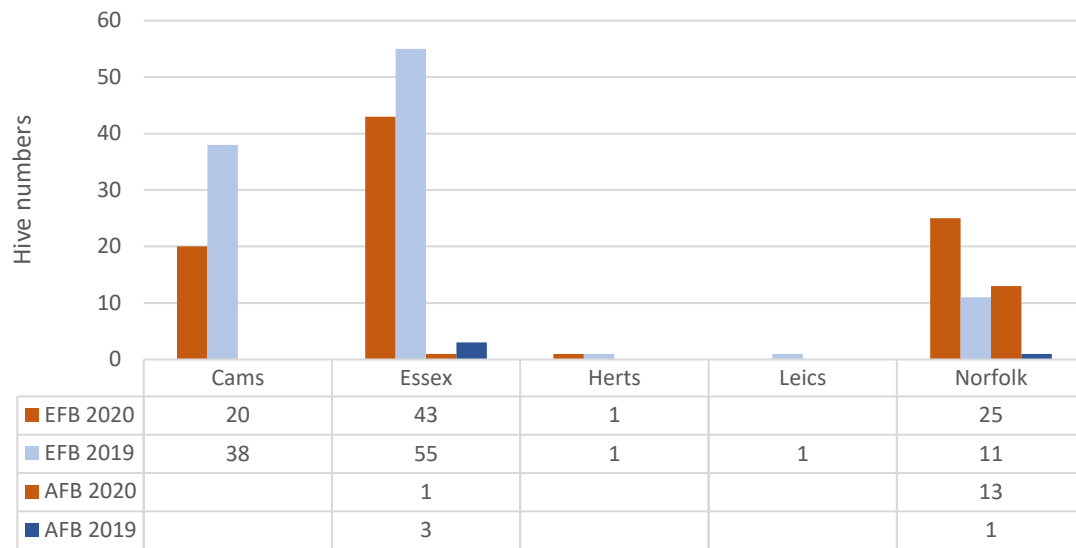
After the retirement of Fred Daynes in 2019, we were able to welcome Jack Silberrad to the Eastern Region in August. Jack will cover most of Cambridgeshire and a small part of South West Norfolk in his new role. The Eastern Region also became smaller, we have now lost Lincolnshire which has been added back onto the North East Region, together with Simon Oglesby who was the Inspector for Lincolnshire. On a positive note Simon's partner Alexandra who covers Leicestershire and Rutland gave birth to a baby boy in May and we will be welcoming Alexandra back in April 2021 to continue inspections within her area.

Within the Region, we have also had to deal with a large number of imports of Queens, packages and NUCs from both Italy and other European Countries of which we are obliged to look at 50% of Italian packages and Queens and 25% from other European Countries. We are no longer part of the European Union and the legislation for importing has now changed. Those beekeepers who regularly import need to read the new legislation set out later in this Newsletter and which is also available on the BeeBase website.

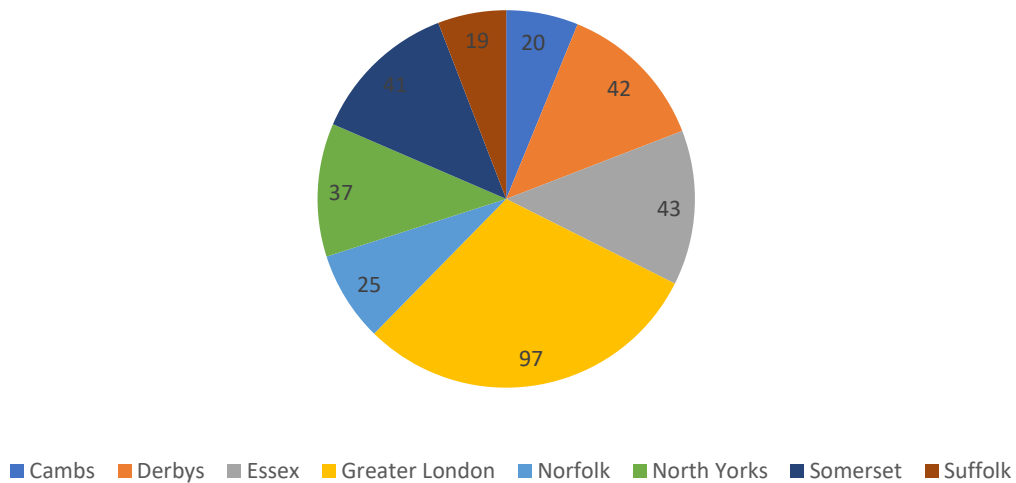
Disease within the Region

Disease within the Region was up in various Counties on the previous years and down in others, with Norfolk and Suffolk numbers rising and Cambridgeshire and Essex both falling, as shown in the charts below.

