



National
Bee Unit

National Bee Unit



Animal &
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Agency

Central Region Annual Review

Introduction

This has been my first year with the National Bee Unit (NBU) as your Regional Bee Inspector in Central Region. It has been a busy year and a steep learning curve for me, not only having to learn the unique ways of the Civil Service, DEFRA, APHA and the NBU but also bringing my own skills up to the world class standard of the existing bee inspectors. When I say world class, I really mean that; the NBU is the only organisation of its kind that conforms to ISO accreditation and regular examination and inspection of staff and procedures. For many years as a beekeeper and then as a DASH accredited bee-farmer, I always enjoyed welcoming the bee inspectors who came to visit, and I always felt my own skills had been improved by their visit and so I feel honoured to have joined the team.

I feel that I must start my report by paying tribute to my team, they have worked incredibly hard in challenging circumstances this year. They have had to endure one of the hottest seasons on record and ensure a high standard of service delivery despite staffing shortages across the region. The feedback that I have received from beekeepers has been nothing short of excellent. Finally, I want to congratulate Dan Etheridge who many of you will know as one of our SBI's covering Hampshire, Dan has spent the 2022 season covering as the RBI in SE Region and has just recently passed the selection process and is now the permanent RBI for the SE Region. He will be missed by colleagues in Central Region. We have recently run a successful recruiting campaign and we will be welcoming a new member to our team next season.

The NBU, BeeBase, and the Central Region Team

Cristina Ruiz (National Bee Inspector) took maternity leave from January to October and the role was covered by Dhonn Atkinson (Northeast Regional Bee Inspector). There has continued to be several changes at this level with a number of RBI's covering the National Bee Inspector role owing to vacancies that require cover higher up in APHA.

The National Bee Unit office welcomed Samantha O'Toole in June to provide programme support alongside Diane Gillibrand. The Southern Region was re-named Central region and the geographic alignment slightly altered to include the counties of Leicestershire & Rutland.

You can use the post code search on the contacts page of BeeBase to identify your local Seasonal Bee Inspector. They 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 Regional Bee Inspector.

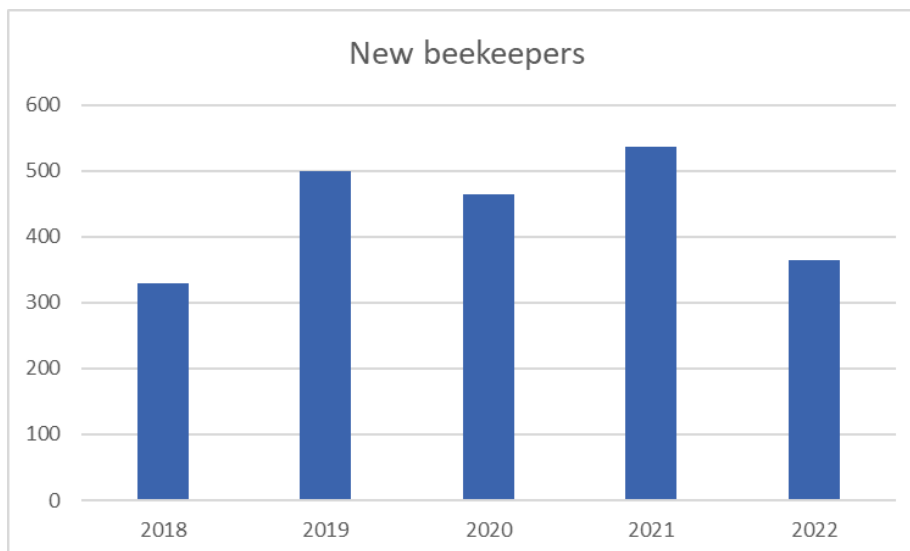


- **Regional Bee Inspector:**
John Geden 07501275259
- **Seasonal Bee Inspectors:**
Kevin Pope (Dorset) 07775 119466
Avril Earl (Wiltshire) 07824 529422
Philip Spillane (Berkshire & Buckinghamshire) 07775 119470
Mark Lynch (Oxfordshire) 07824 530180
Isaac Mullane (Hampshire) 07552 262787
Alexander Grau (Leicestershire & Rutland) 07775 119434
Robert Poole (Northamptonshire) 07990 138894

