



National Bee Unit. Northern Region Annual Bee Report - 2015

(Covering Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and the Wirral, Lancashire, Cumbria, Tyne and Wear, County Durham and Northumberland)

Foulbrood Disease

There have only been 3 reported cases of notifiable disease in the Northern region in 2015: -

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

- SJ 36 Chester – 1 colony, 1 apiary (South Cheshire)

European Foulbrood (EFB) has been found in the following 10km squares: -

- SJ 79 Chester-Le-Street, 2 colonies, 1 apiary (Durham) – colonies destroyed
- SJ 38 Lake District – 1 colony, 1 apiary (South Lakes) all colonies in apiary (4) destroyed

As per National Bee Unit protocol, we have completed 3 km inspection sweeps around the infected apiaries and no further disease was found.

If you have apiaries in any of the above areas, can you please make sure they are registered on BeeBase.

Varroa

Varroa levels, particularly later in the season have reached high levels in most unmanaged colonies.

As last season, all my Seasonal Bee Inspectors were reporting damaged/stunted adult bees and deformed wings (Deformed Wing Virus) while undertaking inspections in late summer, many beekeepers have found it difficult to control the *Varroa* levels in their colonies.

Please be aware that most colonies have been rearing brood in the winter period due to the warm weather, this can lead to high mite levels in spring. If the levels are not controlled, populous colonies can collapse in the summer.

For more information on managing *Varroa*, please visit our website www.nationalbeeunit.com and read the 'Managing *Varroa*' leaflet produced by the National Bee Unit. This can be downloaded from the website.

Please remember *Varroa* and its associated viruses are still the biggest killers of honeybee colonies here in Europe and throughout the World. **Regular *Varroa* monitoring is a very important part of your *Varroa* management and should be completed at least 3 or 4 times throughout the year (winter, spring, mid-summer and late summer); action must be taken if mite levels are near or over the injury or economic threshold limit at any time. Do not rely on physical deformities (Deformed Wing Virus [DWV], damaged, stunted/small/deformed adult bees) in adult bees to diagnose *Varroosis*, it is generally too late at this point for colonies to recover**



Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV)

Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus was prevalent again in 2015, particularly in commercial beekeeper’s apiaries. This viral disease of adult honeybees is thought to lie dormant in most honeybee colonies and often shows no effect in the colony. However, when symptoms such as crawling and/or trembling bees, sometimes with shiny, hairless or bloated abdomens become apparent then the disease can spread very quickly through the colony and result in rapid depopulation of adult bees. The disease only occurs in large ‘mature’ colonies with drones and can often be seen in the drones first. In severe cases, masses of dead bees may be found on the hive floor and/or on the ground at the front of the hive and sometimes the colony may not survive. It is thought that the spread of the virus within the colony is exacerbated by overcrowding and confinement in periods of poor weather, though cases were being reported right through the summer period. It is also thought that disease can transfer through contact, so good hygiene practises are suggested (i.e. washing gloves and hive tools between inspecting each colony). Re-queening from non-susceptible stocks is also suggested to further reduce the incidence. In some cases this disease can be confused with spray poisoning. For additional information on this and other viruses please see the NBU leaflet ‘Common Pests, Diseases and Disorders of the Adult Honey Bee’ and the recently produced fact sheet “Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus”. This is available as a pdf download at:

www.nationalbeeunit.com.

Approved Bee Medicines

For your assistance, I list the current Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) authorised bee medicines below. Please check the VMD website regularly (www.vmd.defra.gov.uk) or ring the VMD to confirm that products are still legal and currently in use.

Product	Active Substances
Apiguard Gel (25% Thymol) for Beehive Use	Thymol
Apilife Var Bee -Hive Strip for Honey Bees	Thymol (8g) Camphor Recemic (0.39g), Eucalyptus Oil (1.72g), Levomenthol (0.39g)
Apistan strips 10.3% w/w Bee Hive Strip= 834mg per strip	Tau Fluvalinate
Bayvarol Strips 3.6 mg	Flumethrin
Thymovar 15g Bee-hive strips for Honey Bees	Thymol
MAQS Beehive strips 95% w/w	Formic Acid - 68.2g of Formic acid per strip
API-Bioxal , 886mg/g of powder for hive use	1g contains Oxalic acid dihydrate 886mg (equals 632.70mg of anhydrous)
Please note: Fumidil B is not licensed for use in the UK	

Treatments are approved for use in honeybee colonies in this country by the VMD (Veterinary Medicines Directorate) and not by the National Bee Unit.