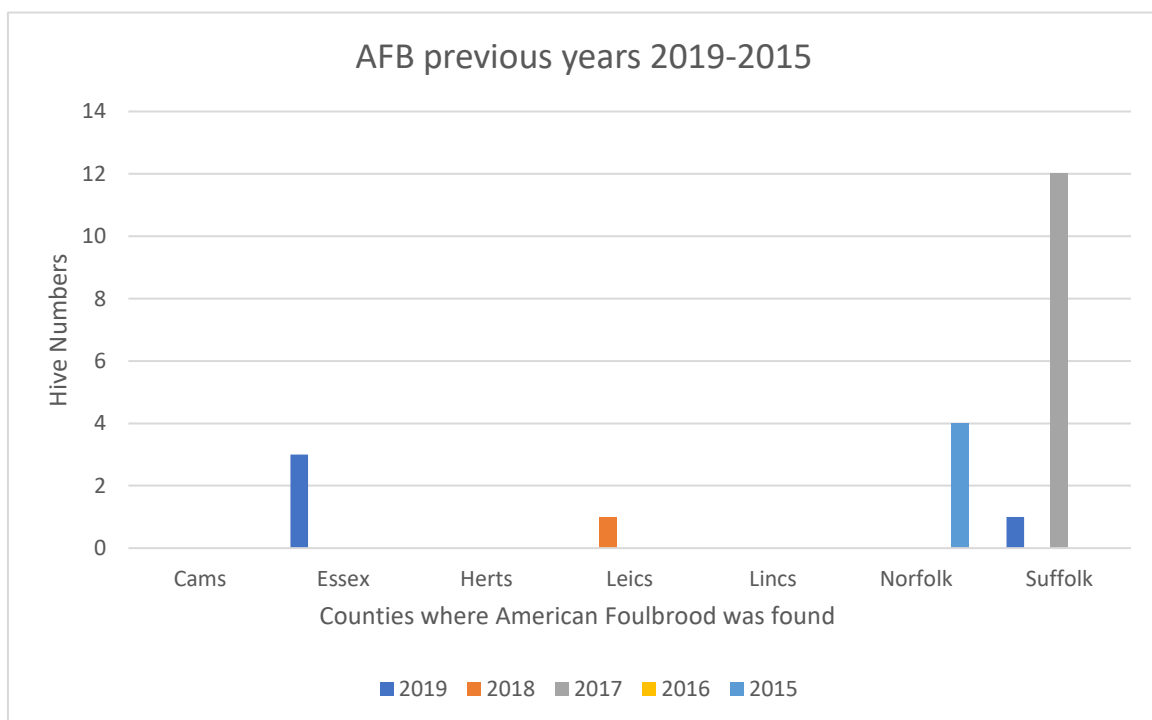
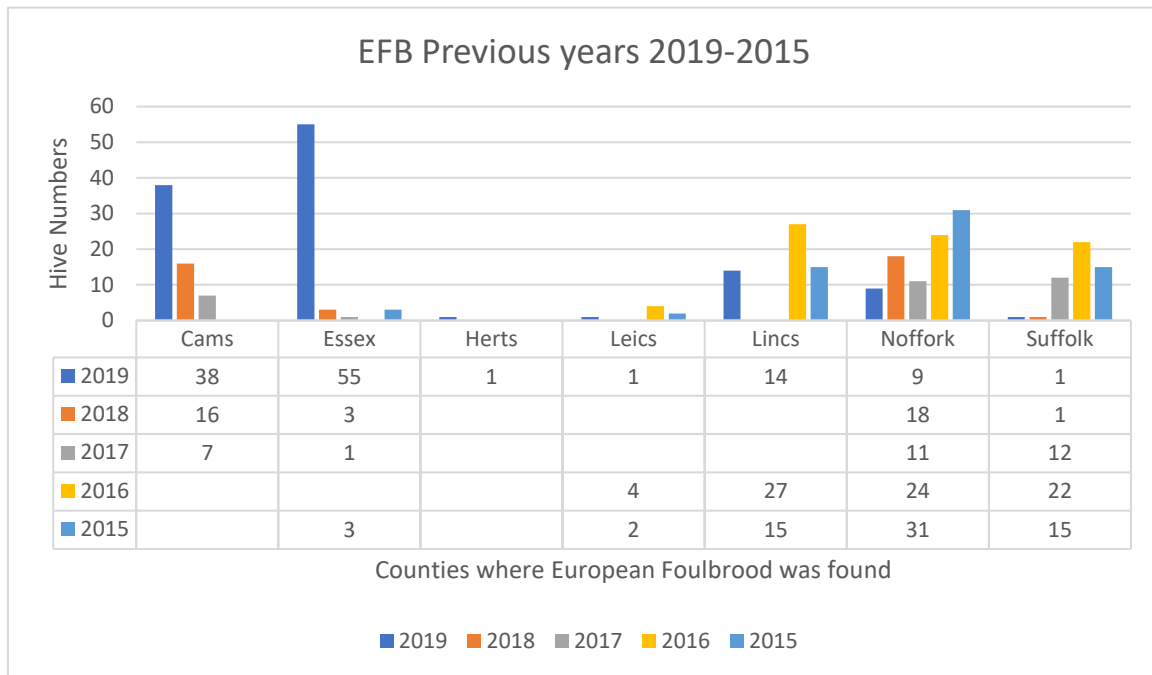
Foul Brood Outbreaks 2019 - 2020 Eastern Region



