

National Bee Unit

2021 Southern Region Annual Report



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

The 2020 Season

Covid 19 has impacted us all and changed the way we live our lives be it work, rest or play.

The National Bee Unit carried on with as much business as usual that could be safely carried out under Government restrictions and guidelines. During the initial stages of lockdown in April, as key workers, we were responding to priority callouts from beekeepers and spent the rest of our time contacting people by phone or email to update records, which reassured the beekeeping community that we were still available if required but were not adding to any risks.

As lockdown eased we were able to carry out our primary task of inspecting bees and controlling notifiable pests and diseases with the cooperation of beekeepers and by introducing social distancing measures. Many inspections were carried out with the absence of beekeepers, some watching from a safe distance in the apiary or through a convenient window.

Unfortunately Healthy bee days had to be cancelled and rearranged and talks either rescheduled or moved online. It is a strange feeling talking to a laptop with 40-50 people watching and listening but something that we have grown used to.

With more people spending more time in the countryside I had expected more reports of Asian Hornet this year. This did come to fruition in terms of the number of reports but we only had one confirmed sighting and subsequent nest find, that being in Gosport.

I know many beekeepers spent many hours observing apiaries, forage and bait stations throughout the summer and during Asian Hornet week and I thank you for your efforts. New Forest Beekeepers Association were very diligent and organised dates each month when as many members as possible all took part and spent time looking for Asian Hornets. Their own Asian Hornet Team members investigated several reported sightings from members of the public and via the Non Native Species alerts.

It is this working together that will help keep this invasive species at bay.

On the whole it's been another good year for beekeeping across the region. Indeed some of us have found our bees to be a great sense of relief as whilst everything around us was chopping and changing the bees just carried on regardless.

Honey crops were about average, incidences of disease were up on 2019 as were the number of inspections that were carried out. Reports and incidents of Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus were down on previous years but levels of Varroasis and colonies struggling to thrive due to high levels of stress caused by high Varroa numbers continue to remain high.

Finding foulbrood disease is never good news but I do find it more pleasing when the beekeeper finds it and reports it themselves, especially after attending one of our educational talks, demonstration's or healthy bee days. This happened twice to me this year and it's reassuring to know that the village hall talks held on cold February nights do work.

As the United Kingdom has now left the EU there are changes to import and export regulations and these are detailed later in this report.

The NBU Southern Region

Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire & Northamptonshire.

The team. We welcomed a new Seasonal Bee Inspector to the team this year, Isaac Mullane following the retirement of Robin Oliver (Hampshire, New Forest) in 2019. Isaac's start date and training were delayed due to conflicts with social distancing and the necessary interviews and training. We eventually got there and Isaac joined the team in the summer, completed his training and immediately got plunged into the Asian Hornet incursion in the Gosport area, not far from his home. Isaac is an experienced beekeeper, has a great eye for detail and brings some youthful enthusiasm to the team.

Both Avril Earl (Wiltshire) and Mark Lynch (West Oxfordshire & North Berkshire) have completed their first full solo year after joining the team in April 2019. They both visited many apiaries, carried out several hundred colony inspections, found and dealt with incidences of EFB and were part of the team that found the Asian Hornet nest in Gosport.

Kevin Pope (Dorset and everywhere else I send him!), Covered a lot of ground inspecting apiaries across Dorset, parts of Wiltshire, Berkshire, Hampshire and towards the end of the season the New Forest area. He dealt with EFB in his home county of Dorset, helped with Isaac's training and was part of the Asian Hornet response team.

Dan Etheridge (Hampshire & Isle of Wight) managed to fit in helping me with interviews and training whilst carrying out over a 1000 foulbrood & exotic pest inspections and numerous import checks. He was also busy checking for Asian Hornet activity (with Kevin Pope) near to the previous year's nest finds and later in the season was part of the team tracking and tracing the Asian hornet to its nest site.

Phil Spillane (East Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire) dealt with EFB in all 3 counties. He too helped with Isaac's training, attended many beekeeper call outs and was part of the successful Asian Hornet response team.

Bob Poole had a busy year in Northamptonshire, working closely with local beekeepers and bee farmers. He dealt with a several EFB outbreaks across the region inspecting over 1200 colonies in the process.

The National Bee Unit

In November 2020 the Healthy Bees Plan Review and the Healthy Bees Plan 2030 was published, see <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#262>. Defra, Welsh Government and the National Bee Unit have worked with stakeholders to produce a review of progress made under the original Healthy Bees Plan, a ten-year blueprint introduced in 2009 to improve honey bee health across England and Wales. The Healthy Bees Plan 2030 is a comprehensive document with future strategies to protect and advance the wellbeing of our honey bees, benefitting from the findings in the review and the work of the Healthy Bees Plan in the first 10 years.

