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## National Bee Unit

### Western Region Annual Review

#### The 2022 Season

The Western Region Team provide their brief highlights of the season below:



#### **Jon Axe (Regional Bee Inspector)**

This year has been my first full season as Regional Bee Inspector for the Western Region and it has been a pleasure to meet beekeepers across the region. With the easing of COVID restrictions it has been good to be back to inspecting alongside beekeepers and to restart our education programme of safaris and bee health days. Cases of European Foulbrood have continued in many parts of the region and receiving photos of combs and larvae has helped us target these new outbreaks effectively.



#### **Ben Bowen (Seasonal Bee Inspector)**

Generally, beekeepers have reported a good year for honey harvests being the best year some claim to have had in the last few seasons. Swarming appears to have been variable depending upon who you speak to and where they live. Queen rearing has been a point of discussion and poor mating flights were a common reported issue. Poor mating flights in May/June were common. A prolonged hot spell of weather in July and August saw an early end to the main forage in Staffordshire and North Warwickshire. We had good feedback on the Bee Health Days, and I hope local beekeepers will have learned some new skills and know to how to contact us.



#### **Liz Gardner (Seasonal Bee Inspector)**

I spent considerable time in new areas, and it was great to meet a variety of beekeepers with bees in beautiful locations. I remind beekeepers of the importance of keeping equipment clean and bee tight to avoid disease. Good records of movements of bees (including swarms) can really help us help you in cases where foulbrood is found. The NBU factsheets cover many subjects and now is the perfect time of year to brush up on your knowledge. It's also time to clean and mend kit and dispose of anything that is beyond repair.



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### **Bronwen Hopkins (Seasonal Bee Inspector)**

My first season has gone by in the blink of an eye! It was a challenging, busy but thoroughly enjoyable season. It has been a pleasure to meet so many diligent and enthusiastic beekeepers. Despite the searingly dry conditions most beekeepers reported an excellent summer crop of honey with thanks to the bramble, and those I know who took bees to the heather seem to have had similar success. Many people reported late-mating 2021 queens who failed early in the season. Varroa counts seemed to be on the high side perhaps due to the mild winter and so I'm hopeful for a crisp and cold winter this time.



### **Colleen Reichling (Seasonal Bee Inspector)**

The weather has been great this year, but the heat of the summer meant we all needed to be careful of heat exhaustion and dehydration. I would like to acknowledge the efforts made by beekeepers to take control of the spread of EFB (European Foul Brood). In some cases, beekeepers have not restocked apiaries to create "fire breaks" between other beekeepers, been more conscious of collecting swarms, and only restocked with local bees from known sources. I encourage everyone to continue to be vigilant and take steps to limit the spread of foulbrood. Every positive step you take is helpful, so thank you to you all for your help in saving our bees!

### [The NBU, BeeBase, and the Western 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).

The National Bee Unit office welcomed Samantha O'Toole in June to provide programme support alongside Diane Gillibrand.

Jonathan Axe completed his first full season as Western Regional Bee Inspector in 2022. We welcomed Bronwen Hopkins as the new Seasonal Bee Inspector for Herefordshire and were also joined for the season by Daniel Baxter from the Welsh team to assist us in the Avon area.

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:** Jonathan Axe (07867 151641)
- **Seasonal Bee Inspectors:**
  - **Staffordshire, West Midlands:** Ben Bowen (07557 178512)



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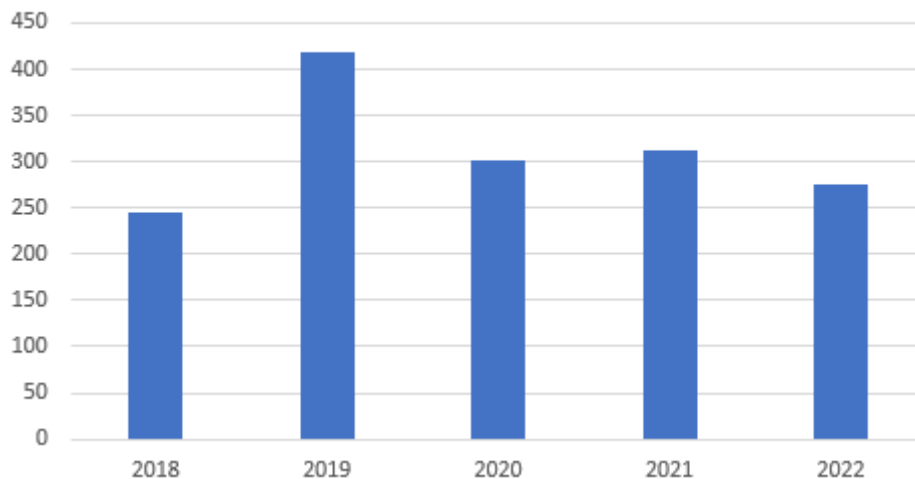
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- **Gloucestershire:** Liz Gardner (07867 351610)
- **Herefordshire, Forest of Dean:** Bronwen Hopkins (07796 433626)
- **Warwickshire, Worcestershire:** Colleen Reichling (07990 138898)
- **Avon:** Vacant contact Meg Seymour (07775 119475)
- **Shropshire:** Vacant contact Jon Axe (07867 151641)