EFB Eastern Region Outbreaks & other high scoring Counties 2020

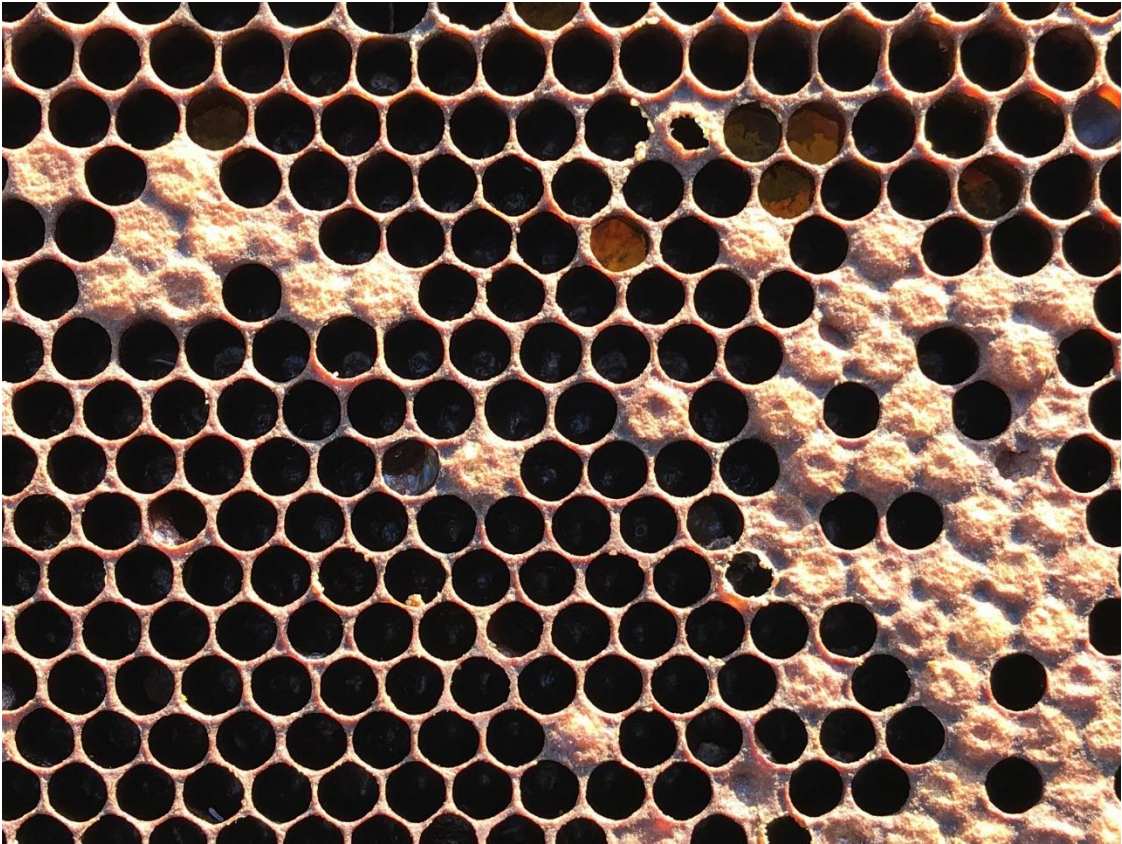


Bar Charts of Historic Outbreaks of Foulbrood years 2019-2015





European Foul Brood Photo Ian Nichols



American Foul Brood Photo Ian Nichols

This year has been very challenging for disease within the Region, with both cases of European Foul Brood (EFB) and American Foul Brood (AFB) going up in parts of the Region most notably Norfolk and North Essex.

The EFB came to light in North Essex due to a beekeeper reporting some suspect looking brood which turned out to be EFB. The EFB in Norfolk came to light by finding it in a colony that had been housed in the spring from a swarm in Fakenham, subsequently with a lot of hard work from Inspectors, we then went on to find EFB in further apiaries. Whilst doing these inspections we found AFB. Analysis carried out by Victoria Tompkins at FERA, revealed the strain of EFB to be 'Type37', we were surprised to find that it is a strain only found previously in Cambridgeshire. This led us to believe that we have a beekeeper in the Fakenham area who has either bought bees from Cambridge or has recently moved into the area and bees having EFB.

The AFB found in Norfolk was all the same strain but with 5 different beekeepers in a wide area, from the Norfolk coast to Central Norfolk, which led to the most recorded number of cases since 2014.

From undertaking a large number of Inspections in North Essex we have found more cases of EFB, where we have 2 strains, 'Type5' which is common for both Norfolk and Suffolk and 'Type13', which is less common and has been found in small pockets in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk in the past.