As you can see from the above table, there is now an approved/legal oxalic acid (OA) treatment available for use by beekeepers in this country. Please note, this is the **only** UK product (other than other OA products obtained under the EU Cascade system) that can be used for OA trickling or sublimation. It is currently available from most beekeeping suppliers in 10, 50 and 100 colony packs.

Please note, it is a legal requirement to record all hive treatments used, i.e. when and where purchased, type and amount of treatment or product used, batch number and expiry date if applicable, when applied and when withdrawn. The product, again if applicable, should be disposed of as per the manufacturers' instructions. This information should be kept for 5 years.

The Veterinary Medicines record card can be found on BeeBase at <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/BeeBase/index.cfm?pageid=309>

Other treatments from Europe are available for use under the 'Cascade' system. Please visit the VMD website for information and import regulations, at www.vmd.defra.gov.uk

The 2015 honey season

Reports from beekeepers in the Northern region indicate that 2015 has been a poor honey gathering season, particularly in the far North.

The Northern region average yield was well down on last season at around 10 to 30lb per honey producing colony and a lot of beekeepers produced no excess honey. Some beekeepers reported a higher yield 30 to 50lb this was mainly due to their proximity to the high nectar yielding plants, Willow Herb and Himalayan Balsam. The Heather crop average was around 10 to 30lb per colony.

Honey prices increased slightly, flower honey retailing between £3.50 to £5.50 per lb, dependent on demand and location.

Staffing

Stewart Beattie, my Seasonal Bee Inspector for Cumbria and North Lancashire decided to retire at the end of the 2015 season.

Stewart has been, without a doubt, one of the best Seasonal Bee Inspectors the Northern Region has ever had and will be hard to replace.

He had great ability to communicate with beekeepers at all levels, had a great eye for disease and a fantastic work ethic. He will be greatly missed by both beekeepers and his colleagues.

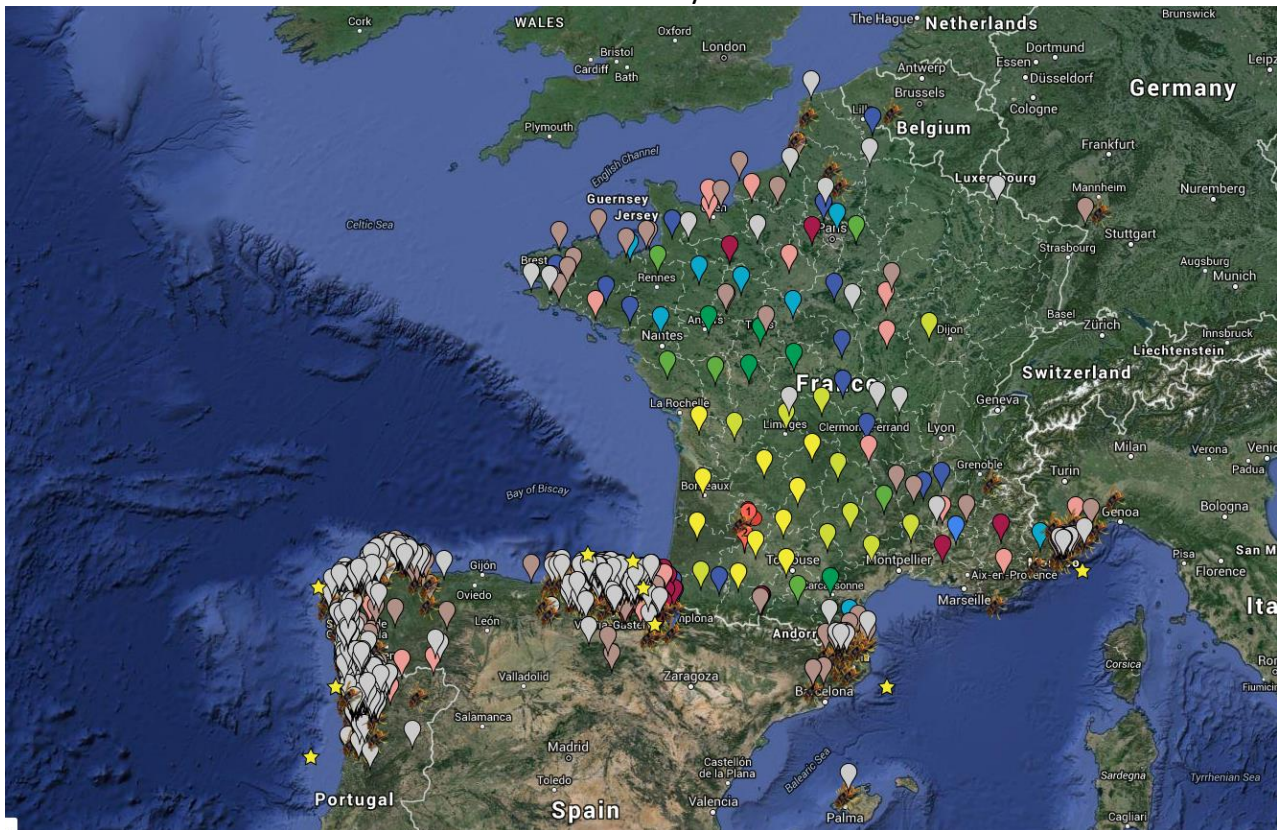
On a more positive note, we recruited two new Seasonal Bee Inspectors in 2015, Graham Royle to cover the Cheshire area and Mark McLoughlin for the Wirral/Liverpool area.