### Beekeeper and colony numbers

There are currently 4,914 beekeepers in Western Region registered on the NBU's online database BeeBase. Between them they have 24,847 colonies in 6,970 apiaries which equates to an average of 5 colonies per beekeeper (although many have fewer, and some have many more).

### New Beekeepers



*New Beekeepers in Western 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 maintain an accurate database by completing the annual [Hive Count](#) census taken from 1<sup>st</sup> November till 31<sup>st</sup> 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



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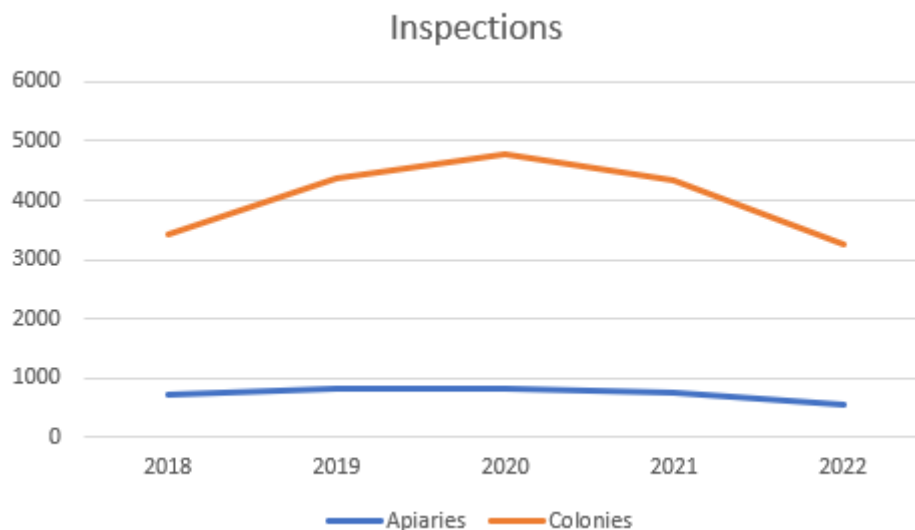
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measures effectively. Registration is free and your information is completely confidential. All beekeepers on BeeBase with a current email address that opt to receive updates will receive an automatic email alert if disease is found within 3km of the 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

Western Region completed 552 apiary inspections totalling 3,249 colonies this season. This number is lower than last year due to vacancies within the team and time invested in clearing sizeable disease outbreaks.



*Inspections in Western 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

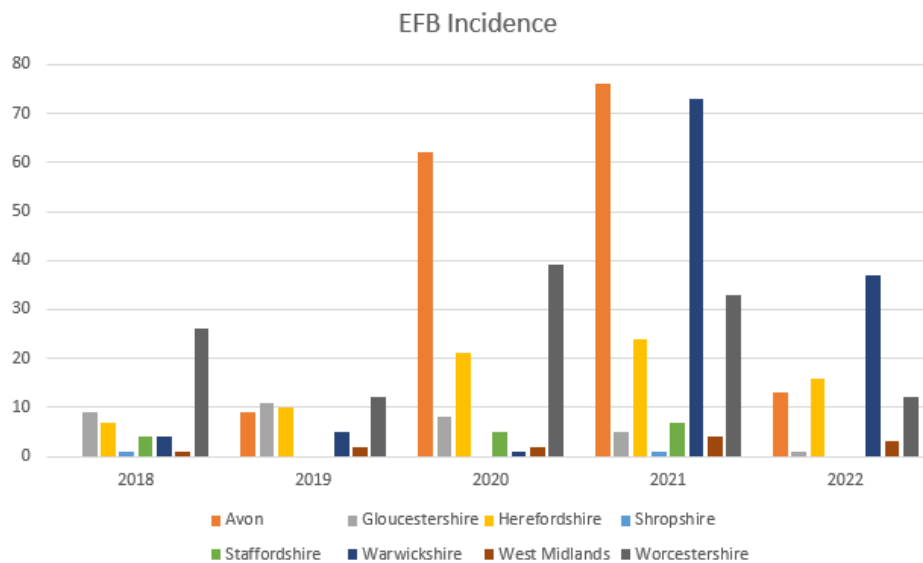
Details of disease found this year can be found on the "Disease Incidence" pages of BeeBase (<https://nationalbeeunit.com>).