The various strains of EFB, notably 13 and 37, are showing different symptoms and are not as easy to spot as the normal EFB that has been endemic within the Region for a very long time. They are much harder to spot, the larvae are at times opaque, show very little white gut and only until it gets well established do we see a breakdown of the colony.

From the evidence we have seen over last year, I ask everybody looking through their bees to be extra vigilant and to call the inspectors if you have any concerns about your colonies.

I will also ask that you follow full biosecurity whilst dealing both with your bees but also with swarms, which should be housed on new comb, not fed for 48 hours and kept in isolation away from your other bees for at least 2 brood cycles. I would advise to go as far as keeping them totally isolated and treating them as if they are infectious and set up a dedicated quarantine apiary. We have seen this year that with poor biosecurity and the mixing of collected swarms has led to beekeepers losing a large number of colonies through preventable disease.

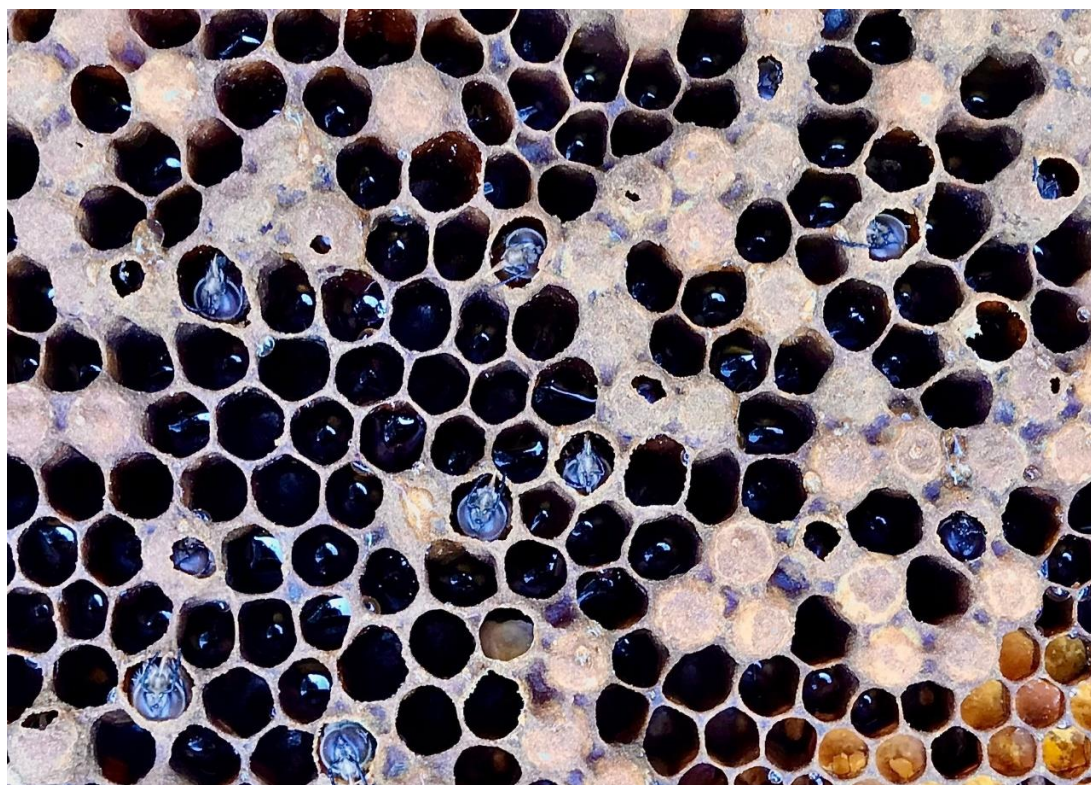
I would also advise that those beekeepers in disease areas should manage your bees more intensely and suggest the following measures of controlling swarming, clipping Queens, taking nuclei and when you remove the supers to take off your early spring crop and again later in the year, ensure that you feed them. Bees that are well fed with a good supply of stores in times of dearth will tend to stay in their hives. Hungry colonies will go out and rob other poor colonies which may have disease and bring it back to your apiary. The same applies with swarming colonies, again they will go out, find dead hives and bring any disease back.