Kate Wilson, office manager and Lesley Debenham, Admin support have taken temporary promotion to different roles within APHA. Adam Parker, the Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI) for Monmouthshire, has in turn taken a temporary promotion to fill the NBU Office BeeBase and Advice Manager role. The loss of personnel in the office is mitigated by some Seasonal Bee Inspectors now working full time over the winter, they take up

different roles within APHA including in Animal Health, Plant Health and NBU office support.. We welcome Diane Gillibrand and Yvonne Wroe to the NBU Admin team providing administration support for the NBU.

From April 1st 2021 you can use the post code search on the contacts page of BeeBase to check for your local SBI, who can be contacted on the numbers below from the beginning of April until the end of September. During the winter period of October to March please direct all enquiries to the RBI.

Regional Bee Inspector	Area	Contact
Peter Davies	Southern Region	07900 292160 Peter.davies@apha.gov.uk
Seasonal Bee Inspectors		
Kevin Pope	Dorset	07775 119466 Kevin.pope@apha.gov.uk
Isaac Mullane	Hampshire	07552 262787 Isaac.mullane@apha.gov.uk
Avril Earl	Wiltshire	07824 529422 Avril.earl@apha.gov.uk
Dan Etheridge	Hampshire & Isle of Wight	07979 119376 Daniel.etheridge@apha.gov.uk
Phil Spillane	East Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire	07775 119470 Phillip.spillane@apha.gov.uk
Mark Lynch	West Oxfordshire & Berkshire	07824 530180 Mark.lynch@apha.gov.uk
Robert Poole	Northamptonshire	07990 138894 Robert.poole@apha.gov.uk

BeeBase Registration

I hope that all of you reading this are registered on BeeBase. If you have received a visit from your local Seasonal Bee inspector you will be, but if not, please can I encourage you to register. It is free and all your details are kept confidential. The benefits to you are email alerts when foulbrood or exotic pests (including Asian Hornet) are found in the area of your apiaries. The benefit to the wider beekeeping community is that inspectors know where to look for disease or pests so that outbreaks can be quickly brought under control. Just because you are a member of the BBKA does not mean that you are automatically registered on BeeBase. If you are registered then thank you, but please do keep your apiary locations updated. If you have lost your BeeBase password then contact the NBU office for a reset. You can register online (www.nationalbeeunit.com) or by contacting the NBU office on 0300 3030094 or through your Regional Bee Inspector.

The graphs and figures in this report are available on the public pages of BeeBase, the NBU website, in 'Bee Pests, Diseases and Maps'. The site also offers multiple pages of tips, advice and downloadable leaflets on disease control and bee husbandry.

Inspections

This year Southern Seasonal Bee Inspectors visited a total of 1033 apiaries and inspected 5340 colonies.

Region	County	Current beekeepers	No of Current Apiaries	No of Colonies	Non Current beekeepers
Southern England	Berkshire	667	838	2553	311
	Buckinghamshire	666	857	3161	317
	Dorset	1017	1374	5589	489
	Hampshire	1773	2481	8344	835
	Isle of Wight	186	234	1003	83
	Northamptonshire	475	681	3148	410
	Oxfordshire	751	1057	4247	484
	Wiltshire	887	1214	4007	466
	TOTALS		6422	8736	32052

Disease and Pests

Notifiable diseases: European Foulbrood (EFB) and American Foulbrood (AFB)