We should hopefully be recruiting to fill Stewart Beattie's post in early 2016.



Update on Asian hornet and Small Hive Beetle in Europe

The Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*, continues to spread through North West France and this year has been reported in and around the area of Calais. It is of serious concern that this pest could make its own way or hitch a ride across the English Channel into the UK. With the amount of traffic entering the UK from Europe the Asian hornet could arrive almost anywhere, though the South and South East coasts remain most at risk. Contingency plans have been put into place and all attempts will be made to eradicate any incursion. However, to be successful, any developing nests established by fertile queens in spring must be located and destroyed before the next generation of queens is released. Beekeepers are at the forefront of surveillance for Asian hornet as it is quite likely to be observed hawking in front of bee hives, but any suspect sightings should be reported to the NBU and the Non-Native species secretariat (NNSS) at alernonnative@ceh.ac.uk. An identification sheet for the Asian hornet and details of monitoring traps are available as downloads from BeeBase. The open access Google map is regularly updated to show the continuing spread of Asian hornet in Europe. Note that not all nests and sightings in France are recorded but the white markers show new areas affected this year.

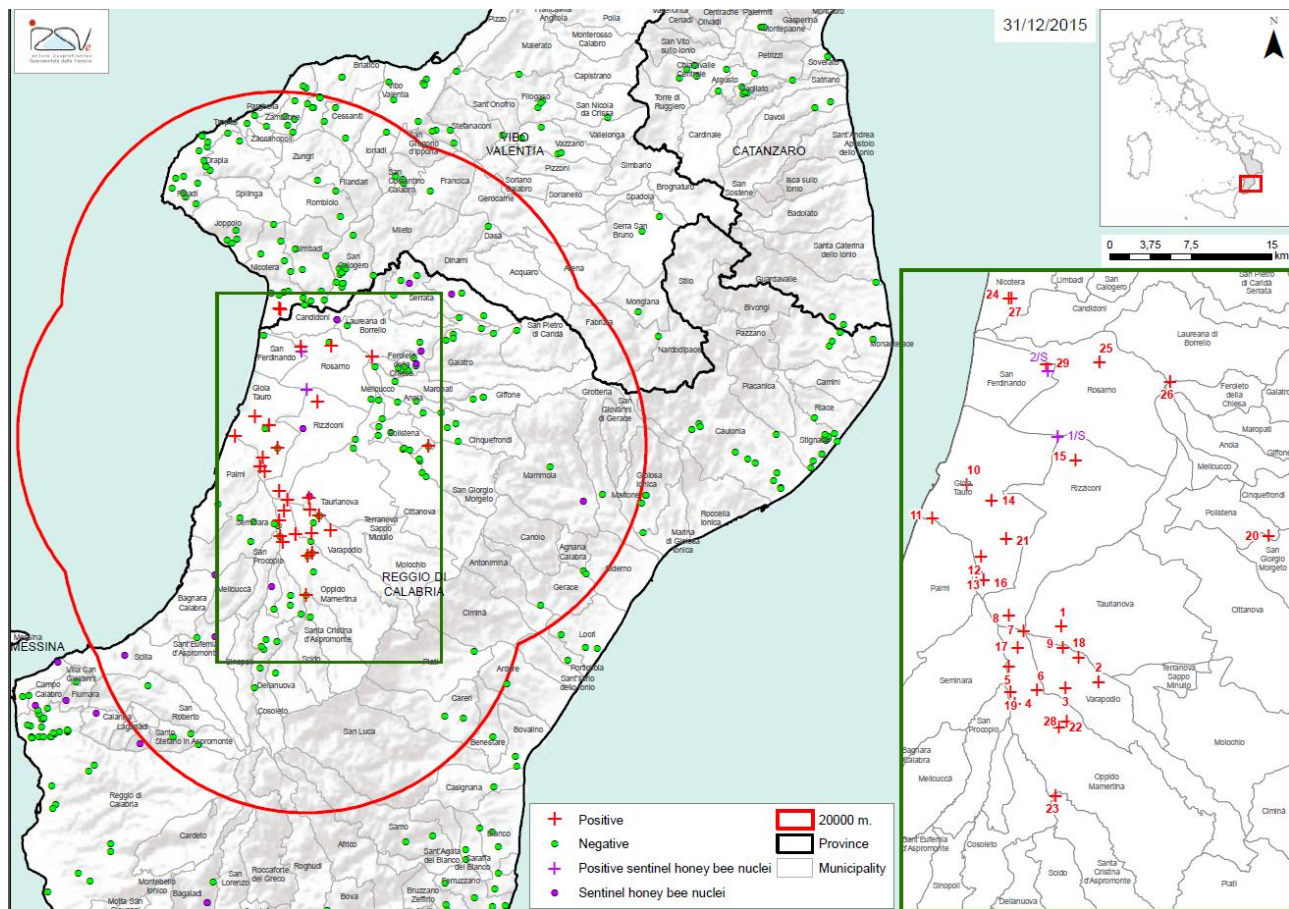


See <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zQZZvCfjCXXQo.k0cLRXyow4C0&msa=0>

Last year I reported on the detection in September of Small hive beetle (SHB) in South West Italy, near the port city of Gioia Tauro. For the rest of the year a rigorous inspection programme was instigated in Calabria and neighbouring regions. SHB was confirmed in 60 apiaries within the initial 20km protection zone and one in Sicily resulting from tracing of colonies moved there just prior to the first detection. All the colonies in the affected apiaries were destroyed (about 3,500 in total) and soil around the hives treated with insecticide. Inspections were recommenced after winter and, perhaps surprisingly, no further colonies were found to be infested until mid-September this year. Since then and to 31st December 2015 SHB has been found in 29 apiaries, all within the 20km protection zone set up in Calabria



