



The 2021 Season

Unfortunately, this season has still had the shadow of Coronavirus hanging over it. We were able to carry out inspections normally subject to government guidelines, but the Bee Health Days that we usually run could not go ahead. However, with the help of the County Associations we were able to cover some of our beekeeper training via zoom. Over two weekends in June, we provided presentations on Varroa, Foulbrood and Exotic Pests for Devon and Cornwall. For Somerset we provided a mid-week presentation called 'The Bee Disease Detectives' this attracted more than 300 attendees some of which were from as far afield as Canada and the USA.

With a poor spring many of the colonies were under stress, with many beekeepers reporting colonies close to starvation because they were unable to gather enough food. There was also an increase in the reports of Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV) which was exacerbated by large colonies being confined to their hives. All of the South West (SW) Counties this year have seen an increase in European Foulbrood (EFB) and there has been a notable increase of American Foulbrood (AFB) in Devon.

On a brighter note, in the middle of the season we had the go ahead to recruit for a new Inspector, as the SW team have been short of one since 2019. As a result of this I am pleased to announce that Cathy Mudge who lives in Devon will be joining us at the start of next season.

Some interesting photos taken this season.



Spring pollen



Green eyed drone

The team in SW England

Please use the post code search on the contacts page of Beebase to check for your local SBI. They can be contacted on the e-mails and phone numbers below from the beginning of April until the end of September 2022.

Regional Bee Inspector (RBI)	Inspection Area	Contact Details
Simon Jones	Somerset	Tel 01823 442228 07775119459 simon.jones@apha.gov.uk
Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI)	Area	Contact Details
Eric James	Cornwall	07979119369 eric.james@apha.gov.uk
Hazel Vallis	Cornwall & Devon	07775119457 hazel.vallis@apha.gov.uk
Leila Goss	Devon	07775119453 leila.goss@apha.gov.uk
David Packham	Devon	07775119463 david.packham@apha.gov.uk
Eleanor Burgess	Somerset	07775119465 eleanor.burgess@apha.gov.uk

During the winter period of October to March please direct all enquiries to the Regional Bee Inspector (RBI).

Beekeeper and hive numbers

There are currently 5340 beekeepers in South West England registered on the National Bee Unit's (NBU's) online database BeeBase. Between them they have 24047 colonies in 7155 apiaries, an average of 4.5 colonies per beekeeper and 3.4 colonies per apiary. These figures are a slight decrease on last year.

This year 291 new beekeepers have been registered on to BeeBase in the SW Region. We have continued updating BeeBase over the season, checking those beekeepers who haven't been visited for a long time and removing those who are not keeping bees anymore. Please take part in the 2021 National Hive Count launched in November where you can update your BeeBase records with the total number of overwintering hives and you will help us maintain an accurate database.

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 www.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 me 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 Data Protection Act (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. **Secretaries** – if you currently have this in place, please send 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 (SHB) in the UK or more Asian Hornets in our region in the coming season.