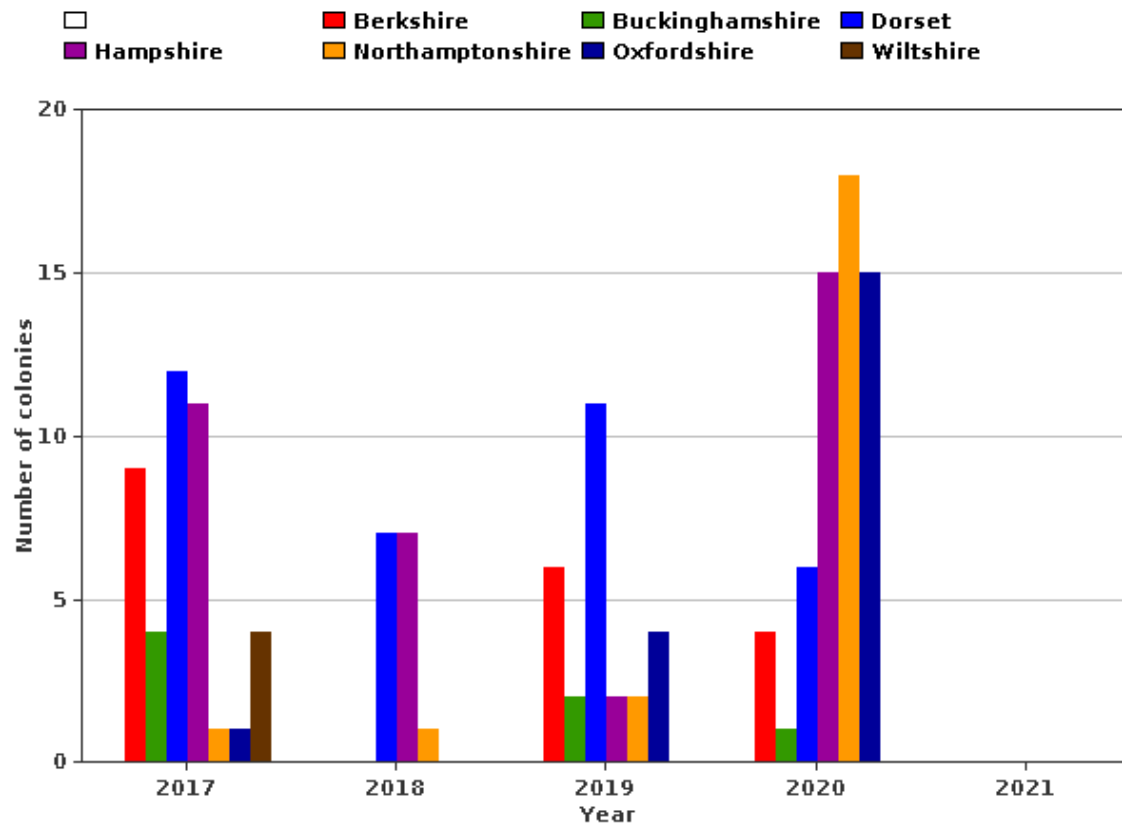


This photograph shows EFB found in a colony by a Hampshire beekeeper at the first spring inspection in 2020. Would you have found it? Photo P Davies NBU

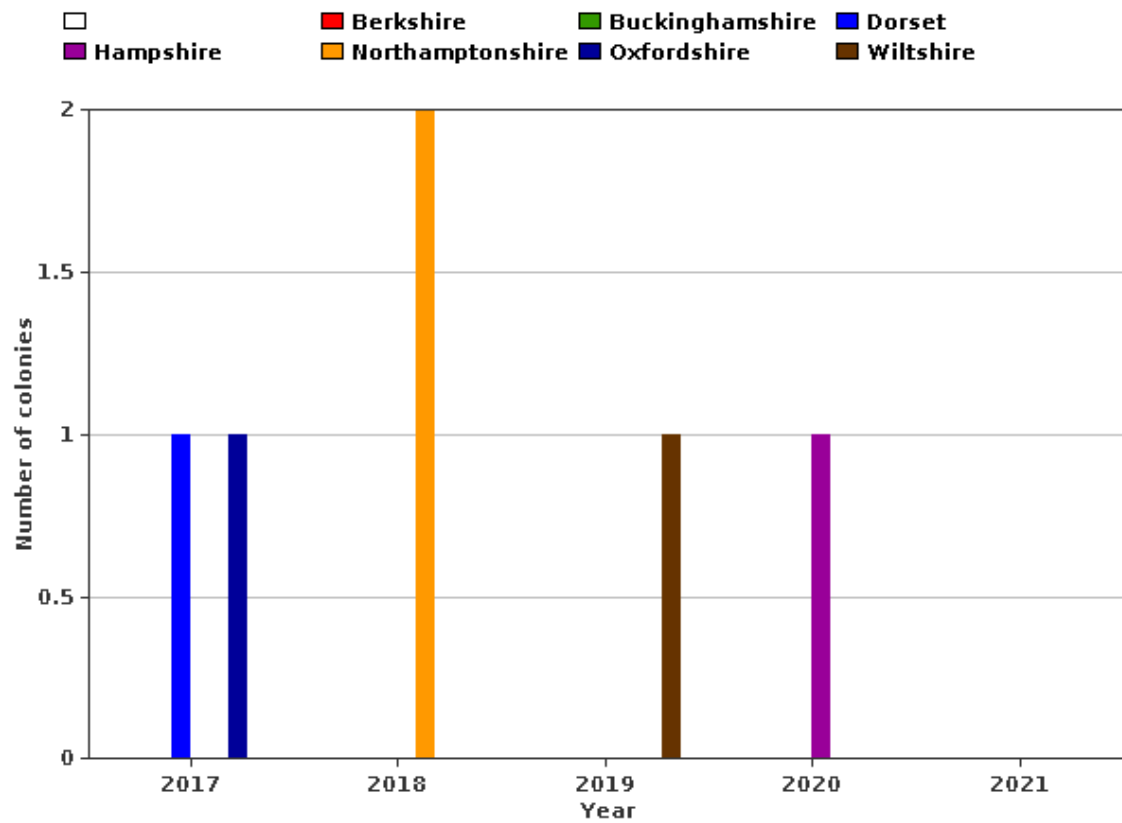
This season Foulbrood was diagnosed in 25 apiaries compared to 18 in 2019.