last year (none within Sicily). A number of sentinel apiaries containing nucleus colonies have been set up in or near areas previously affected and adult beetles detected in two of them. The following map shows the situation for 2015 as of 31st December. A large number of apiaries in Sicily and the South of Italy have been inspected but no spread of SHB outside the initial area within the 20km protection zone has been detected



See <http://www.izsvenezie.com/aethina-tumida-in-italy/>

The NBU leaflet, 'The Small Hive Beetle – a serious threat to European apiculture' has recently been revised and is available as a download from BeeBase at www.nationalbeeunit.com or as a hard copy. Contingency plans are in place to deal with any incursion into the UK and were tested in the field this year in both England and Wales. Early detection is the key to the success of any attempt to eradicate SHB. As well as an increased focus on inspection by the NBU of imports (queens and colonies) and colonies situated in areas considered at increased risk of an incursion, it is essential that all beekeepers remain vigilant. It is also essential that all apiaries be registered on BeeBase (as well as beekeeper contact details) so that we can identify apiaries at risk in the event of an incursion of SHB into the UK and target control measures effectively.

I would like to thank members of the Sentinel Apiary Programme, for their diligence in monitoring their own colonies for exotic pests.



The most serious threat of the introduction of SHB into the UK remains the trade in bees and hive products. Import regulations are our main defence and it is essential that all beekeepers abide by them. If in any doubt, please contact the NBU office or me.

National Beehive Count.

The UK is committed to taking action to improve the state of our pollinators and recently published strategies set out how, by working together, we can ensure a thriving and sustainable pollinator population. One of the first things we need to do is to improve our current understanding of our honey bee population – how many there are and how healthy they are.

We are doing this by launching an annual National Beehive Count from the winter of 2016/17 onwards. The idea is to estimate the number of beehives going into winter dormancy. In order to work out the best way of estimating the number of bee hives (colonies) in the UK, a smaller, pilot count is taking place during the winter of 2015/16. For the pilot, we propose to use the information on beehives numbers held on BeeBase and other sources to derive our estimate of the national count.