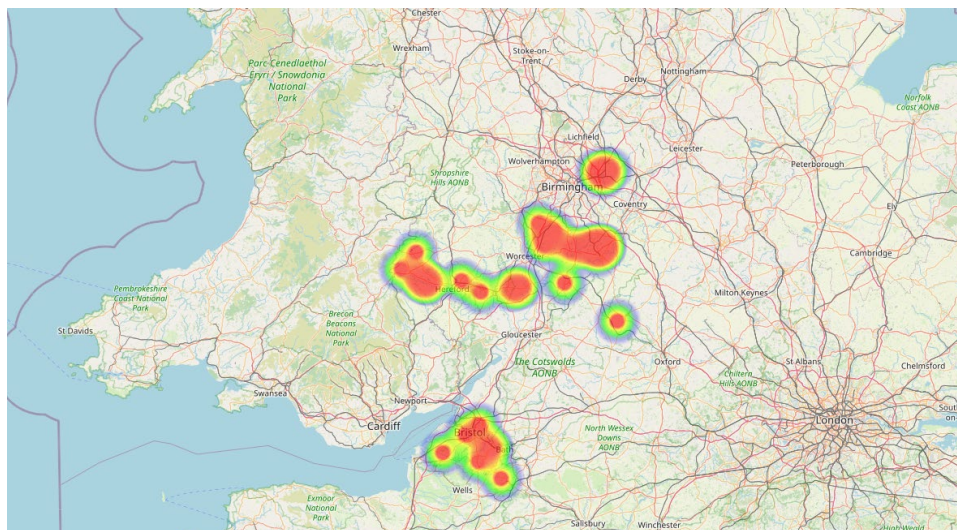
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## Foulbrood

We have continued to deal with significant levels of European Foulbrood (EFB) in Western Region in 2022. We have imported extra Inspectors from other regions (most notably Wales) to help manage the outbreaks. The cases of foulbrood found in Western Region in 2022 are lower than 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 Western Region from 2018-2022



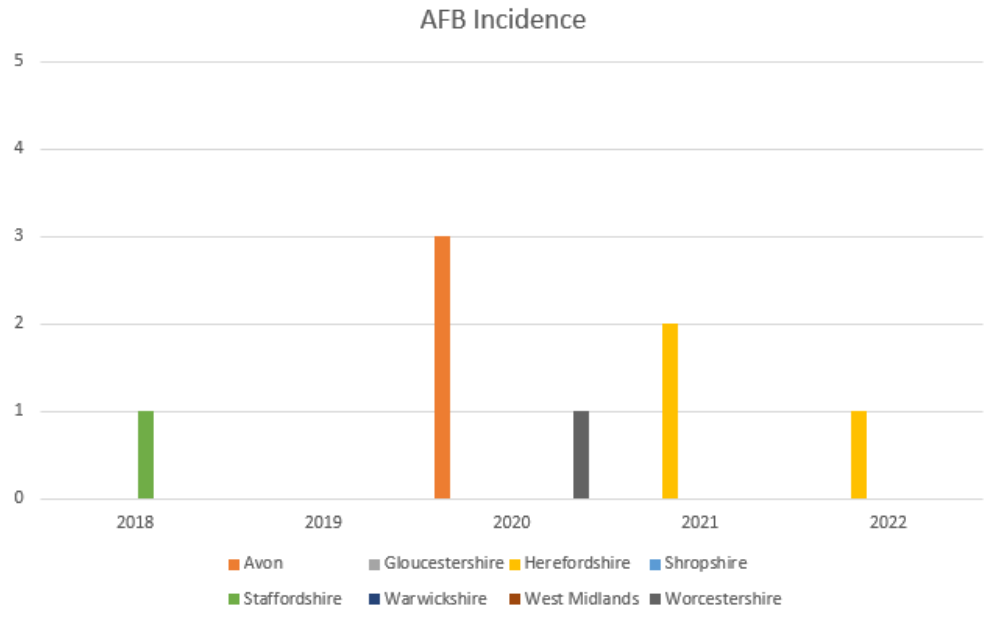
Distribution of EFB Cases in Western Region in 2022

We have continued to identify cases of EFB across the region with both new and recurrent cases.