Managing Varroa still appears a problem amongst beekeepers, with treatments going on too late or when the varroa load is beyond the threshold, I would recommend that beekeepers download the managing Varroa booklet on BeeBase the link is below.
<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1389>

UK approved medicines for the treatment of Varroa for the use of honeybees

Name of Treatment	Active Ingredients
Apiguard (Gel)	Thymol
Apilife-VAR (Strips)	Thymol & essential oils (camphor, Eucalyptus & Menthol)
Apistan * (Strips)	Tau Fluvalinate
Api-Bioxal (Powder or Solution)	Oxalic acid dihydrate
Apitraz (Strips)	Amitraz
Apivar (Strips)	Amitraz
Bayvarol* (Strips)	Flumethrin
Dany's Bienenwohl (Powder and Solution)	Oxalic acid dihydrate
Mite Away Quick Strips (MAQS)	Formic acid
Oxuvar (Powder or Solution)	Oxalic acid dihydrate
Oxybee (Powder or Solution)	Oxalic acid dihydrate
PolyVar Yellow (Strips)	Flumethrin
Thymovar (Strips)	Thymol

**resistance found on these products*



Varroosis Photo Ian Nichols

Yellow-legged Asian Hornet, *Vespa velutina nigrithorax*

This year has seen a reduction in confirmed Asian Hornet sightings in the UK with just one Asian Hornet nest found and destroyed by NBU inspectors in an apple tree in Gosport, Hampshire on Friday 11th September. This followed reports from two householders in the area, one of whom was a beekeeper who had identified Asian Hornets feeding on his grapes. The nest was small, approximately 20cm in diameter, local beekeepers were made aware through the Asian Hornet Teams (AHTs) and monitoring has continued in the area.



Vespa velutina nigrithorax feeding on grapes: Photo Gordon Brooks



Gosport Vespa velutina nigrithorax nest in apple tree: Photo Peter Davies

The NBU has close ties with the Jersey Government's Asian Hornet Co-ordinator and team of volunteers, given their location between us and France. NBU inspectors have had field visits there in previous years so that we could learn from their experience. There haven't been as many Asian Hornet nests reported on Jersey this year either, with the tally of those destroyed on the island being 38 by October 15th, which contrasts with 83 found by the end of 2019. The reduction will be partly due to the ongoing eradication of nests and founding queens in previous years. The other most likely reasons given are the damp and variable temperatures between January and March this year making the overwintering queens more susceptible to fungal attack, and the reduction in traffic from France, due to Coronavirus restrictions, reducing the number of founding queens hitching a ride over from the French mainland in the spring.

We encourage everyone to download the free Asian Hornet Watch iPhone or Android app.