There were 63 colonies diagnosed this year compared to 27 in 2019.

Incidence of EFB in Southern region over the last 4 years



Incidence of AFB in Southern region over the last 4 years



Further details and mapping can be found on the disease incidence pages of BeeBase at www.nationalbeeunit.com. It is recommended that these are checked regularly to see if there is any foulbrood disease close by.

Some of my August made up Nucs for over wintering. Photo P Davies NBU



Varroa

NBU advice for strong, vigorous colonies is to monitor and control varroa appropriately using biotechnical methods and authorised products as directed. Varroa treatments should be targeted before colonies start to produce their 'winter' bees but monitoring of Varroa levels during the season will help determine whether an earlier treatment is required. Viral damage, which is associated with varroa as they are such good vectors for viruses, will seriously reduce the longevity of the adult bees and so impact on the foraging capability of colonies with a high Varroa infestation level in the summer period. Treated too late in the season, so that the winter bees are affected by viruses or purely weakened by the mites feeding on them, is frequently the cause of colony mortality in the late winter and early spring

NBU promotes Integrated Pest Management. Most beekeepers follow this practice to a degree, whether by design or not, using biotechnical controls such as splitting, induced brood breaks, drone brood removal, and open mesh floors.

When it comes to treatments it's important to use products authorised by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), administer as directed in the instructions, and not to apply the same varroa treatment several times in a row.

This year approved varroa treatments available in the UK remain unchanged. The list of those registered for use by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is available on their website:

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

the 'Summary of Product Characteristics' giving full details of use. For the full list, select 'Bees' from the drop down list of species in the product search link.

There's a legal requirement that the use of any treatments is recorded, and these records must be kept for a minimum of 5 years. Full details can be found on Beebase along with numerous free fact sheets including the 'Managing Varroa' booklet.

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>

Exotic pest surveillance (EPS)

We carried out 391 inspections specific to exotic pests this year, targeting a combination of identified risk points and random sites. EPS inspections check for Small Hive Beetle (SHB), Tropilaelaps mites and Asian Hornets (AH) as well as being a normal brood inspection looking for foulbrood. The identified risk points are ports, airports, crude hive product importers, fruit and vegetable wholesale markets, larger queen importers and landfill sites associated with imported products. Given the continued presence of Small Hive Beetle in Italy this year and the incursion of the Asian Hornet from across the channel in France, the importance of exotic pest surveillance work cannot be overstated.

We have 15 Sentinel Apiaries in Southern region in order to improve our capacity to combat the arrival of pests from abroad. Sentinel apiaries are set up in areas considered 'at risk' where a volunteer beekeeper agrees to monitor their colonies specifically for exotic pests. As well as visual inspection, floor debris from the designated hives is sampled twice a year and tested for Small Hive Beetle and Tropilaelaps. All equipment and paperwork is supplied to the beekeeper who collects samples as directed and sends them to the NBU laboratory for screening. SHB & AH traps are provided and checked at normal colony inspections and noted on a log sheet. Thank you to those beekeepers who currently carry out this work, but also, please do get in touch if you would like to be involved in the future.

Asian Hornet (the 'yellow legged hornet')

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 which 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).



Asian Hornet feeding on grapes
Photo Gordon Brooks



Gosport nest in apple tree
Photo Gordon Brooks

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 are encouraging everyone to:

- download the free Asian Hornet Watch iPhone or Android app
- 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.
- report suspect sightings using the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app, or by filling out an online report form, or by emailing alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk .

