



National Bee Unit- South West Region 2016 Annual Report

The 2016 Season

The 2016 season has not been the best for honey production, with many beekeepers reporting a mediocre honey crop. The exception to this was those beekeepers who took their hives to the heather in August; some of them have reported exceptional crops.

The Bee Inspectors have had another busy year. The three new Seasonal Bee Inspectors who started in August of 2015 have been getting to know the beekeepers in their areas. Hazel Vallis is covering West Cornwall, Eric James East Cornwall and Leila Goss North Devon.

We have continued to deliver in partnership with the local Beekeeping Associations our 'Bee Health Days'. This season the Devon Bee Health Day took place at the Bandvulc tyre factory on the Lee Mills Industrial estate near Ivybridge. Plymouth Branch has a teaching apiary on the site and with kind permission of the owner we were able to run our workshops in some of the rooms of the factory. We ran further days with Somerset Beekeepers at the Edgar Hall Somerton and with Cornwall Beekeepers at the Town Hall at Wadebridge.

The Inspectors also had a presence at the Somerset Lecture day in February, Avon's 'Spring Day School' in April and Cornwall's 'Bit of a Do' (BOAD) in September.

We have continued with our inspection program for European (EFB) and American (AFB) Foulbrood; although the incidence of disease has on the whole been lower than 2015 there has been a slight increase in the number of (AFB) cases in Cornwall (see the graphs below). To help beekeepers improve their knowledge of disease, the Inspectors have given demonstrations at club teaching apiaries and are getting increasingly involved with 'Beekeeping Safaris' organised by local groups. If you are interested in running one in 2017, please contact your local Bee Inspector; there is a 'Fact Sheet' on BeeBase describing Bee Safari's.

We have again been carrying out Exotic Pest Inspections around risk points such as ports and airports to check for incursions of Small Hive Beetle (SHB), Tropilaelaps and Asian Hornet. In addition to this there are 18 Sentinel Apiaries around the region. This is where beekeepers that have an apiary near a risk point, assist the NBU by regularly monitoring their colonies for Exotic Pests and twice a year send in floor debris samples to be tested.



They are an important part of the surveillance program and I would like to thank them for their continued support.

Part of our work each season is to monitor imports of queens and package bees from the European Union (EU) and Third Countries (Argentina, Australia and New Zealand). Again this year we saw a large number of packages imported from Italy, some of which were bought by beekeepers in the South West (SW) region. These were inspected for SHB as they were decanted into hives and fortunately nothing was found (SHB was found in Southern Italy in 2014).

Every year the National Bee Unit (NBU) carries out Contingency Exercises for Exotic Pests, this is used to practice the Contingency Plan that we have in place. Last season (August 2015) the SW team ran an exercise around Exeter airport.

This year it was the turn of the Southern Region and it was sprung on them without notice to simulate an actual event. To make the exercise even more true to real life, one of three samples prepared by NBU office was secretly spiked with some pieces of Small Hive Beetle before it was submitted to the laboratories for testing. The Laboratory test procedures worked and when the pieces were found the field exercise was initiated. Due to the high number of beekeepers in that area all of the available Bee Inspectors from the South West team were drafted in to help.

In mid-September as we were preparing for the end of the season, which is usually the end of September, Asian Hornet was found in Gloucestershire. All of the available Inspectors from the SW were deployed to Tetbury to assist with this incursion (there is more information about this further down the report). Then in early October another find in North Somerset meant that we had to set up an additional Local Disease Command Centre (LDCC) to carry out further monitoring in that area. It is important to carry out exercises for this type of event, and we were pleased to have been so well prepared when it happened ; however there is no substitute for the 'real thing' and this winter we will be looking at the lessons identified from these two incursions.



