



Annual Bee Report 2014 – Northern Region

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

Foulbrood Disease

All the foulbrood disease found this season has been in the southern part of the region

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

- SJ 87 Mottram, 1 colony, 1 apiary (Cheshire)
- SJ 86 Congleton, 1 colony 1 apiary (Cheshire)

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

- SJ 79 Altrincham - 3 colonies, 1 apiary (Greater Manchester)
- SJ 56 Tarpoley - 5 colonies, 2 apiaries (Cheshire)
- SJ 86 Congleton - 1 colony, 1 apiary (Cheshire)
- SJ 58 Widness - 1 colony, 1 apiary (Cheshire)
- SJ 87 Mottram – 1 colony, 1 apiary (Cheshire)

As the 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. This was probably due to the mild winter (winter brood rearing) and the exceptional warm spring and summer, creating high levels of brood rearing and thus Varroa breeding.

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 and in some cases were resorting to the use of 'Apistan' and 'Bayvarol' strips again.

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

Please remember *Varroa* and its associated viruses are still the biggest killers of honey bee 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)

Early summer saw the start of reports of colonies affected by symptoms associated with CBPV. This viral disease of adult honey bee is thought to be widespread, but 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 quickly through the apiary and result in rapid depopulation of colonies affected. 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 recently revised NBU leaflet 'Common Pests, Diseases and Disorders of the Adult Honey Bee', available as a pdf download at www.nationalbeeunit.com.

Approved Bee Medicines

For your assistance, I list the current 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 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
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.

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 2014 Honey season

Reports from beekeepers, suggest that all parts of the Northern region 2014 had the best honey-gathering season for many years.

The warm winter and spring produced large colonies in spring and consequently these colonies were in the right state for reproducing (swarming) and most beekeepers spent most of their time in April, May and June trying to keep their colonies together.

Also, as a consequence many beekeepers and equipment suppliers ran out of boxes, frames and foundation.

The warm weather here in Bolton seemed to run straight through until October, with some warm rain in between, which helped the nectar flow from the Willow Herb and Balsam tremendously.

The Northern region average main crop yield was well up on last season at around 30 to 35lb (14 to 16kg) per honey producing colony. Some beekeepers reported 70 to 100lb, as the average crop, this was mainly due to their proximity to large amounts of Himalayan Balsam. The Heather crop was also much better this season, with an average of 30 to 35lb.

Honey prices increased slightly, flower honey retailing between £2.50 to £5.50 per lb dependent on demand and location.