Small Hive Beetle



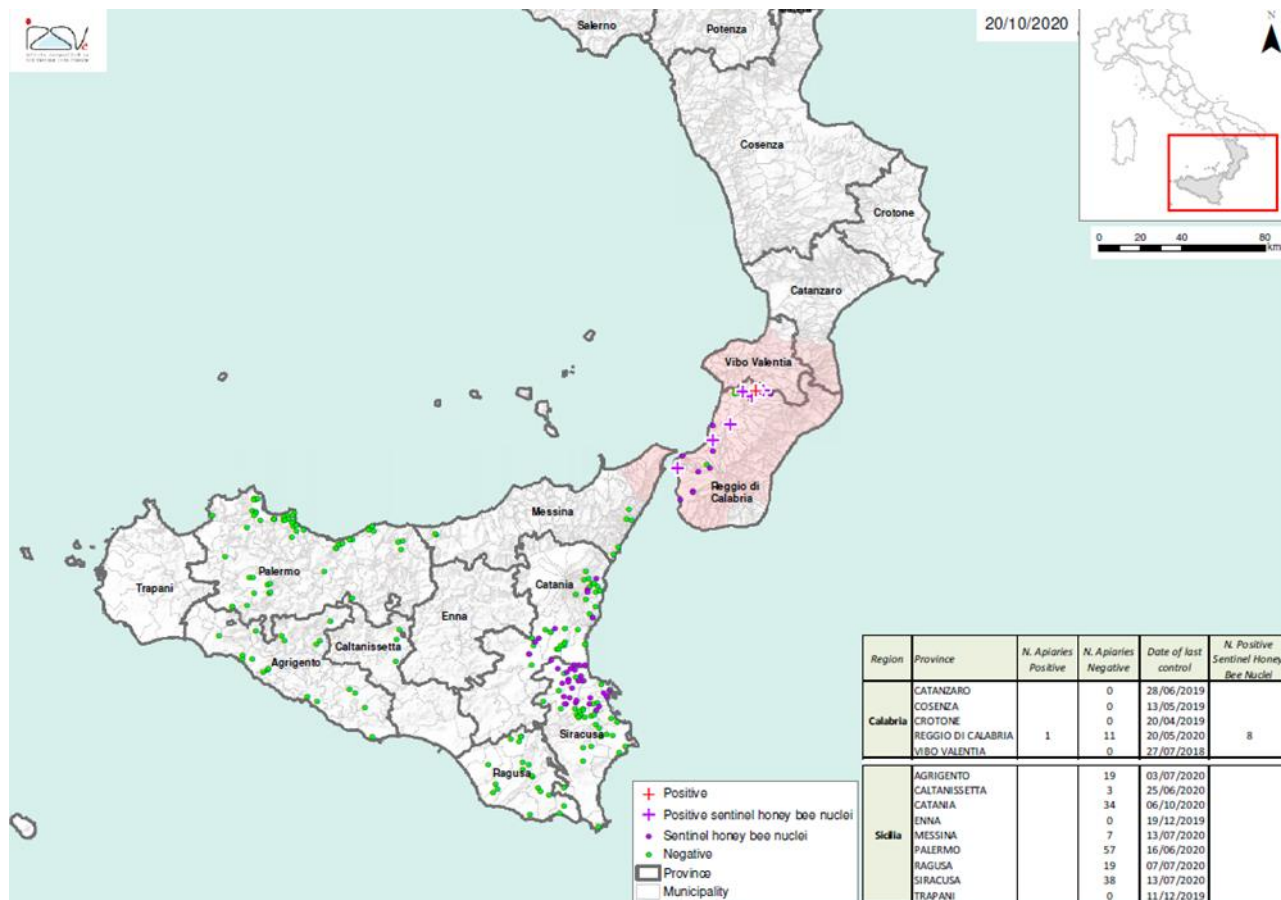
Aethina Tumida Adult and larval stages

No Small Hive Beetle have been found in the UK to date.

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.



On the 18th June 2019, the presence of *A. tumida* (SHB) was again confirmed in eastern Sicily,

Imports 2020

43 Import consignment inspections were carried out in the Southern region in 2020, these were consignments of queens, packages, nucs and colonies.

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

I would like to thank the team for their hard work and dedication to improving and maintaining Bee Health across the Southern region under unfamiliar working conditions.

A big part of our job is the interaction and face to face contact with beekeepers which we all enjoy but unfortunately this year has not been possible. We hope that normal service will be resumed in 2021.

I'd like to wish you all a successful and trouble free season next year and please remember the NBU are here to help <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/>

Pete

Peter Davies

Regional Bee Inspector, Southern Region - National Bee Unit

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