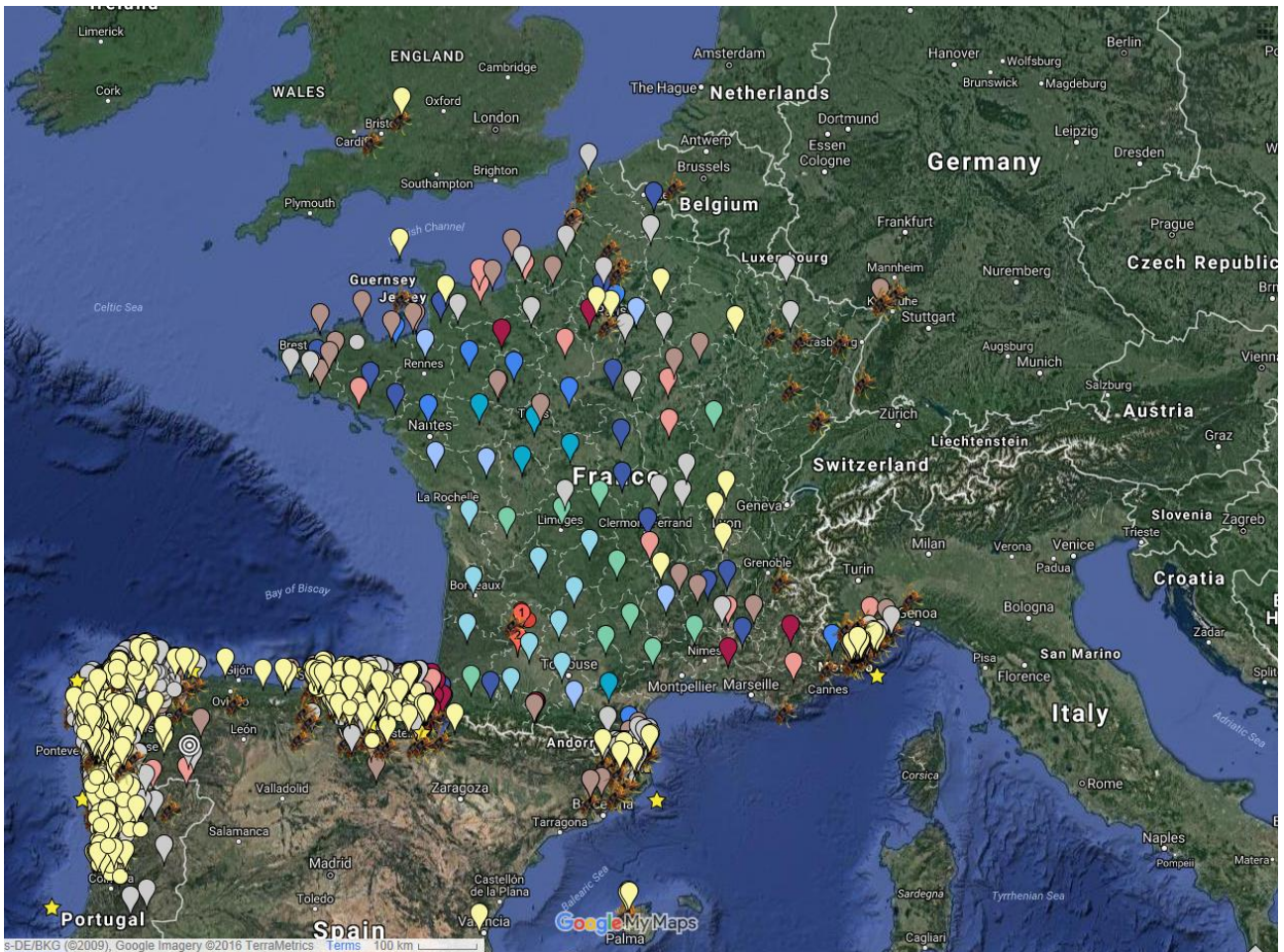
Imports into England, Scotland and Wales for 2016

The 2015 figures are in brackets for comparison:

- 13,921 Queens imported from the EU (10,434)
- 1,924 Packages of Bees imported from the EU of which 1,354 were from Italy (2,393 of which 1,862 were from Italy)
- 23 Nucs imported from the EU (225)
- 0 Full colonies imported from the EU (16)
- 335 Queens from Third Countries –Argentina (520, also Argentina)

Update on Asian hornet and Small Hive Beetle in Europe

A natural or assisted spread of the Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*, from mainland Europe into the UK had been anticipated and a Contingency Plan put in place to deal with any confirmed incursion. The map below illustrate shows the continuing spread of Asian hornet in Europe (updated November 2016), including the first incursion into the British Isles in the Crown dependencies of Alderney and Jersey and subsequent incursions in the UK in Gloucestershire and North Somerset.