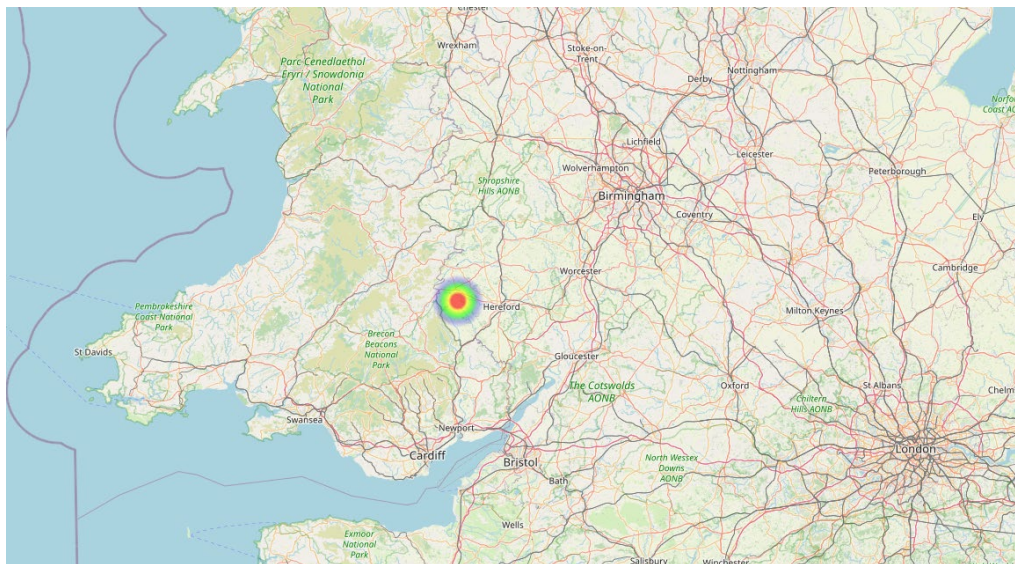


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American Foul Brood (AFB) was diagnosed in just 1 colony at 1 apiary in Herefordshire. We cannot definitively link this outbreak to a particular cause although it is suspected that it was present in old equipment brought in from another area.



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



Distribution of AFB Cases in Western 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)



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- 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 North Shropshire Beekeeper Association and Warwickshire 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 an event.



*Bee Health Day in Warwickshire*

### 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, The National Bee Unit carried out 50 inspections specific to exotic pests in Western Region.

We also have 15 volunteer Western Region beekeepers 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)



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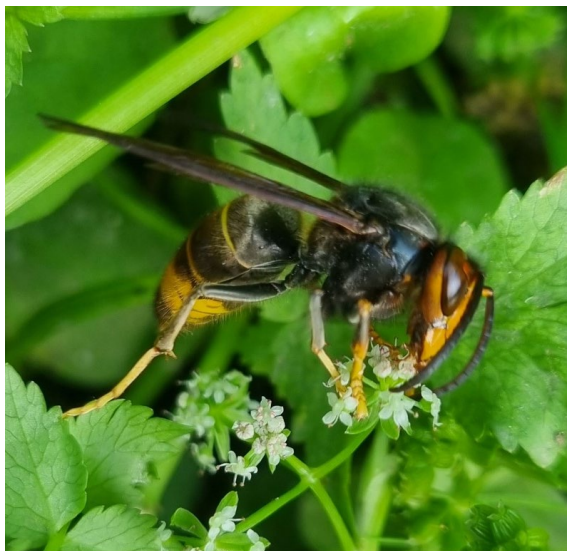
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represent a valuable front-line defence against exotic pest incursion. Exotic risk points include freight ports, plant importers, airports, crude hive product importers, and queen importers. The distribution of VSAs near risk points and at random sites 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.