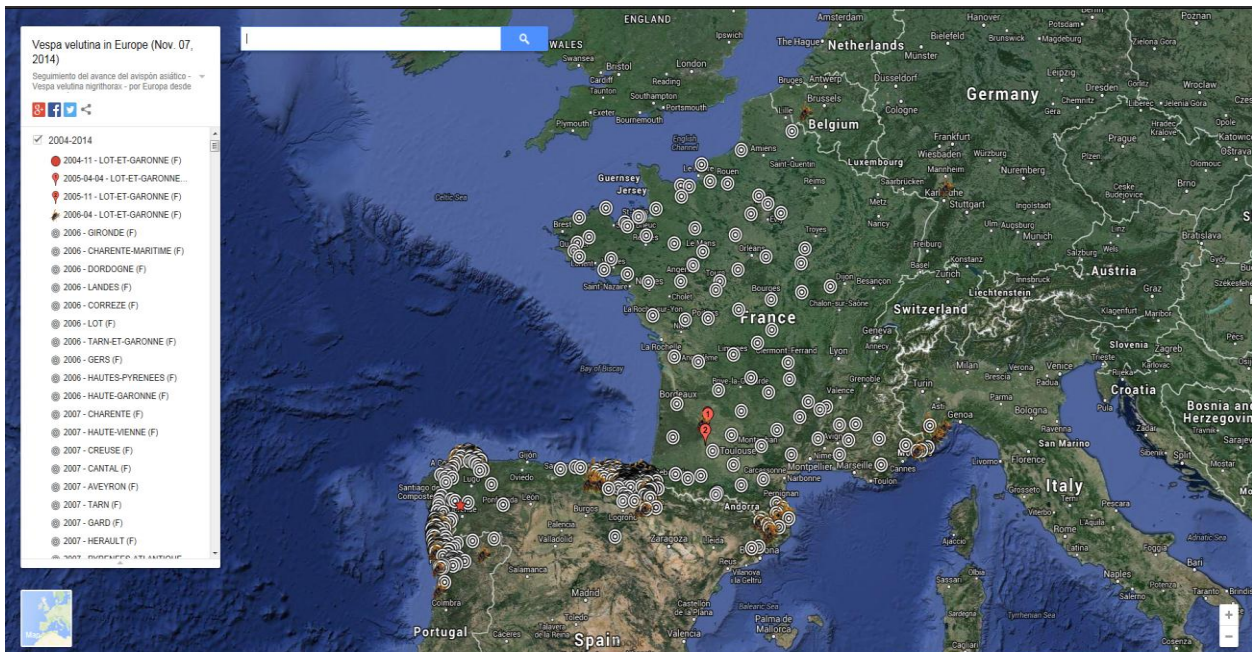
Staffing

Terry Ashley my Seasonal Bee Inspector for Cheshire, has decided to retire this season. Terry has been employed by DEFRA as a Seasonal Bee Inspector since 1993. He also helped out on Foot and Mouth (FAM) in 2001/2, undertaking blood testing of animals and becoming the 'Rat Man' in the Northern area, dealing with rat management on the FAM infected farms. Terry will be sadly missed by both beekeepers and his colleagues, where he was well respected for his calm manner, gentle bee handling, keen eye for disease and conscientious work ethic. Hopefully, Terry's post + a new post in the Merseyside/Wirral area will be advertised in the spring- time. Advertisements for the posts will be in the main bee periodicals (BeeCraft/BBKA news).



Asian hornet and Small Hive Beetle – Increased threats to beekeeping in the UK

The Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*, continues to spread through mainland Europe and in the ten years since being first reported in south west France, is now established throughout France, in Spain and Portugal and confirmed as present in Belgium, Italy and most recently, Germany. At the NBU we were braced for a report of an incursion of Asian hornet in the UK this year, particularly in the more susceptible south and south east of the country. However, all suspect sightings proved to be other species such as the European hornet, *Vespa crabro*, or wood wasps. Colleagues who have seen the Asian hornet at first hand in the south of France report on the continuing impact on beekeeping in the area – high losses due to direct predation and weakened colonies and significantly lower honey yields - despite all efforts to destroy any nests found. It is therefore imperative that we continue to monitor for this exotic pest and report any suspect sightings to the NBU and the Non-Native species secretariat (NNSS) at alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk. An identification sheet for the Asian hornet and details of monitoring traps are available as downloads from BeeBase.