<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/news-and-media/news/asian-hornet-monitoring-takes-flight-new-app-developed-ceh-scientists>

Report suspect sightings using the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app, or by filling out an online report form Or use the Online recording form below.

http://www.brc.ac.uk/risc/alert.php?species=asian_hornet

As a last resort by emailing alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

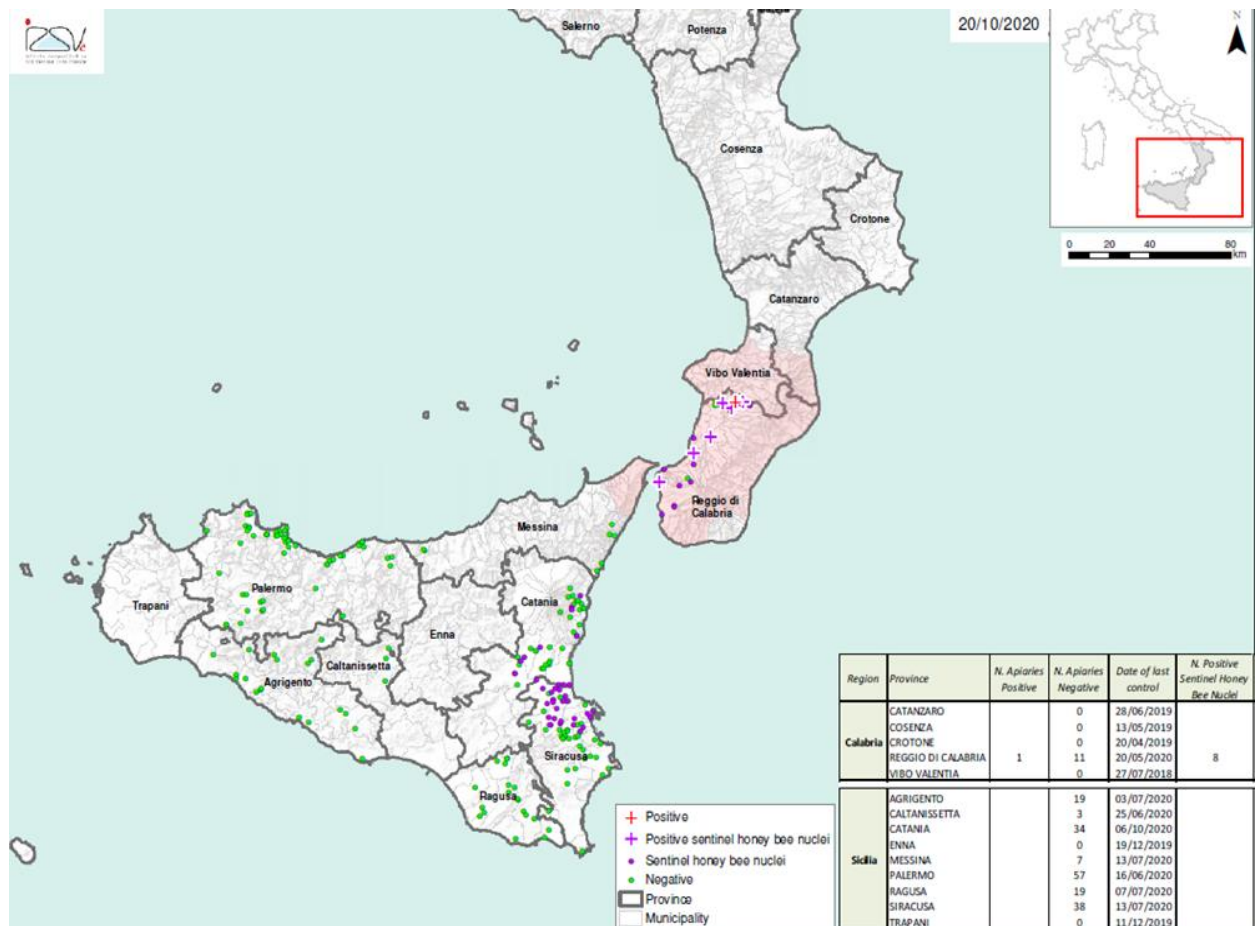
Familiarise yourself with what the hornets and similar insects look like.

Keep a look out on late summer flowering plants such as ivy where the hornets (and other insects) forage on the flowers. We are currently at the northern edge of the Asian hornet's

European range and by working together hope to keep this invasive species at bay and protect our nation's important pollinators.