Beekeeper and colony numbers

Central region is the biggest of all eight NBU region in terms of beekeeper numbers. Your team covers the following ten counties: Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, and Rutland. There are currently 7,414 beekeepers in the region registered on the NBU's online database BeeBase. Between them they have 35,835 colonies in 10,206 apiaries.

We had 329 new beekeepers register on BeeBase over the course of this season up to 19th December, which is encouraging and demonstrates that beekeepers continue to recognise the importance of registration and a healthy continuance of people keeping bees.



New Beekeepers in Central Region 2018-2022

Our inspectors update BeeBase throughout the season, checking the status of beekeepers who haven't been visited for a long time and removing those who are not keeping bees anymore. Beekeepers can be of great assistance in helping us



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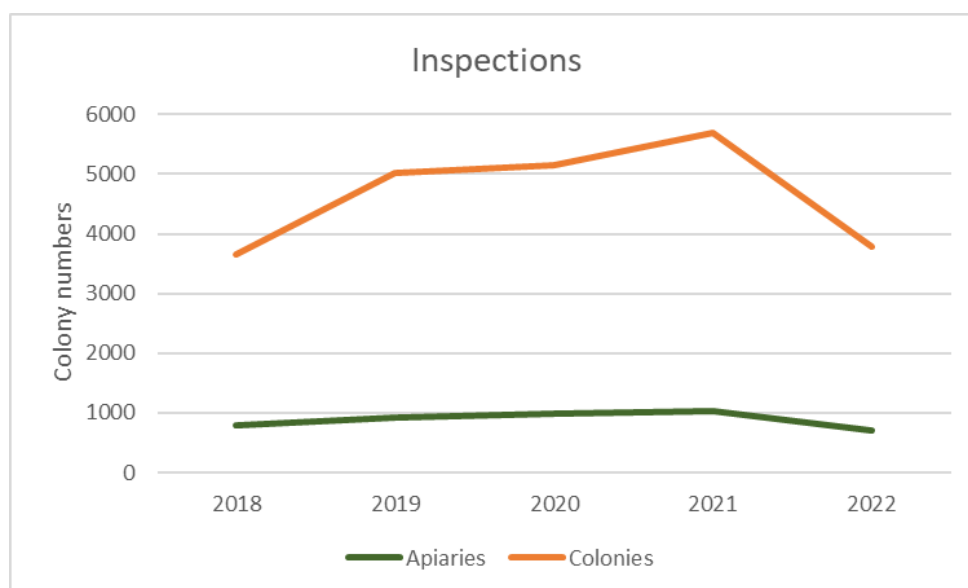
maintain an accurate database by completing the annual [Hive Count](#) census taken from 1st November till 31st December each year. Almost 9,000 UK (United Kingdom) beekeepers updated their details on BeeBase during the 2021 Hive Count. There are currently more than 46,000 beekeepers registered on BeeBase, meaning that around 20% participated. Hive Count provides a very useful indication of the number of managed colonies in the UK and so your assistance in 2022 is much appreciated.

We often find beekeepers believe that by joining a beekeeping association they have been registered on BeeBase. That is not the case and so we kindly request that anyone running beekeeping courses or otherwise introducing people to beekeeping remembers to show them BeeBase and explain the role of the National Bee Unit.

Registration on BeeBase is essential so that we can identify any apiaries at risk of notifiable disease or an incursion of an exotic pest into the UK and target control measures effectively. Registration is free and your information is completely confidential. All beekeepers registered on BeeBase with a current email address can receive an automatic email alert if disease is found within 3km of the registered apiary. Beekeepers can securely access their personal details and inspection records. You can register on the BeeBase [website](#) or by contacting the NBU office on 0300 303 0094.