<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?msa=0&mid=1jRfoi4oF6GmiGRgbXuD71Qpbw8s&ll=46.60925415505642%2C2.689161067645273&z=6>

The recent Defra press release <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-outbreak-contained-in-gloucestershire-and-somerset> confirms the destruction of the nest found at Tetbury, Gloucestershire and no subsequent Asian hornet activity in this area or that of the two individual sightings in North Somerset (both dead specimens). Further details and pictures of the nest at Tetbury can be found on BeeBase 'recent news'. <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#177>



Photograph of the Tetbury Asian Hornet nest 55 feet above the ground



With the amount of traffic, both commercial and private, entering the UK from Europe, further incursions are highly likely and as experience has shown, could occur anywhere in the UK, not just in the higher risk areas along the South and South East coasts. The NBU will be assisting beekeepers in placing hornet traps in the affected areas early next year but all beekeepers are advised to put out monitoring traps with a sweet bait in apiaries in late winter. Experience in France has shown that these are highly attractive to queen hornets coming out of hibernation. These should be checked regularly, preferably daily so that non-target species can be released, and any suspect sightings reported to the Non-Native Species Secretariat at alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk and the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector. A fact sheet detailing a suitable home-made monitoring trap can be found on BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>



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An updated identification sheet for the Asian hornet and further information on the Asian hornet can also be found on the dedicated pages on BeeBase at

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208>



There are also some Asian Hornet videos available for viewing on the APHA YouTube channel which may be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLouExecY1KnfANGcLUd2D6KkLRHEn_-T

