

South-East Honey Survey 2010

As usual, I would like to start my report by thanking all the beekeepers that have taken the trouble to respond to my request for honey crop and price statistics. This year the number of responses was similar to last year at 240 which again makes some of the averages sensible. As you can see from the figures below, 94 from the 240 did not give prices for honey but I am still happy to accept the figures and include the average honey take per colony. Some of these beekeepers do not sell any of their honey and may feel they are being excluded from the survey. If this applies to you please just make a note on the form, I'm happy to receive any information you are willing to give.

The average take per colony was better than last year at 44lbs per colony, nearly equalling that of 2008 (47lbs). The early nectar flows were good and in many areas there was also a good main summer crop. Again, as last year the honey flow stopped abruptly around the middle of July, allowing me to extract supers, dry them and have my first varroa treatment on by 8th August. This sudden and relatively early cessation of the summer flow now seems to be a feature of rural beekeeping in the South East area. Of course, I know that for those of you in urban areas, the flow may well continue into August and September but this does then give you difficult choices about the timing of varroa control.

In the discussion below, I have made comparison with the final results from the previous survey asking the same questions about the 2009 season, so that you can compare this directly to last year's survey.

Results 2010

- **Average Honey Yield per colony:**
240 replies ranging from 0.0lb to 211.0 per colony
2010 average = 44lb (2009 = 35lb)
- **Direct Sales Price (Flower):**
146 replies ranging from £2.00/lb to £10.00/lb
2010 average = £4.31/lb (2009 = £3.96/lb)
- **Wholesale Honey Price (Flower):**
50 replies ranging from £2.50/lb to £6.00/lb
2010 average = £3.73/lb (2009 = £3.50/lb)
- **Bulk Honey Price (Flower):**
6 replies ranging from £2.00/lb to £3.50/lb
2010 average = £2.43/lb (2009 = £2.40/lb)
- **Cut comb:**
18 replies were received ranging from £3.50/lb to £10.00/lb.
2010 average = £7.45/lb (2009 = £7.78/lb)

Discussion

These results are compiled from beekeepers owning between 1 and 100 colonies with total yields between 0lbs and 8000lbs. The highest yield per colony (211lb) came from a beekeeper with 1 colony, well done to them! There is the usual wide variation in reported average honey yields – from 0 to 211lbs per colony. In fact 10 responses gave a zero return, some of which were new to the craft this season, I hope that they will be able to respond next year with improving figures. The average yield, 44lb, is a reasonable increase over the previous year's figure (36lb), which, I think, is explained by the wet winter leaving plenty of groundwater, for the warmer, drier weather of the summer.

Direct sale to customers is always the commonest method of honey sales - 146 respondents provided a figure for this. As usual there is a wide price range, from £2.00/lb to 10.00/lb. The average price this year has finally broken the £4.00 barrier at £4.31/lb and is much nearer the sort of price that beekeepers should be asking for a premium product. Using figures from this survey, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £189.64 when sold direct at average price. (2009 = £138.60)

50 replies indicated selling honey wholesale to a retailer. I notice a rising trend of beekeepers selling to retailers over recent years. At the average wholesale price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £164.12. (2009 = £122.50)

6 contributors sold honey in bulk. At the average bulk price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £106.92. (2009 = £84.00)

Out of the 240 replies, 18 indicated selling cut-comb honey and it is assumed that the majority of this cut-comb is sold direct. This year the price per pound has dropped slightly to £7.45. At average cut comb price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £327.80 (2009 = £272.30)

Overall, direct sales honey prices in 2010 have increased by approx 8.84% over 2009 prices to an all time high for honey prices recorded by this survey. The wholesale honey price increased by 23p, whilst the bulk price remained steady, only increasing by 3p.

Last year I had an enquiry about the total honey crop figures from the survey, so this year I will include these:

Total number of beekeepers	240
Total number of colonies	1251 (on 31 st August 2010)
Total honey crop	55558lbs
Of which	
Heather honey	30lbs
Cut comb	796lbs
Flower honey	54730lbs

This year, as last year, I have obtained figures for other regions so that you may make a comparison. These regions are the administrative regions of the National Bee Unit and can be found on the NBU website: www.nationalbeeunit.com



Region	Flower Wholesale £/lb	Flower Direct Sales £/lb	Flower Bulk Sales £/lb	Cut comb £/lb	Maincrop yield (lb)
Western	£3.07	£4.35	£2.30	£9.20	88
Wales	£3.90	£5.40	£2.50	£8.48	22
Northern	£3.94	£4.30	£2.66	£10.05	48
South East	£3.71	£4.31	£2.43	£7.40	46
Southern	£3.54	£4.13	£3.00	£6.85	33
Eastern	£3.25	£4.50	£2.20	£6.00	40
South West	£3.50	£4.32	£1.82	£7.73	44
North East	£3.62	£4.29	£2.25	£6.16	70
Average	£3.57	£4.45	£2.40	£7.73	49

This year the direct honey sales price for the SE is just below the average for England and Wales as a whole. Once again, I still feel that there is room for a higher price, which I believe should now be approaching £5 per pound. Remember how much time, effort and cost go into putting that honey in the jar, and sell your honey as a locally produced, premium product.

Alan Byham
 S.E. Regional Bee Inspector
 National Bee Unit
 Tel: 01306 611016
 Email: alan.byham@fera.gsi.gov.uk
 Website: www.nationalbeeunit.com