Inspections

Your Central Region Seasonal Bee Inspectors completed 705 apiary inspections totalling 3,790 colonies this season. This number is lower than last year due to vacancies and absences within the team. The 5-year average for inspections is 888 and colonies inspected is 4,665.



Apiary and colony inspections in Central Region 2018-2022

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 Seasonal Bee Inspector during the summer or their Regional Bee Inspector all year round.

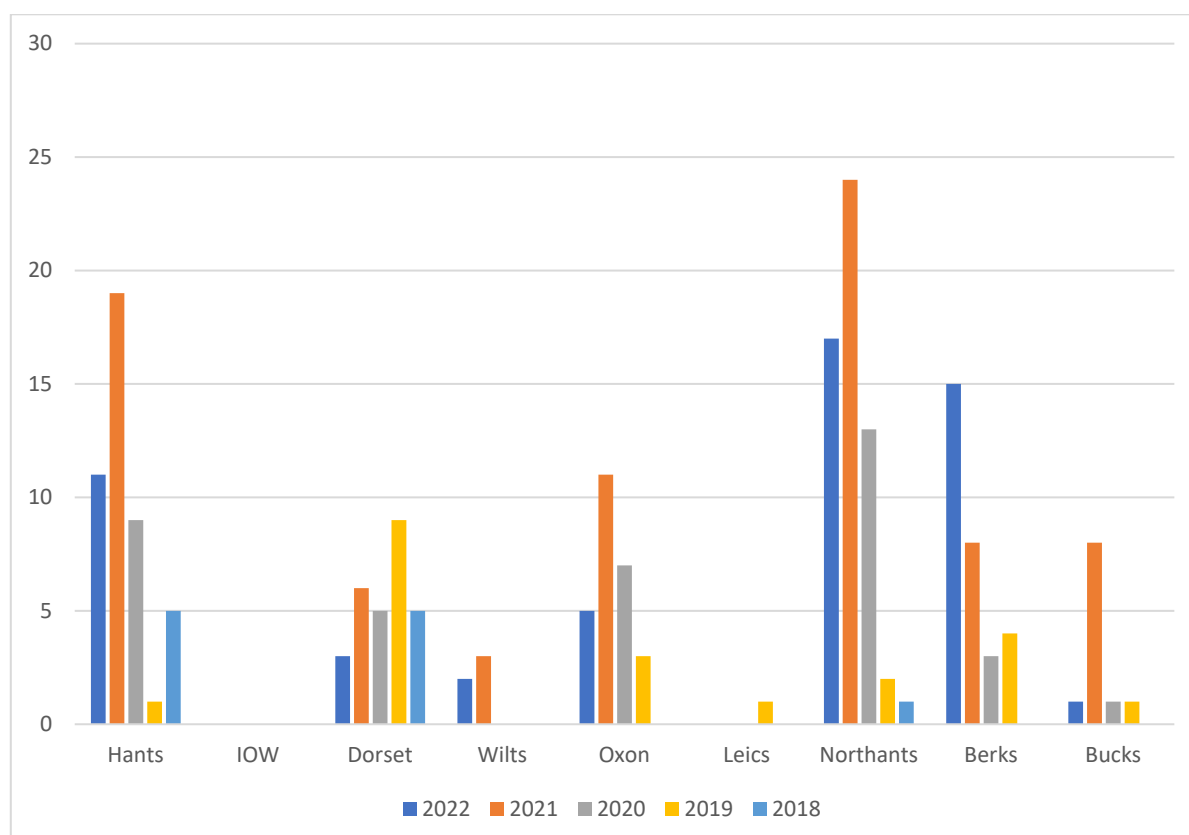
If you can take a photograph, then you can send it to your local inspector by email or text message. Alternatively, call us on the phone and describe the problem. If we can't rule out there being a statutory disease or pest, we will arrange to visit free of charge.

