



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

National Bee Unit

2021 Eastern Region Annual Report

The 2021 Season

It's been a bit of a strange year and probably one easily forgotten as it felt like we were in and out of various lockdown restrictions and just bobbed along for most of it. Looking back it seems to have flown by. One minute I am doing my spring checks and getting colonies ready for pollination, next I am getting calls for swarms, extracting honey and doing autumn treatments. I did end up with decent honey yields and the colonies seemed to be happy and thriving. That's enough about me and my bees, here is an update on the region.

Unfortunately, Healthy bee days were still on hold due to Covid uncertainties, but we did deliver several talks via Zoom across the region which were well received and hopefully we can resume the Healthy Bee Days this summer, we have a few pencilled in.

Across the region honey yields were about average, incidences of disease were down slightly on 2020 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 continued to remain high.

The NBU Eastern Region

The team. Regina Nickel (Norfolk), David Burns (Suffolk), Jack Silberrad (Cambridgeshire) Jonathan Baynes (parts of Suffolk, Cambs and Herts), Ian Nichols (Essex) and Peter Folge (Hertfordshire) have had a busy year. They have carried out just under 5000 colony inspections, completed numerous import checks, several Bee farmer DASH (Disease Accreditation Scheme) audits and helped Southern colleagues deal with 2 Asian Hornet Incursions.

In July Jonathan and Regina both left the National Bee Unit to pursue other interests and careers. They were both very experienced inspectors, done a great job and were well respected amongst the beekeepers in their respective patches. I had the pleasure of working with both of them, thank them for their hard work and dedication and wish them well.

Recruitment for 2 new Eastern inspectors has taken place over winter and is still ongoing as I write this. Chris Milton has been appointed for West Suffolk and starts in late March and interviews and assessments are still taking place for the Norfolk vacancy.

Myself as Regional Bee Inspector transferred to Eastern region (where I live) at the end of the season following the retirement of Keith Morgan after nearly 20 years working for the National Bee Unit. Keith was the longest serving member of the Bee Unit, was himself a bee-farmer, had a great depth of knowledge which will be hard to replace and had an eye for spotting foulbrood even in very lightly infected colonies. He was instrumental in setting up the disease assurance scheme for bee farmers and was well respected wherever he went in beekeeping circles, he will be a hard act for me to follow.

BeeBase Registration and Association Membership Lists

I would like to remind everyone how essential it is that all apiaries are registered on BeeBase so that we can identify any at risk of notifiable disease or an incursion of an exotic pest into the UK and target control measures effectively. Self-registration is free via the link at [Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](http://nationalbeeunit.com) or you can register by contacting the NBU office on 0300 303 0094 or your RBI. All beekeepers registered on BeeBase with a current email address will receive an automatic email alert if disease is found within 3km of the registered apiary. If you are self-registered, please ensure that you keep your apiary records up to date or contact one of us if you are unsure. Self-registration is recommended as it also gives beekeepers secure password protected access to personal details and inspection records.

Your association can send us their list of members if they wish but can only do this if they satisfy the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website provides guidance on best practice). These lists are very useful to us as they allow us to identify new beekeepers and to update contact details for existing beekeepers. We use our database every day to prioritise our notifiable disease inspections. An up to date list is something that will be hugely important if we are unfortunate enough to find Small Hive Beetle (SHB) in the UK.

Regional Bee Inspector	Area	Contact
Peter Davies	Regional Bee Inspector	07900 292160 Peter.davies@apha.gov.uk
Seasonal Bee Inspectors	April to October	
Ian Nichols	Essex	07557 178416 ian.nichols@apha.gov.uk
David Burns	East Norfolk / East Suffolk	07900 365721 david.burns@apha.gov.uk
Pete Folge	Hertfordshire / Bedfordshire	07775 119433 peter.folge@apha.gov.uk
Jack Silberrad	Cambridgeshire	07776 165869 jack.silberrad@apha.gov.uk
Chris Milton	West Suffolk	tbc
TBC	Norfolk	tbc

Number of Beekeepers in Eastern Region

Region	County	Current beekeepers	No of Current Apiaries	No of Colonies
Eastern England	Bedfordshire	426	540	1987
	Cambridgeshire	927	1124	3309
	Essex	1166	1685	6332
	Hertfordshire	1011	1201	4193
	Norfolk	1146	1698	8537
	Suffolk	1003	1423	4744
	EASTERN ENGLAND TOTALS		5679	7671

Disease and Pests

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

There were 4871 inspections carried out across the region. EFB was diagnosed in 78 colonies and AFB in 4 colonies.

EFB

Bedfordshire 4, Cambridgeshire 33, Essex 2, Hertfordshire 3, Norfolk 20, Suffolk 16

AFB

Norfolk 4

Varroa

Varroa continues to be a challenge, it's responsible for many colony losses each year, however its incidence varies across the country and depends very much on its management. Out in the field inspectors have found that the general level of knowledge amongst beginners about how to manage varroa was poor, probably not helped by the lack of BKA training due to the pandemic. We felt that many knew of treatments, but not much detail about them, which is something we hope to cover in our bee health events next year. It is strongly advised that beekeepers regularly monitor mite levels as part of the management of their colonies and take action if they reach damaging levels. Control can be achieved by using biotechnical methods and/or authorised products as directed by the manufacturer.