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

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.





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- report suspect sightings using the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app, or by filling out an online report form, or by emailing [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk).

By working together, we 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.

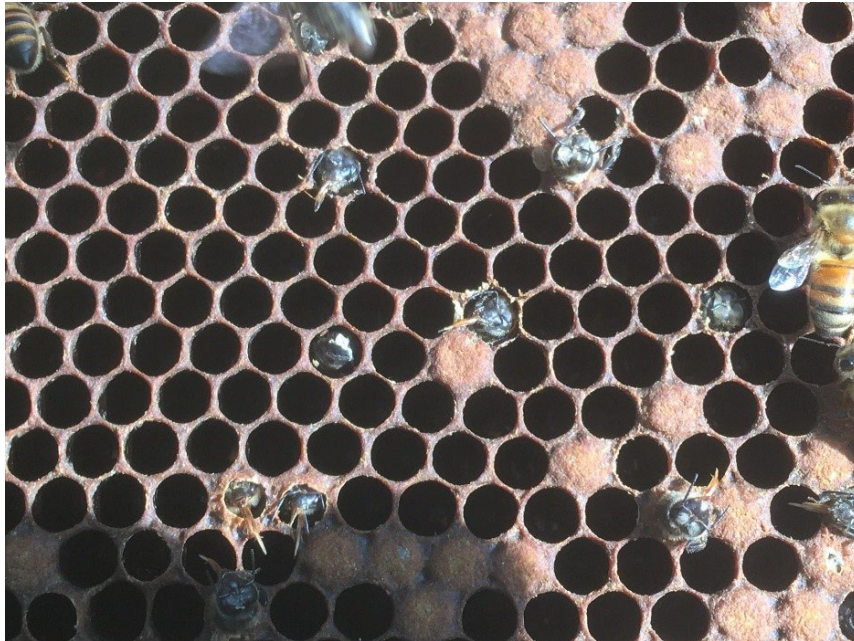


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*Symptoms of late-stage Parasitic Mite Syndrome (PMS)*

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](#).

I recommend the following publication for more information - **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.



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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.

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. 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](mailto: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](#).



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### Finally

I am ever so grateful to our team of Seasonal Bee Inspectors for their efforts in the field and to you for supporting us in our inspection programme during 2022. Our inspections are targeted to maximise our ability to find and control pests and diseases and our work schedules are so much easier for the help you give us in arranging appointments. I hope to meet many more of you in 2023. Please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the Western Region Seasonal Inspectors should you require help and advice. With best wishes to you all.

Jon Axe

### Jonathan Axe

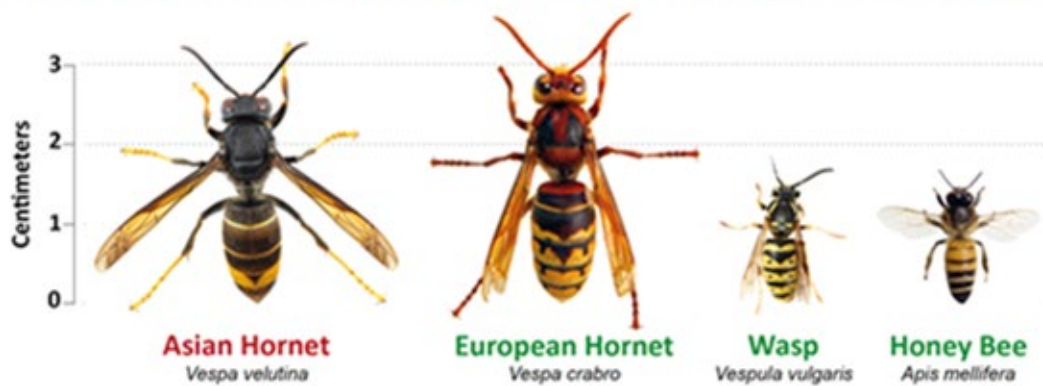
Regional Bee Inspector, Western England  
(covering Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands and Worcestershire)

**Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) | Asiantaeth Iechyd Anifeiliaid a Phlanhigion**

Telephone: Mobile: 07867 151641 | Email: [jonathan.axe@apha.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.axe@apha.gov.uk)

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

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



Report through the Asian Hornet Watch app or [www.bit.ly/asianhornetreport](http://www.bit.ly/asianhornetreport)



[APHA Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [YouTube](#)

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