This will also support the European Commission in its project to understand the state of beekeeping across the EU and as a mechanism to allocate funds to support the beekeeping sector from 2020 onwards.

We are asking all beekeepers to help by updating existing information about their beehives by 12th February 2016. We would like to record the number of overwintering hives so please update your figures to reflect the number of beehives within your apiaries as of 1st November 2015. Using this date will help us ensure consistency across the country by reflecting the national position at a single point in time. If for any reason you are unable to update your records before this date, your response will still be counted and will feed into autumn's Hive Count.

Please could you update or add any new contact details and apiary records, including how many colonies you own. If you have any other questions not covered by this please don't hesitate to contact the National Bee Unit office:-

e-mail: nbuoffice@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 303 0094

Beebase Registration

There is a common misunderstanding that beekeeper's who are members of a Beekeeping Association are automatically registered on Beebase, unfortunately this is not the case.

Generally you are registered on Beebase, if, you have had your bees inspected by an Appointed Bee Inspector, added to the database by an Appointed Bee Inspector (without an inspection), by the office staff at the National Bee Unit in York (with prior permission from the you or your Beekeeping Association) or registered on-line yourself.



We are currently trying to encourage as many beekeepers as possible to register on BeeBase. This will enable use to contact beekeepers for example, to undertake exotic pest surveillance work, to offer management advice and inspect their colonies for notifiable disease.

When notifiable disease is found, the Beebase 'sweep system' is used to search the area around the disease outbreak (normally 3km). This enables us to visit the beekeepers in the surrounding areas to make sure that their bees have not contracted the disease.

We then use our email disease alert system to make beekeepers aware that notifiable disease has been found in their area. **To be alerted you must have a correct/current email address on BeeBase.** If you are registered, please make sure that all your colony amounts, apiaries and your personal details are up to date.

If you are not already registered on BeeBase please register as soon as possible.

If you are unsure whether you are registered, or are having difficulty registering, please contact the NBU office on 0300 303 0094

Please note the National Bee Unit does not pass your personal information to third parties.

To access the site, please visit www.nationalbeeunit.com

Good Husbandry Days 2016

In 2016, the Northern inspection team will hopefully be organising one or two one-day 'Healthy Bee Days' events throughout the region. If you would like more information on organising and running one of these days please contact me on my details at the end of this report.

We will be asking associations to encourage 1st and 2nd year beekeepers on the course and particularly beekeepers that have not attended this type of training course before. Pre-booking to reserve a place will be required.

These events will be focus on 3 or 4 of the following: -

1. **Varroa control/management**
2. **Good husbandry/hygiene/barrier management**
3. **Diseased and 'confusion' comb recognition**
4. **Nosema diagnosis and management.**
5. **Practical hands on examination of honeybee colonies for disease.**
6. **Exotic Pest recognition and management**
7. **Comb changing**

I would like to apologise for the cancellation of the 2015 Good Husbandry Days, this was due to my ill health (see below).



My health

As some of you will know, I have not been well in 2015 and have not worked for most of the 2015 season. I had a heart attack in February 2015 and collapsed and hit my head in August, from this I suffered two brain haemorrhages. I am very slowly starting to feel better, but it has been difficult to come to terms with my illnesses, particularly as I have always been fit and healthy.

CONTACTS

Seasonal Bee Inspector Contacts

Merseyside/Wirral

Mr Mark McLoughlin (available April until the end of September)
Works mobile: 07500 891425
E-mail: mark.mcloughlin@apha.gsi.gov.uk
Working 3 days per week

Cumbria/North Lancashire

Please contact Regional Bee Inspector – Ian Molyneux

Lancashire and some parts of Greater Manchester

Mr John Zamorski (available April until end of September)
Works mobile: 07775 119446
E-mail: john.zamorski@apha.gsi.gov.uk
Working 3 days per week

Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland

Mr Ian Wallace (available April until end of September)
Works mobile: 07775 119445
E-mail: ian.wallace@apha.gsi.gov.uk
Working 5 days per week

Cheshire

Mr Graham Royle (available April until the end of September)
Works mobile: 07500 891423
E-mail: graham.royle@apha.gsi.gov.uk
Working 3 days per week



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

Details of disease incidence, research and news updates are regularly placed on the NBU website on www.nationalbeeunit.com

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