Inspections

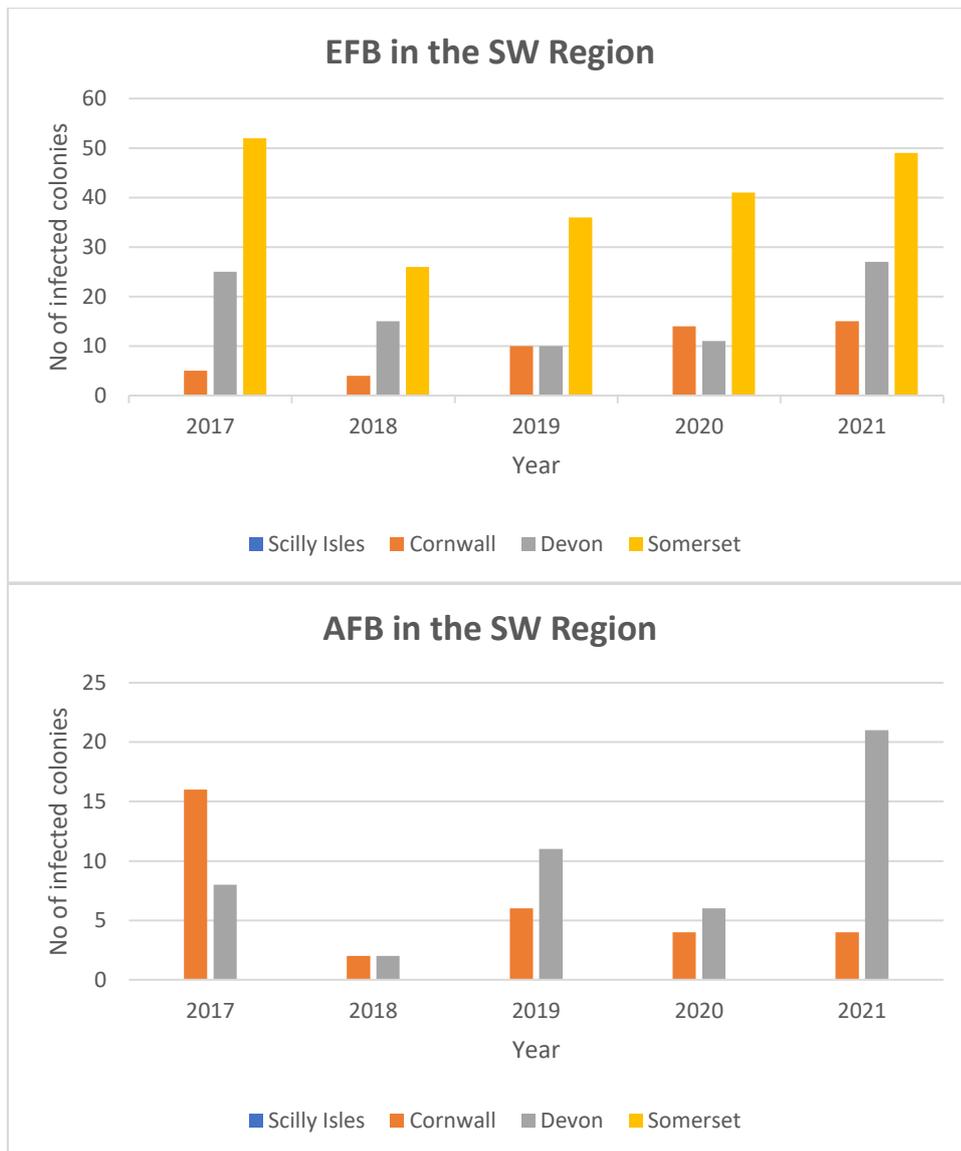
This year the SW Inspectors inspected 2880 colonies in 629 apiaries. This was similar to last year but is lower than years previous to that, due to the fact that we have been short of a Seasonal Bee Inspector for the last two seasons.

Please note that it's a legal requirement to inform the NBU if you know or suspect a statutory, notifiable disease or pest is present in your apiary. Beekeepers can contact their RBI all year round, or their SBI in the summer, if they have concerns about bee disease or pests. You can take a photograph if you see anything suspicious in the brood, and in relation to insects, try to take a sample. The photograph can be sent by email or text to your SBI or RBI, or you can contact us by phone to describe the problem. If we can't rule out there being a statutory disease or pest, we will arrange to visit free of charge.

Disease and Pests

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

Details of disease found this year is on the disease incidence pages of BeeBase at [Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](http://Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers (nationalbeeunit.com)) together with the relevant grid squares, they are summarised in the graphs below.



Varroa

In order to maintain strong vigorous colonies, the NBU advice is to monitor and control Varroa appropriately. Control can be achieved by 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 throughout the season will help determine whether an earlier treatment is required.

Varroa acts as a vector for viruses which will reduce the longevity of the bees and so impact on the foraging capability of colonies during the summer. Hives treated too late in the season may result in winter bees being affected by viruses or they may be weakened by the Varroa mites feeding on them. This may lead to colony mortality in the winter or early spring.

This year there have been a **new** addition to the Varroa treatments available in the UK. This is Formic Pro and is manufactured by NOD Apiary Products who produce the MAQS that have been used in the UK for some time.