Surveillance of Small Hive Beetle (SHB) in Italy in 2020

Information from the National Reference Laboratory for Apiculture in Italy below, updated in October 2020, shows extensive surveillance for Small Hive Beetle in Sicily with no positives found. Meanwhile in the Calabria region on the mainland one positive apiary and eight positive sentinel Nuclei have been found containing both larvae and adult beetles.



Import inspections

We carried out 34 import inspection consignments in 2020 for potential disease and exotic pests in the Eastern Region, covering nuclei, packages and queen bee imports.

Importing or Exporting Honey Bees after 31st December 2020

The UK has left the EU, new rules apply from January 2021

The transition period comes to an end this year on 31st December 2020. To find out how this affects Imports and Exports of honey bees as of the 1st January and what you can do to prepare please refer to guidance on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and the [Border Operating Model](#), which provide information on the new processes.

For movements both ways between Northern Ireland and GB guidance may be found in the [Northern Ireland Protocol](#)

If you are planning to import or export bees it is your responsibility to follow these new rules and protect GB biosecurity.

Guidance on changes for businesses and citizens may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/transition> where you may use the Brexit checker to obtain a personalised list of actions.

If you import Bees:

[Check what you need to do to import from the EU from 1 January 2021](#)

You risk not being able to bring or receive goods from EU countries from 1 January 2021 if you are not prepared for the end of Transition

Check what you need to do to import animals, animal products, high risk food and feed into Great Britain from 1 January 2021

There will be new processes that importers must follow. These processes to import from an EU country will be introduced in 3 stages:

[1 January 2021](#)

[1 April 2021](#) (included for completeness but only relevant to animal products and high-risk food and feed)

[1 July 2021](#)

You will need to register for the UK's new Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS)

You will no longer be able to import using the TRACES system from 1 January 2021.

More information:

[Importing animals, animal products and high-risk food and feed not of animal origin from 1 January 2021](#)

EU law prohibits or restricts the import of specific goods from third countries that are deemed to present an unacceptable level of animal, plant or public health risk. These prohibitions and restrictions will be transposed into UK law at the end of the Transition Period.

As GB and the EU are expected to be treating each other as third countries from a bee health point of view, these restrictions and prohibitions will currently prevent or restrict mutual trade in bees.

As a result, importers will only be able to import queens from the EU. Any associated packaging (including queen cages and attendant workers) will have to be sent to a designated laboratory for examination and for honey bees this is Fera Science. Importing packages or colonies will no longer be possible after the 31st December 2020.

From 1st July 2021 imported queens will have to pass through a Border Control Point (BCP). Currently, only

BCPs at Heathrow and Manchester airports will accept imports of invertebrates, which includes bees. The National Bee Unit will continue to carry out physical checks on consignments of queens according to risk.

If you export Bees:

[Check what you need to do to export to the EU from 1 January 2021](#)

You risk not being able to send or take goods to EU countries from 1 January 2021 if you are not prepared for the end of Transition.

The position regarding exports is similar to imports. The EU would also consider the UK to be a Third Country. This will mean that the EU would only accept exports of queens from the UK – providing we are listed as a third country approved to export to the EU. The export of packages and colonies will no longer be possible.

Further Advice:

Please review the Gov.uk pages linked above for more detailed and the most up to date guidance. [BeeBase pages](#) containing Import and Export guidance will be updated on a regular basis for easy reference

Finally

Don't forget to continue looking at you bees during the winter, many hives are suffering from damp and may benefit from some extra ventilation, others are a bit short of food, if this is the case, please take the time to place fondant on your colonies, wasps were particularly bad this year and continued raiding colonies right into November and you may well find despite you feeding them, that they are short of enough stores to take them through to the spring .

Beekeepers, like gardeners, are ever optimistic for a better year to come and there is never a more fitting time to hope for that than now. No one started the year expecting a pandemic and lockdown, but we can count ourselves fortunate that we haven't been deprived of the joy in managing our bees well, even if we got a poor honey harvest in return. Furthermore, the very large majority of beekeepers were glad to receive a visit from us, especially during lockdown, as it was someone else to talk to, even if from a distance!

Many thanks to my team of SBIs for getting out there in difficult times, to you for having us inspect your bees, and I look forward to seeing you next year.

Keith Morgan
Regional Bee Inspector, Eastern Region

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National Bee Unit Website (BeeBase): www.nationalbeeunit.com

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