The manufacturers of the authorised treatments spend a great deal of time formulating how they should be used to ensure the maximum efficacy. Please ensure that when using treatments that the manufacturer's instructions are strictly adhered to in order to achieve the greatest benefit from the product. It is also worth noting that some treatments, such as those that are thymol or formic acid based are affected by temperature. Strips such as those containing Amitraz need to be placed correctly in the brood chamber in line with instructions, for maximum effect. There is a new authorised varroa product - Formicpro 68.2g Beehive Strips for Honeybees which is listed on the Veterinary Medicines Directorate website [Product Information Database - Currently authorised products \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

Most beekeepers will complete two treatments at specific times in the year. The first after taking the honey off and checking for stores, often a thymol based treatment starting in August, which promotes healthy winter bees. Secondly a winter treatment with an oxalic acid based product in December, when there is little or no brood, keeping mite numbers low as new brood is reared in the spring. Both of these active ingredients don't induce resistance in mites through regular use, unlike some harder chemicals.

The rule of thumb is to have colonies going into winter with low mite numbers and likewise going into the spring. Treatments performed too late in the season, eg late September, will often be less effective, resulting in winter bees being weakened by the varroa mites feeding on them. As inspectors we often see colony mortality in the winter or early spring as a result of poor varroa management.

There's a legal requirement that the use of any medicines is recorded and these records must be kept for a minimum of 5 years. Full details can be found on Beebase

along with free fact sheets including the 'Managing Varroa' booklet. [Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](http://nationalbeeunit.com)

Exotic pest surveillance (EPS)

We carried out 172 apiary 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 Eastern 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.

Yellow-legged Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*)

This season we held two exercises to allow us to practice using the new track and trace App developed by DEFRA and the NBU for use on our ipads and smart phones. The first of these in Hampshire and the second a joint exercise with Eastern team in Norfolk. It was during the second of these that a report came in from a beekeeper in the Ascot area of Berkshire who had filmed live insects near a hive on Wednesday 6th October. He also photographed a dead *Vespa velutina* and reported the sighting using the free 'Asian Hornet Watch' app. They were confirmed as Asian hornet and after mounting a track and trace operation in the area, a nest was found in a poplar tree and killed on Monday 11th October. It measured approximately 35cm in diameter, the largest nest found to date in England. Monitoring continued in the area supported by local Asian Hornet Teams (AHTs). This involved residual trapping and surveillance and was carried out daily for 3 weeks following the destruction of the nest. When nothing was seen or caught for 7 days all the traps were removed and the local AHTs and beekeepers were asked to remain vigilant.

This success was followed 3 weeks later by another report of Asian Hornets feeding on nectar on garden plants in the Buckland area of Portsmouth. The report via the Asian Hornet Watch App on the morning of Friday 29th October, was accompanied by clear photographs. National Bee Unit inspectors followed up the sighting quickly and were on site by 2pm that afternoon. An Asian hornet nest was located in a lime tree on Saturday 30th October shortly after midday and killed early Sunday evening 31st October. I'm very proud of the swift response and positive result achieved by my colleagues in Southern England.

The nest was subsequently sent to Fera Science Ltd for analysis and monitoring continued in the area supported by local beekeepers.





The Ascot Asian Hornet nest, all photos P Davies NBU

If you have a smartphone please make sure you download the free Asian Hornet Watch iPhone or Android app and familiarise yourself with what the hornets and similar insects look like. And keep a look out late in the season 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 alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk or contact the NBU.

Imports and Exports

The UK is now considered a Third Country by the EU and similarly all EU member states are now considered a Third Country by the UK, so Third Country rules apply for both imports and exports.

Import of Honey Bees

Honey Bees imported from a third country must be accompanied by an appropriate export health certificate (EHC) from the Third country. This must be issued by the Third Country's Competent Authority or their Official Certifier. Currently only the import of Queens (in cages with attendant workers) is permitted under Third Country rules, except from New Zealand where the import of packages of bees is also permitted.

Importers wishing to import bees from a listed third country must comply with the import requirements. Importers must notify all imports in advance via the IPAFFS system (Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System). Imports from countries other than EU member states must enter via a Border Control Point (BCP). Until March 2022 imports from EU member states will be checked at destination by a Bee Inspector on a risk basis.

The Northern Ireland Protocol sets the principle of unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses to Great Britain. NI beekeepers may continue to export packages and colonies to the UK. There will be no border checks on consignments despatched from Northern Ireland.

Export of Honey Bees

Honey Bees exported to a third country must be accompanied by an appropriate health certificate. This is issued by the NBU once the bees to be exported have been inspected and confirmed free from serious notifiable pests and diseases.

Currently only the export of Queens (in cages with attendant workers) is permitted under Third Country rules to EU and Northern Ireland.

As Northern Ireland is treated as though it still resides within the EU, movements of bees to Northern Ireland must now be accompanied by a health certificate and the full Third Country export procedure must be followed. In the same way, only queens may be exported to Northern Ireland. The export of colonies and packages to Northern Ireland are no longer permitted.

To keep up to date with the latest guidance on importing and exporting live honey bees please visit the following link

Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers (nationalbeeunit.com)

Surveillance of Small Hive Beetle (SHB) in Italy in 2021

Information from the National Reference Laboratory for Apiculture in Italy below, updated in September 2021, shows surveillance for Small Hive Beetle in Sicily with no positives found again this year. Meanwhile in the Calabria region on the mainland, two positive apiaries and five positive sentinel nuclei have been found, their website documents a total of 37 adult beetles found this year.



Aethina Tumida Adult and larval stages