The list of those registered and approved for use by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is available on their web site <http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/Default.aspx> together with

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

To avoid Varroa mites becoming resistant to specific chemicals it is good policy to rotate your treatments on a regular basis.

There's a legal requirement that the use of any treatments are recorded, and these records must be kept for a minimum of 5 years. Full details can be found on this link -

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=110>

The Beebase website has pdf links to numerous free fact sheets including the 'Managing Varroa' advisory leaflet.

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



The worst effects of Varroa - parasitic mite syndrome (PMS) and deformed wing virus

Exotic Pest Surveillance

We carried out 34 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 continued spread of Asian Hornet in France and surrounding countries the importance of exotic pest surveillance work cannot be overstated.

We have 18 Voluntary Sentinel Apiaries (VSA's) in the SW Region. 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 and AH traps are provided and checked at normal colony inspections by the beekeeper and noted on a log sheet. I would like to express my thanks to all of the VSA beekeepers who are such an important part of the NBU's surveillance for exotic pests.

In addition to this we have Enhanced Sentinel Apiaries (ESA's). These are set up in areas that are considered to be of a very high risk. For example, in the SW region we have ESAs in the vicinity of Plymouth Docks. By agreement with the beekeeper, NBU inspectors monitor a selected apiary 3 times each season.



European Hornet at Botanic Gardens Wales



Asian Hornet in Jersey

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.



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

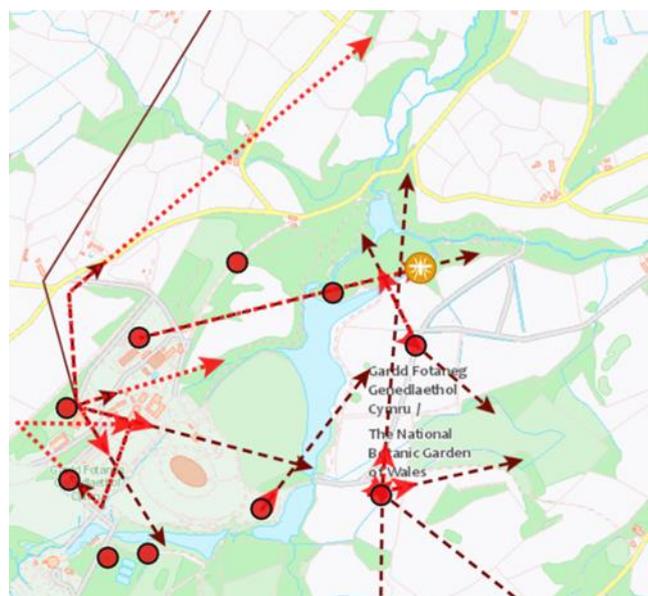
This season the SW team have had two training sessions to familiarise ourselves with our new Asian Hornet mapping app on our I-pads. This app has been developed by the NBU together with FERA to track and trace Asian Hornets when they are spotted out in the environment to speed up the process of finding their nests.

Late in the season a beekeeper in the Ascot area of Berkshire filmed live insects near a hive on Wednesday 6th October. He also captured a sample of *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 Norway Maple 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 the Central Region. The nest was subsequently sent to Fera Science Ltd for analysis and monitoring continued in the area supported by local beekeepers.



*Asian Hornet nest found
October 30th in Portsmouth*



Track and trace mapping app

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. Report suspect sightings using the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app, or by filling out an online report form, or by emailing alertnonnative@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 Honeybees.

Honeybees 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 (NI) 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 Honeybees.

Honeybees 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 honeybees please visit the following link

[Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](https://nationalbeeunit.com)

Finally

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Inspectors in the SW Region for their help and support over the year. Thanks are due also to you, the beekeepers, for co-operating with our Inspectors when they are requesting access to your colonies. Please be vigilant, check for brood disease and look out for Asian Hornets, if you don't look for it, you won't find it. It's a good excuse to spend a bit more time in the apiary just watching!

I wish all beekeepers out there a very enjoyable 2022 and hope that some sort of normality returns to our lives.

Simon Jones

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