Disease and Pests

Details of disease found this year can be found on the "Disease Incidence" pages of BeeBase (<https://nationalbeeunit.com>).

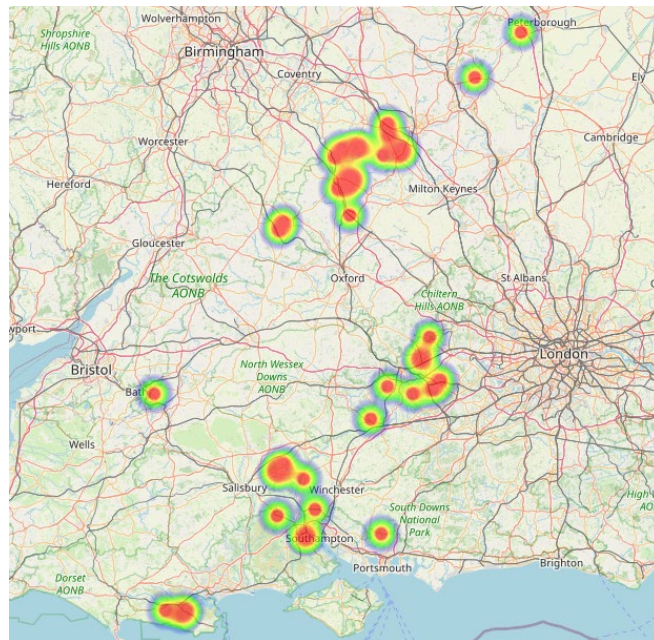
Foulbrood

We have continued to deal with increased levels of European Foulbrood in Central Region in 2022 albeit lower than the levels identified in 2021 but this needs to be considered against the fact that, for several reasons, the overall number of NBU inspections has also been lower.



EFB Incidence (colonies) in Central Region from 2018-2022

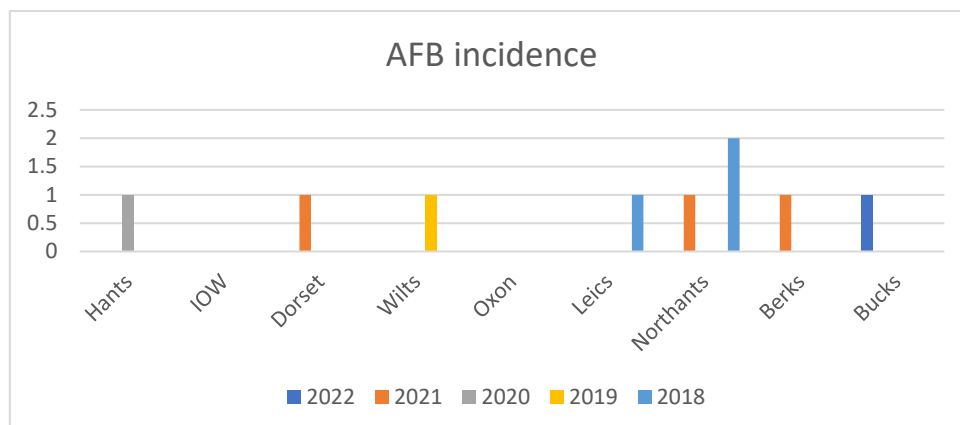
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Distribution of EFB Cases in Central Region in 2022

We have continued to identify cases of EFB in Northamptonshire and we believe that a possible reason may be the collection of unknown swarms that then spread the bacteria into new apiaries. Hampshire, Dorset, and Oxfordshire have also continued to present new and recurrent cases. At the latter part of the season, we identified a growing number of infected in the New Forest in Hampshire and we will be targeting this area early in the 2023 season.

