

Annual Bee Report 2010 – Northern Region. (Covering Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire, Cumbria, Tyne and Wear and County Durham)

Foulbrood Disease

Only one case of foul brood disease has been found in the Northern region this year.

American Foul Brood (AFB) has been found in the following 10km square: -

- NY37 (Longtown, Cumbria) 1 colony in 1 apiary

As last year, I have spent some of my time inspecting colonies in the Western Region (North Cheshire area) and found European Foul Brood (EFB) in the following 10 km square: -

- SJ78 (Ashley, Cheshire) 4 colonies 1 apiary

Varroa

Varroa levels this season, as last season, have generally been low. I believe this is due to beekeepers having a better understanding of treatment regimes, better monitoring and using oxalic acid as a winter treatment.

Treatment with oxalic acid solution can be done by trickling 5mls. per bead (gap between the frames) of bees using a 3.2% strength solution in late December/early January before brood rearing commences. 1kg sugar to 1 litre (1kg) of water + 75 grams of oxalic acid dihydrate crystals mixed in to a cool solution. Solutions should be made up fresh.

Best efficacy is best when the colony is broodless, as oxalic acid does not penetrate capped brood cells.

A maximum of 50 mls. should be applied per hive.

If required, ready mixed oxalic acid solution and applicators can be purchased from all the major beekeeping manufacturers.

Note: Winter colonies should only be trickled once.

When using oxalic acid, most colony losses occur when the colony is already weak/small due to other problems i.e. queenlessness (mainly old bees present), diseases i.e. Varroa/virus, Nosema or few or no winter bees. From experience, I find it best **not** to treat small colonies (below 5 frames of bees when closed down for winter) with oxalic acid; instead I find it best to apply an 'Apiguard' treatment in early spring, before the supers are added.

Beekeepers are now tending to use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) successfully, using thymol treatments combined with bio-technical methods and oxalic acid.

For further information on IPM methods please see the 'Managing Varroa' booklet or visit our web site <https://secure.fera.defra.go.uk/beebase>

Nosema and Acarine

Nosema disease has been on the increase in 2010.

In 2009 I completed a Nosema workshop for the Wirral beekeepers, out of 35 samples only 2 were found with Nosema. At the same workshop this year, out of 50 samples, 45 were positive. It is good beekeeping practise for all beekeepers to take adult bee samples from all their hives for Nosema and Acarine diagnosis, preferably using old/flying bees. Samples should be taken twice a year, once in spring (March) and once in late summer (Aug/Sept).

If required, the National Bee Unit will undertake a Nosema check for you at £10 per sample (at least 30 fresh, dead bees in a match box). If Nosema is found, the laboratory at York will not be able to confirm whether the disease is *Nosema apis* or *Nosema ceranae*, as they will only be completing a microscopical examination of the sample.

If your association would like a workshop/training in Nosema and Acarine detection, then please let me know and I can arrange a suitable training day.

The 2010 honey season.

2010 has been a much better honey gathering year than 2009. The average main crop yield surveying 30 beekeepers across the Northern region was around 40 to 50lb per honey producing colony (double the 2009 figures). As 2009, the rape secreted well, although for some beekeepers this was the only honey their bees produced.

Some beekeepers reported as much as 100lb as their average, although crops in Cumbria were averaging between 20 to 30 lbs. Similarly, crops through the Ribble Valley were around 30lb, and on the Wirral they averaged around 40lb.

Honey prices remained constant, flower honey retailing between £2.50 to £5 a lb for a lb dependant on demand and location. Heather crops were generally poor with an average crop of around 20lb per colony.

Staffing

Unfortunately, Sue Scott resigned (Seasonal Bee Inspector for Newcastle northwards) just before the start of the season due to personal problems and we were unable to replace her.

John Zamorski (Clitheroe) was appointed as Seasonal Bee Inspector in May on a 1 year fixed term appointment, funded through the Healthy Bee Plan.

John Newton (Seasonal Bee Inspector County Durham area) retired at the end of the season.

John has been a great ambassador for the NBU and will be greatly missed by the beekeepers in his region and his work colleagues, we wish him well in his retirement.

Random Apiary Survey (RAS) Results and Disease alerts

Many of you will have helped us in our two year disease apiary survey, which finishes in June this year. If you have had a RAS inspection, it is important to note that individual results will not be sent by post and will only be available by beekeepers logging on to their own apiary records through Beebase.

Therefore it is important to make sure that your e mail address is on Beebase and is up to date and correct

For more information on our Random Apiary Survey, please visit our Beebase web site.

Also there is a new function on Beebase called 'Disease alert'. If notifiable disease is found within 5 km of one of your apiaries an e mail is sent to inform you. Again, it is therefore important that your e mail address is on Beebase and is up to date and correct so you can receive any such alert/s

Seasonal Bee Inspector Contacts

Merseyside/Wirral

Doug Jones, (available April to end of August)
'Honeysuckle'
3 Seabank Road
Lower Heswall
Wirral,
Cheshire.
CH60 4SN

Tel: 0151 342 7062
Works mobile: 07775 119444

Cumbria

Stewart Beattie (available April until end of July)
'Helensdale House'
Long lane
Stainton with Adgarley
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria. LA3 0NH. Tel: 01229463127. Works mobile: 07775 119443

Lancashire

John Zamorski (available April until-?)
46 Woone Lane
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 1BG

Tel: 01200427661
Works mobile: 07775 119446

Details of disease incidence, research and news updates are regularly placed on the NBU website on www.nationalbeeunit.com or you can access our web based site at <http://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase>

If there are any items in this report you would like to discuss, then please feel free to contact me.

Just to remind you, I am available for lectures and demonstrations throughout the year. Unfortunately my lecture calendar is now fully booked for 2011, please book early for 2012.

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