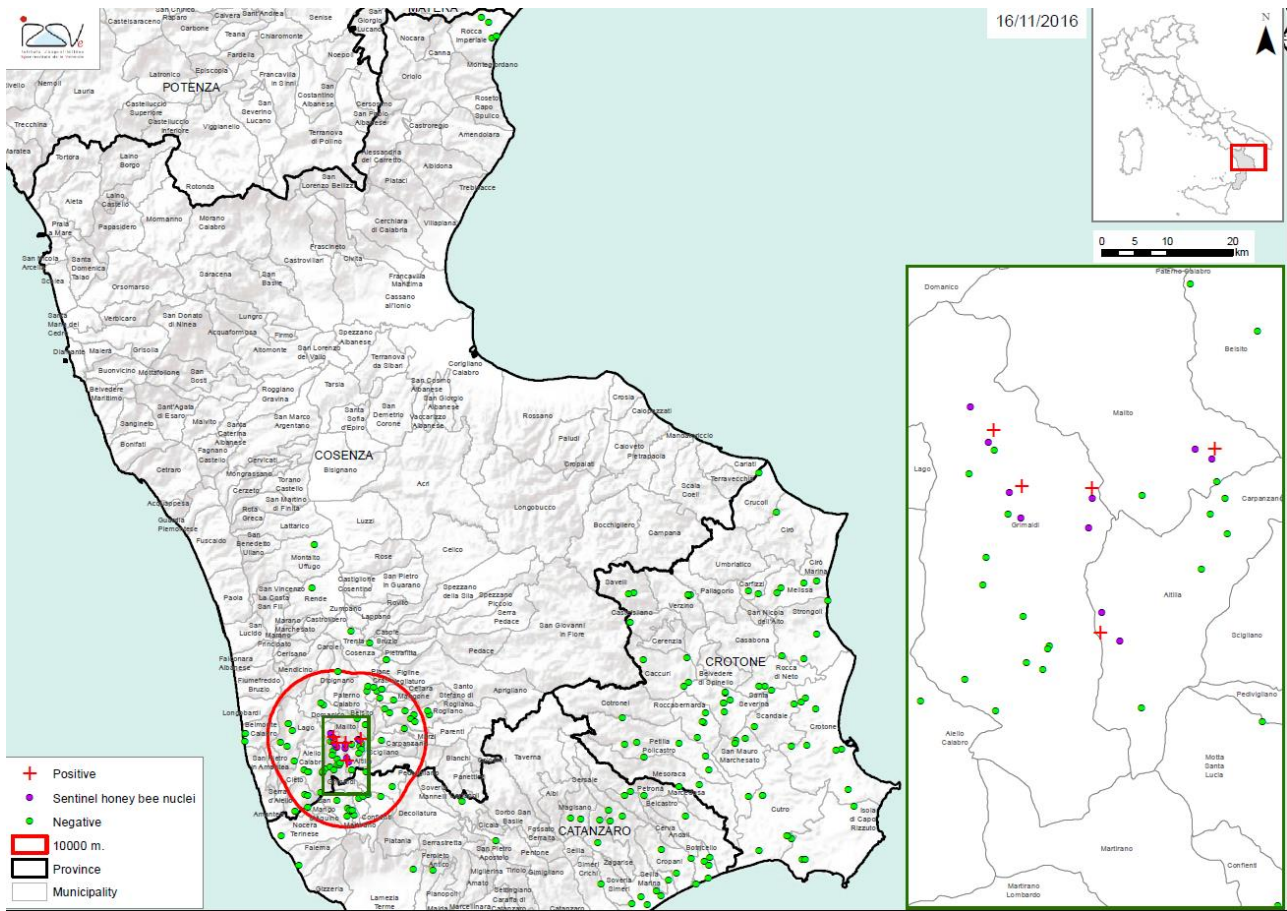
Small Hive Beetle

In July this year we had the unwelcome news of a further outbreak of Small Hive Beetle about 100km north of the original finding near Gioia Tauro in Calabria, South West Italy. It is understood that this outbreak was found after the Italian authorities became aware of and traced an illegal movement of a significant number of colonies from the restricted area to several apiaries in the province of Cosenza, Calabria.

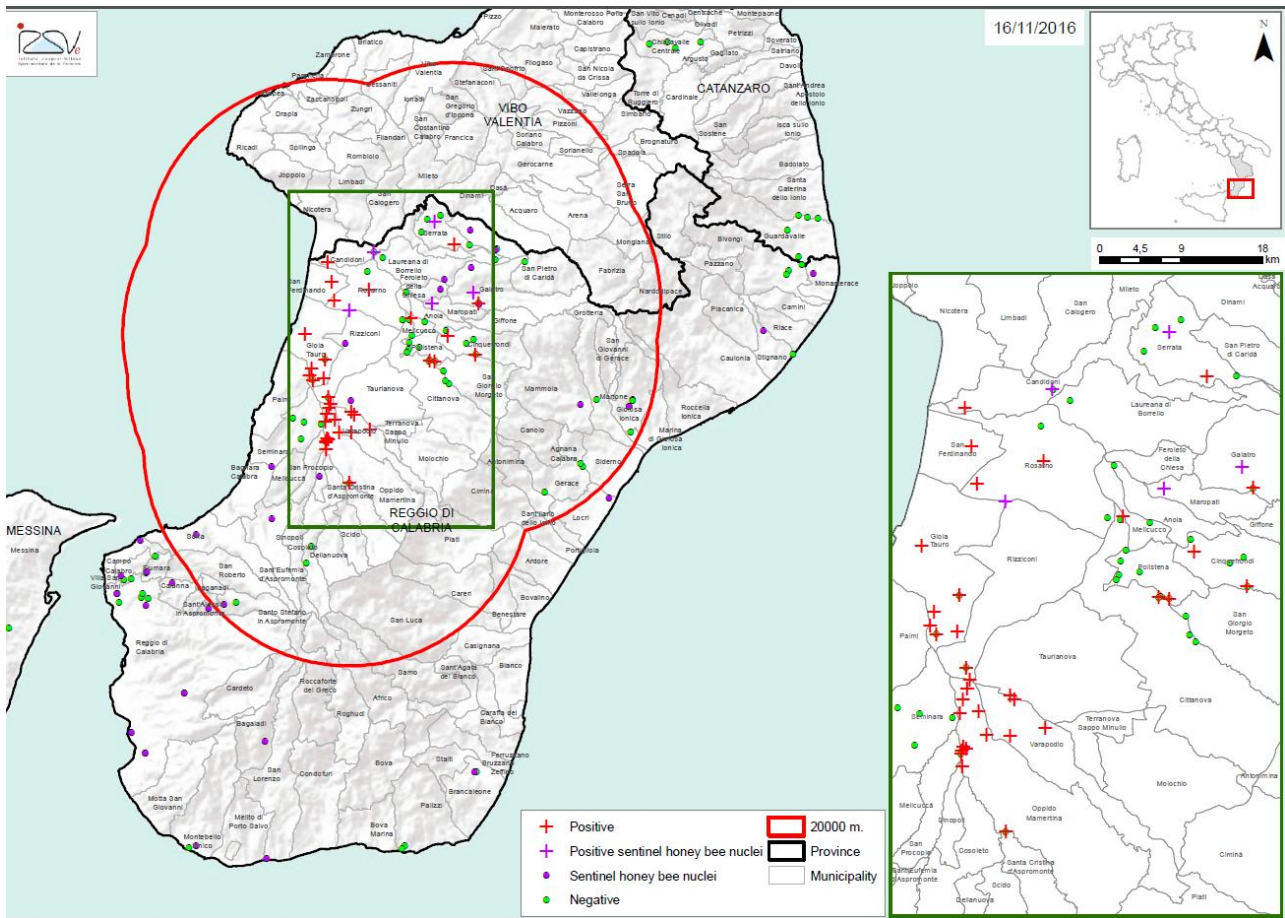
All the colonies were destroyed and inspections of surrounding apiaries commenced. A small number of adult beetles have since been found in one other apiary close by. Only time will tell whether the prompt action has eradicated SHB from this area as (so far) appears to be the case for Sicily where colonies were moved just before the first out-break was discovered.