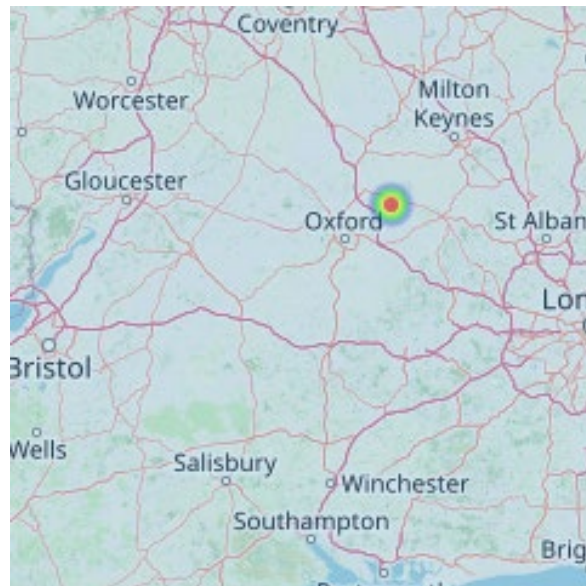
Thankfully AFB (American Foul Brood) is still a rarity in our region, so much so that new bee inspectors must go to other regions to see it first hand in the hive. It was diagnosed in just 1 apiary in Buckinghamshire. We cannot definitively link this outbreak to a particular cause although quite often cases such as this can be linked to the spores being present in old equipment possibly being brought in from another area.



AFB Incidence (colonies) in Central Region from 2018-2022



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Distribution of AFB Cases in Central Region in 2022

Beekeepers play a critical role in stopping the spread of foulbrood through high levels of biosecurity, swarm control, careful management of unknown swarms, and being able to identify symptomatic larvae in their colonies. I recommend the following publication for more information:



Foulbrood Disease of Honeybees ([pdf](#))

- 10 Rules for foulbrood control (page 8)
- Examine a colony for brood disease (page 11-12)
- American foulbrood (page 14-16)
- Signs of European foulbrood (page 19-20)

If you are buying bees, then you are encouraged to seek advice about where they are from, and we are always keen to inspect any bees brought into the region.

Bee Health Days

The lifting of Covid19 restrictions enabled us to deliver Bee Health Days, which are our primary method of beekeeper training. This year sessions focused on inspecting a colony for disease, symptoms of Foulbrood (through diseased comb workshops), practical tips for effective biosecurity, and monitoring and controlling Varroa through biomechanical methods. We are grateful to Hampshire Beekeeper Association and Wiltshire Beekeepers Association for inviting us and organising the logistics for the day. We are keen to deliver further educational sessions in 2023 and welcome contact from beekeeping groups that would like to work with us to organise something.



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Bee Health Day in Wiltshire

In addition to the Bee Health days, I have also visited many of the associations within the region and given talks, demonstrations and participated in 'Bee Safaris'. I always enjoy getting out of the office meeting fellow beekeepers for a natter and every so often getting my bee-suit back on. Please remember that I will always be willing to come and talk to your association either face to face at a meeting or via a computer-based conference system. Part of our remit is to educate beekeepers about foulbrood and exotic pests and so it is part of my job.

Exotic Pest Surveillance

The NBU conduct exotic pest surveillance inspections for Small Hive Beetle and Tropilaelaps mites near identified exotic risk points. In addition, by agreement with the beekeeper, NBU inspectors monitor selected Enhanced Sentinel Apiaries (ESA) 3 times each season near the highest risk points. In 2022, we conducted inspections in 166 apiaries specific to exotic pests in this region.