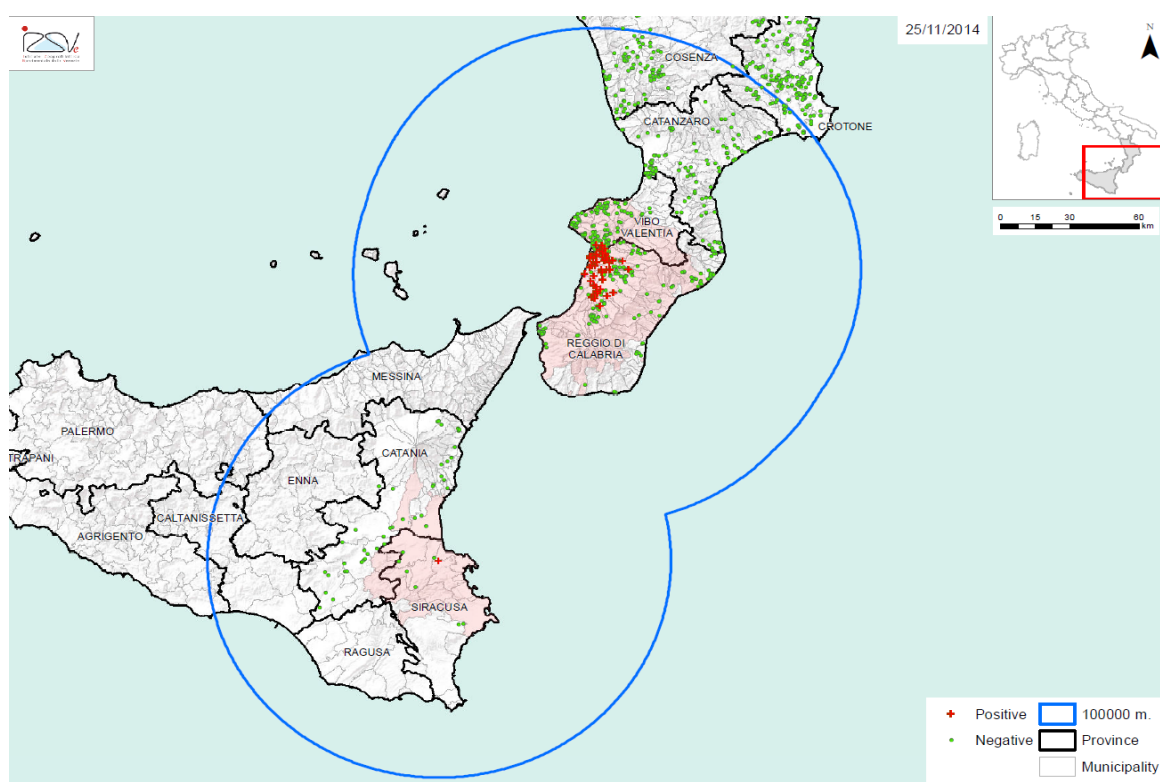
This is a map of the current spread of Asian hornet in Europe showing the initial incursion, and confirmed sightings of nests and hornets. Note the threat to the south coast of the UK. Ref.

<https://maps.google.de/maps/ms?msid=213339588704969522525.0004e8b11f3aba350c18e&msa=0>

In early September the Italian Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie, National Reference Laboratory for Apiculture (IZSV) confirmed the first detection of the presence of Small hive beetle (SHB) in south west Italy, in the port city of Gioia Tauro. Following the initial discovery of the SHB the Italian



authorities established a 20km radius protection zone and a 100km surveillance zone around this site and commenced a rigorous inspection programme in Calabria and neighbouring regions. SHB has since been confirmed in over 60 apiaries within the initial 20km protection zone indicating that the beetle has been present in the area long enough to go through at least one breeding cycle. There has also been a limited (so far) outbreak at one apiary in Sicily caused by movement of colonies in August from the Gioia Tauro area prior to discovery of the SHB. For the current situation concerning SHB in Italy please follow the link to the IZSV website, which can be found on the SHB page within the Pests and Diseases section of Beebase at www.nationalbeeunit.com.



Map of the current spread of SHB in southern Italy and Sicily. Ref.

<http://www.izsvenezie.it/images/stories/Pdf/apicoltura/aethina-tumida/2014-11-25/2014-11-25-zoom100km-en.pdf> and further information can be found in English at <https://sites.anses.fr/en/minisite/abeilles/detection-aethina-tumida-small-hive-italy>

Since 2011, there has been a substantial level of imports of package bees and queens from Italy into the UK including around 600 packages into England and Wales in 2014, though fortunately not from the region of Calabria where the initial incursion appears to have occurred. Fine weather in late September enabled the NBU to trace and inspect these colonies and no evidence of SHB was found.