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A large number of sentinel apiaries have been set up in Calabria and Sicily, near apiary sites where SHB has been previously found and to monitor for any spread into other areas. Once again this year there was little found until late summer, apart from some adult beetles and one larva picked up in a small number of sentinel colonies in Calabria. However, since September and to date (16/11/16) another 34 apiaries within the original protection zone have been found to be infested with a significant cluster to the south of Gioia Tauro.



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

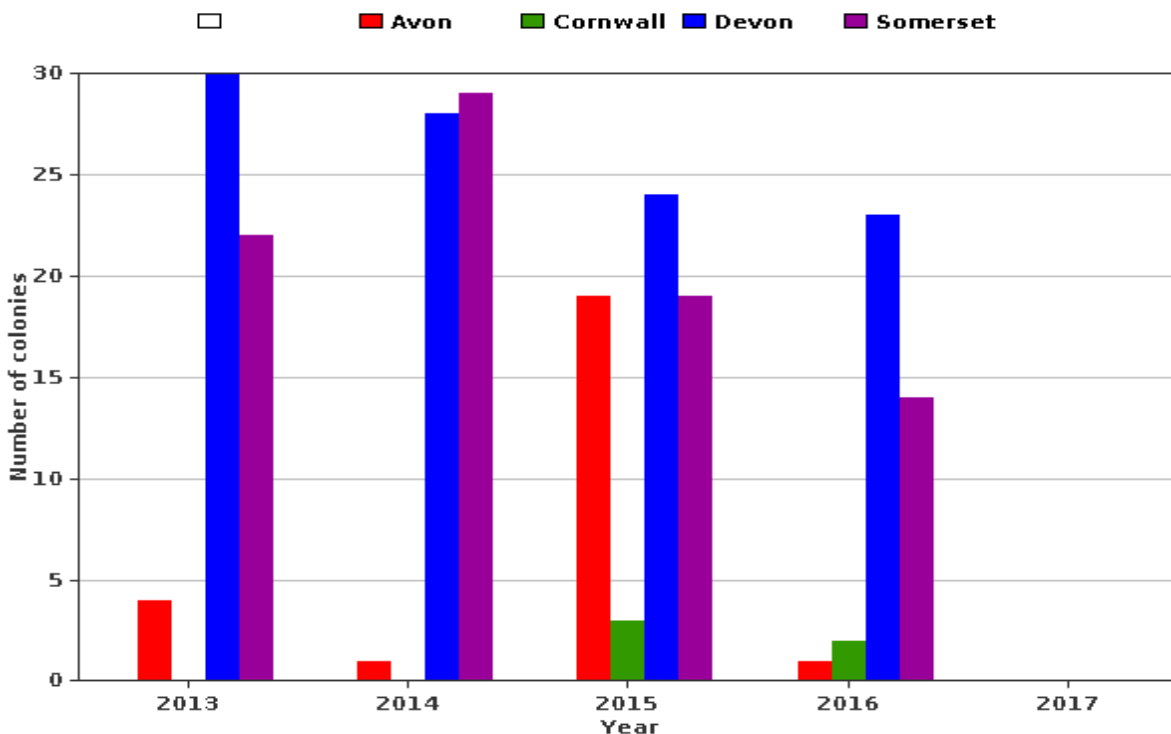
Despite considerable effort it is apparent that the Italian authorities have not yet managed to eradicate SHB from southern Italy, demonstrating the absolute necessity for the earliest detection of an incursion for this to be possible. The NBU continues to step up monitoring for SHB under the exotic pest surveillance programme at apiaries within England and Wales near to identified risk points for incursion. I am thankful to those beekeepers who add to the surveillance effort by being part of the Sentinel Apiary programme but I would encourage all beekeepers to make themselves aware of the signs of SHB and monitoring techniques as described in 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.