We also have 16 volunteer beekeepers in this region who have apiaries near exotic pest risk points and who specifically monitor their honeybee colonies for these exotic pest species on behalf of the NBU. These Voluntary Sentinel Apiaries (VSA) represent a valuable front-line defence against exotic pest incursion. Exotic risk points include freight ports, plant importers, airports, crude hive product importers, and queen importers. The distribution of VSAs near risk points and at random sites maximises the likelihood of early pest detection. VSA beekeepers are provided with a monitoring and sampling kit and regularly examine their colonies according to standard protocols. Samples of hive debris are submitted to the NBU laboratory and tested twice in each season for the presence of Small Hive Beetle and Tropilaelaps mites. We are always looking for new recruits and would be happy to hear from any beekeepers who would like to join the scheme.

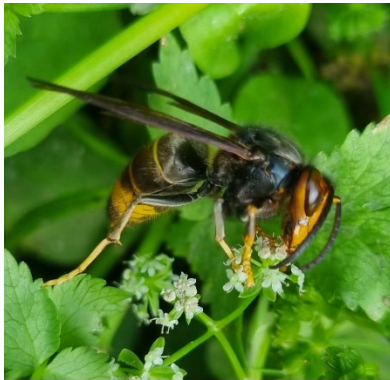


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Yellow-legged Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*)

This year I was granted the opportunity to travel to Jersey to see at first hand the extraordinary work of the volunteer team trying to keep on top of this very damaging invasive species. I absorbed a huge amount of information during my trip, and I feel very confident that I could now manage an outbreak in our region. Thankfully I have not had to put my new-found skills to the test and this year has seen continued low levels of confirmed Asian Hornet sightings in the UK with just one Asian Hornet nest found by NBU inspectors in a sycamore tree in the Rayleigh area of Essex on Friday 30th of September, which was then destroyed. This followed reports from a beekeeper in the area who had found Asian Hornets entering their greenhouse where they were rendering wax. The nest was large, approximately 40cm in diameter, local beekeepers were made aware through the Asian Hornet Teams (AHTs) and monitoring has continued in the area.

Single Asian hornets were also photographed and reported via the Asian hornet watch app in Chelmsford in Essex and Dover in Kent. No further insects were seen but local Asian Hornet Teams have been alerted and are continuing to observe forage and watch insects in the area.



Rayleigh Asian Hornet



Rayleigh Asian Hornet Nest

We encourage 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.

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



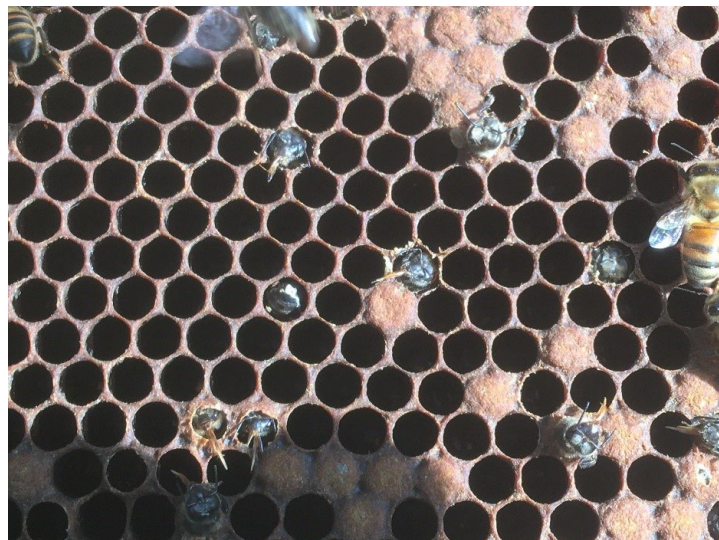
Varroa

To keep strong vigorous colonies, the NBU advice is to monitor and control Varroa appropriately. Control can be achieved by using biotechnical methods and authorised products. Varroa treatments should be targeted before colonies start to produce their 'winter' bees but checking of Varroa levels throughout the season will help decide whether an earlier treatment is needed.