However, now that the SHB is present in Europe the risk of introduction into the UK is far greater and all beekeepers should be both aware of the appearance of all life stages of the SHB and be examining their

colonies on a regular basis. Please refer to the NBU leaflet, 'The Small Hive Beetle – a serious threat to European apiculture' available as a download from Beebase at www.nationalbeeunit.com or as a hard copy.

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.

It is not known at present how the SHB was introduced into Southern Italy, though it is now thought that it arrived in bee imports into the region. Since 2003 the NBU and its Inspectors have increased statutory surveillance programmes to monitor for exotic pests including SHB at apiaries designated as 'at risk' due to their location near airports, freight depots and ports of entry for fruit and other foodstuffs, as well as risks associated with the movement of honey bees and bumble bees for trade.

In 2009 the NBU introduced the Sentinel Apiary Programme in which a selected group of beekeepers has been specifically monitoring their colonies for exotic pests and submitting samples of hive debris to the NBU for examination. Together these two initiatives greatly improve the chance of early interception of SHB if it were to be introduced to the UK, which is the only hope we have of eradicating the pest before it becomes established.

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 National Bee Unit office or me.

Note: It is a legal requirement, if importing queens, packages, nucs or full colonies from Europe, that you complete and send in a 'Bee 28' form (available on Beebase) to your nearest Animal Health Office, informing them of your impending import, it is also good practise to send a copy to the National Bee Unit office at APHA, Sand Hutton, York. YO41 1LZ.

Launch of the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

On 1st October 2014, the Animal and Plant Health Agency was launched following the merger of the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) with parts of the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) responsible for plant and bee health.

The merged Agency combines the animal health and welfare functions previously delivered by AHVLA with teams of field-based inspectors working in the areas of bee and plant health. It is also responsible

for maintaining the National Listing of new plant and seed varieties and for inspection and enforcement services related to the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms.

All parts of the new organisation have considerable experience in dealing with widespread disease outbreaks and pooling this experience and resource will allow best practice and greater resilience for the future. Creating a single organisation, with a single management structure and common identity, will ensure that the agency is best placed to exploit opportunities for synergies and efficiencies, increasing resilience, enhancing flexibility and strengthening the emergency-response capability.

The National Bee Unit Inspectorate is part of the new Agency, though Diagnostics and Research functions remain within FERA. Beekeepers should notice little change, apart from the new logo and e-mail addresses. Mike Brown remains head of the NBU and NBU Programme Support and Technical Advice remain at Sand Hutton, though there is a new telephone number and e-mail for the NBU office (0300 303 0094, nbuoffice@apha.gsi.gov.uk). Please visit www.nationalbeeunit.com contacts page for full details.

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 data base 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 contacted 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 current email address on Beebase.** If you are registered, please make sure that all your 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 any of your personal information to third parties.

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

Good Husbandry Days 2015

In 2015, the Northern inspection team will hopefully be organising 3 one-day 'Healthy Bee Days' events throughout the region. The first confirmed event takes place in the Cheshire/Wirral area on Saturday 30th May 2015. This will take place at Norton Priory, Tudor Road, Runcorn, WA7 1SX. For information/booking please contact Lesley Jacques at lesley.jacques@me.com

We are hoping to run two other events, one in Lancashire area and one event in or around the Hexham area, further details will be forwarded to your local association when it becomes available. 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**

CONTACTS

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Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

Seasonal Bee Inspector Contacts

Merseyside/Wirral

Contact Regional Bee Inspector Ian Molyneux

Cumbria/North Lancashire

Stewart Beattie (available April until end of September)

Works mobile: 07775 119443 (works 3 days per week)

e-mail: stewart.beattie@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Lancashire and some parts of Greater Manchester

John Zamorski (available April until end of September)

Works mobile: 07775 119446 (works 3 days per week)

e-mail: john.zamorski@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland

Mr Ian Wallace (available April until end of September)

Works mobile: 07775 119445 (works 5 days per week)

e-mail: ian.wallace@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Cheshire

Contact Regional Bee Inspector - Ian Molyneux

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