I make no apology for mentioning once again how essential it is that all apiaries are 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. Self-registration is free via the link at www.nationalbeeunit.com, or you can register by contacting the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector. It is also essential that all beekeepers abide by UK regulations for the import of bees from Europe and elsewhere, including submitting an Importer Notification Form, either on-line or to the NBU office so that we are able to follow up on imports. It is of course illegal to import bees, queens or any bee-related products from within the 100km zone around the affected areas. Further details can be found on the Imports/Exports pages of BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=47>

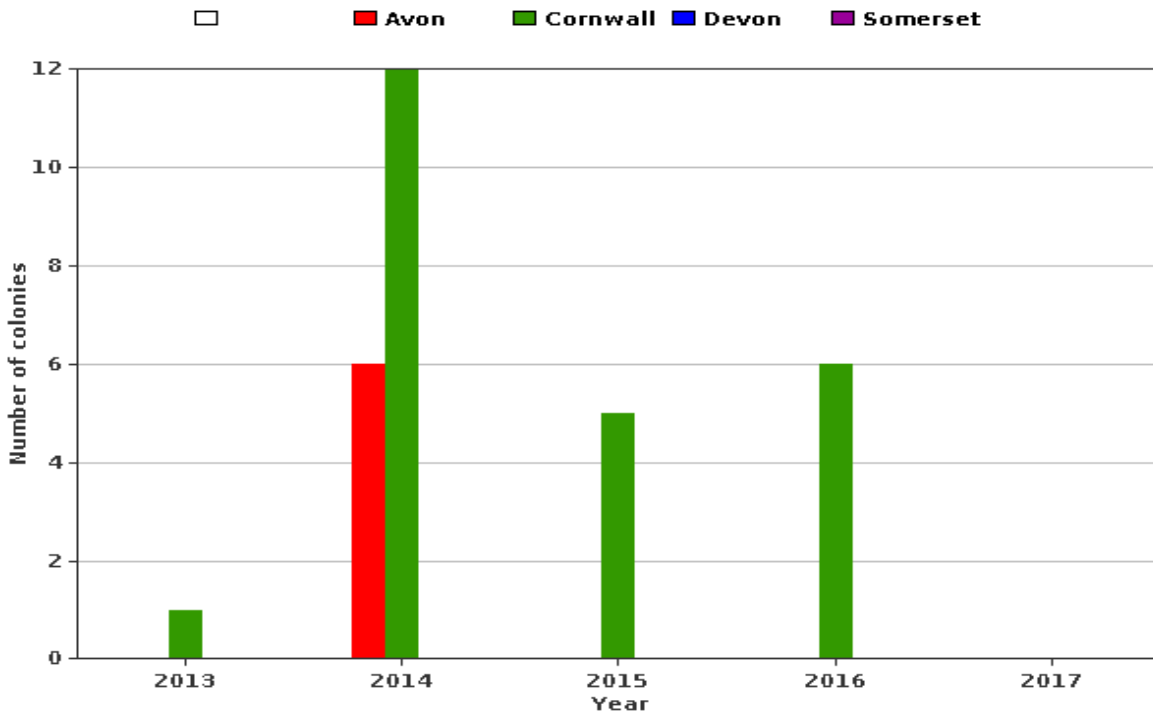
Foulbrood Disease for 2016 in the SW Region

Regional trends of EFB





Regional trends of AFB



Further details and mapping can be found on the disease incidence pages of BeeBase at www.nationalbeeunit.com. It is recommended that these are checked regularly to see if there is any foulbrood disease close by.

All beekeepers registered on BeeBase with an email address will receive an automatic email alert if disease is found within 3km of the registered apiary. If you are self-registered, please ensure that you keep your apiary records up to date or contact me if you are unsure. Self-registration is recommended as it also gives beekeepers secure password protected access to personal details and inspection records.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Seasonal Bee Inspectors who make up the SW team for all their hard work during the past year.

The new season will start on 1st April 2017 and from that date their contact details will be as follows:



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If you have any concerns prior to the 1st of April then please contact me:

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National Bee Unit-Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

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