Varroa acts as a vector for viruses which will reduce the longevity of the bees and so reduce 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 were several changes to authorised treatments. Bayvarol and PolyVar Yellow are no longer permitted for use in the UK. Formic Pro was introduced but you should note that it is not authorised for use with supers present and if a honey super remains on the hive during treatment that honey may not be used for human consumption. The list of those registered and approved for use by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is available on their [website](#) 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 you should rotate your treatments on a regular basis.



Symptoms of late-stage Parasitic Mite Syndrome (PMS)

It is a legal requirement to keep a record of treatments applied for a minimum of 5 years. Full details can be found on [BeeBase](#).




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I recommend the following publication for more information:

 The National Bee Unit

Managing Varroa



Managing Varroa ([pdf](#))

- Key Strategies for Effective Varroa Control (page 36)
- How to recognise and monitor Varroa (page 14-16)
- Using Biotechnical controls (page 18-21)
- Using Varroacides (page 22-26)
- Integrated Pest Management (page 31-34)

Imports and Exports of Honeybees.

Third Country rules now apply to import and export trade between the UK and EU (European Union) member states. Movements of honeybees from Great Britain to Northern Ireland are treated as exports and so are also subject to these rules. Import rules do not apply to movements of honeybees from Northern Ireland to GB (Great Britain).

Imports

Honeybees imported from a Third Country must have an appropriate Export Health Certificate (EHC). The health certificate 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 must notify all imports in advance via the IPAFFS system. From 1st November 2022, the health certificate for imports from EU countries must be uploaded onto IPAFFS (Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System) so that it can be viewed online. There is no longer a requirement for the original paper EHC document to accompany the consignment. Original documents will remain valid but, by providing an original document, this does not remove the requirement to upload an electronic version.

Imports from countries other than EU member states must enter via a Border Control Point (BCP). For now, imports from EU member states will continue to be checked at destination by a Bee Inspector on a risk basis; this approach is expected to change in 2023, with the exact date to be confirmed.

Exports

If you intend to export bees, you must ensure that the destination country permits imports from GB and that you can comply with their import conditions. It is the exporter's responsibility to do this.



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If you export your bees to any country without the correct certification, the consignment may be rejected/destroyed by the destination country. If the consignment required an inspection prior to export, the NBU would not be able to issue a certificate retrospectively.

From January 2022, Export Health Certificates for exports to EU countries must be signed by an Official Veterinarian (OV). For countries outside the EU, whether an OV is required to sign the EHC is determined by the authorities in the country of destination, so it is important for the exporter to check the requirements with them.

Only queen bees can be exported to EU countries. To export queen bees, you must obtain an Export Health Certificate and arrange for it to be signed by an OV. The OV must carry out a health inspection at the apiary before the certificate can be signed, and exporters should expect that there will be a charge for the services of an OV. The health certificate template can be found on GOV.UK, along with Notes for Guidance and information on how to contact an OV.

The OV will confirm whether a National Bee Unit inspector also needs to be present to support the OV at the health inspection. Currently there is no separate charge for a bee inspector to be present.

The OV can find information about how to contact a Bee Inspector on BeeBase or contact the National Bee Unit at (nbu@apha.gov.uk). For exports to EU countries, a signed health certificate is valid for 10 days.

To keep up to date with the latest guidance on importing and exporting live honeybees, please visit [BeeBase](#).

Finally

So, as you can see from the forgoing it has been a busy year and next year will be just as busy, I am sure! We already have a couple of dates for your diary:

- 25th January 2023 – Combined NBU Forum for SE & Central Region. Details about this event have been sent to individual BBKA association secretaries.
- 29th April 2023 – Isle of Wight Bee Health Day.

I am looking forward to the 2023 season and finally I wish you all a very happy and peaceful holiday period.

John

John Geden

Regional Bee Inspector, Central England

(Covering: Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Rutland.)



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Telephone: Mobile: 07501275259 | Email: john.geden@apha.gov.uk

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

Think you've seen an Asian Hornet? Report it!



Report through the Asian Hornet Watch app or www.bit.ly/asianhornetreport



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