

National Bee Unit – Southern Region

A review of the 2011 season

December 2011

The Season

This year was one of extremes with a warm spring, a good summer and a mild autumn. There is always lots of local variation but in the South of the region this led to good honey crops however in other areas there was a drought in the summer which led to lower nectar yields and many hives consumed all their remaining stores. The heather in the New Forest yielded very well and some beekeepers were struggling to keep up with the bee's requirement for empty supers.

It has been a mild autumn and the bees have been rearing brood for longer than usual. This has two consequences; firstly they will have used up a lot of the honey in the hive, and secondly the extended brood rearing will have given time for Varroa to increase in number since the late summer treatments. Therefore please check your colonies for the amount of stores they have and feed with fondant if necessary. Also please monitor your colonies for the level of Varroa and if necessary use a winter treatment.

The Southern Team

As usual the season began with our technical training seminar at the Food and Environment Agency (FERA) at Sand Hutton, York. This is an intensive 3 day training session for bee inspectors and covers the new practices and requirements that will be expected in the coming season. Every year we have different targets and tasks and this year the focus was on completing the Random Apiary Survey (RAS) and collecting samples for one of the Insect Pollinators Initiative (IPI) projects. This project was titled 'Modelling systems for managing bee disease: the epidemiology of EFB' and involved the collection of combs from EFB infected colonies and for comparison purposes the collection of combs from colonies in the same apiary and from colonies in apiaries where no disease was found.

The sample collection for the RAS was completed by mid season all samples have been analysed and you can see the results from your own apiaries on the beekeeper record pages in BeeBase (accessed from the front page). There is a vast amount of data and the number crunching is ongoing and full results should be generated in spring 2012.

In 2011 we had seven Seasonal Bee Inspectors (SBI's) in the Southern region. However in mid season Bob Loades left us joining Thornes as the manager of their Windsor office, and at the end of the season Fraser Young left us to concentrate on his commercial beekeeping business. Both Bob and Fraser will be missed greatly by the Southern team and I thank them for their contribution over the past 3 years.

Current Team

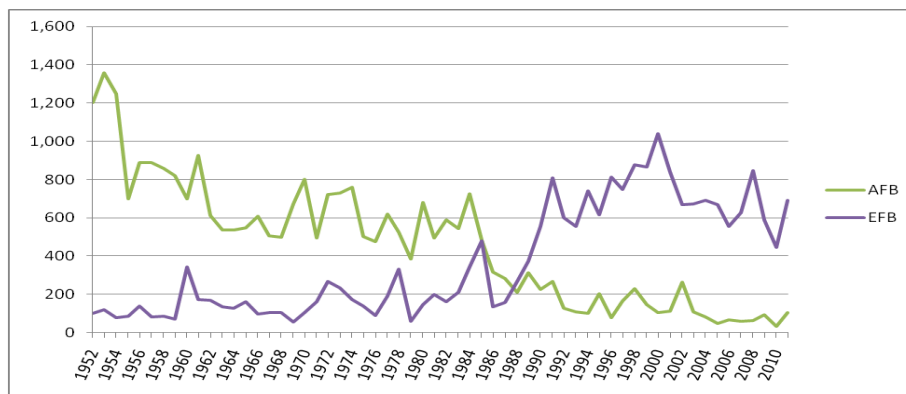
Margaret Holland	Northamptonshire	07775 119465
Robert Carpenter Turner	Wiltshire	07775 119464
Phil Spillane	Oxfordshire	07775 119470
Julian Parker	Buckinghamshire	07775 119469
Kevin Pope	Dorset	07775 119466

Please remember that the SBI's aren't employed by us in the winter months so please do not ring them until after the start of season on the 26th March 2012.

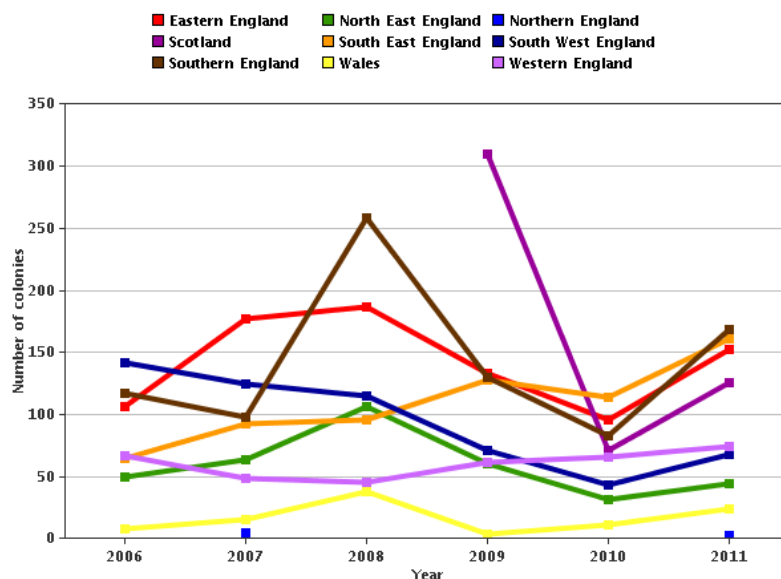
You may be aware of the recruitment freeze across the Civil Service but I am hopeful that we will be able to recruit 3 people to fill the empty posts in Berkshire, SW Hampshire and SE Hampshire. Therefore if anyone is interested in becoming a seasonal bee inspector in the Southern region, has good beekeeping experience, and lives in one of those areas, then please contact me for an informal discussion (01264 338694).

Inspection Programme

In 2011 in England, Scotland and Wales a total of 41,305 colonies were inspected in 7466 apiaries, and 821 colonies were diagnosed with EFB and 109 with AFB. As can be seen from the graph below (in England and Wales only as there was no bee inspectorate in Scotland before 2009) the trend of disease in recent years is still downwards although there is annual fluctuation.



AFB has declined to low levels but there is still quite a way to go with EFB. Below is a graph showing the number of colonies with EFB in each of the regions of the inspectorate over the last 5 years.

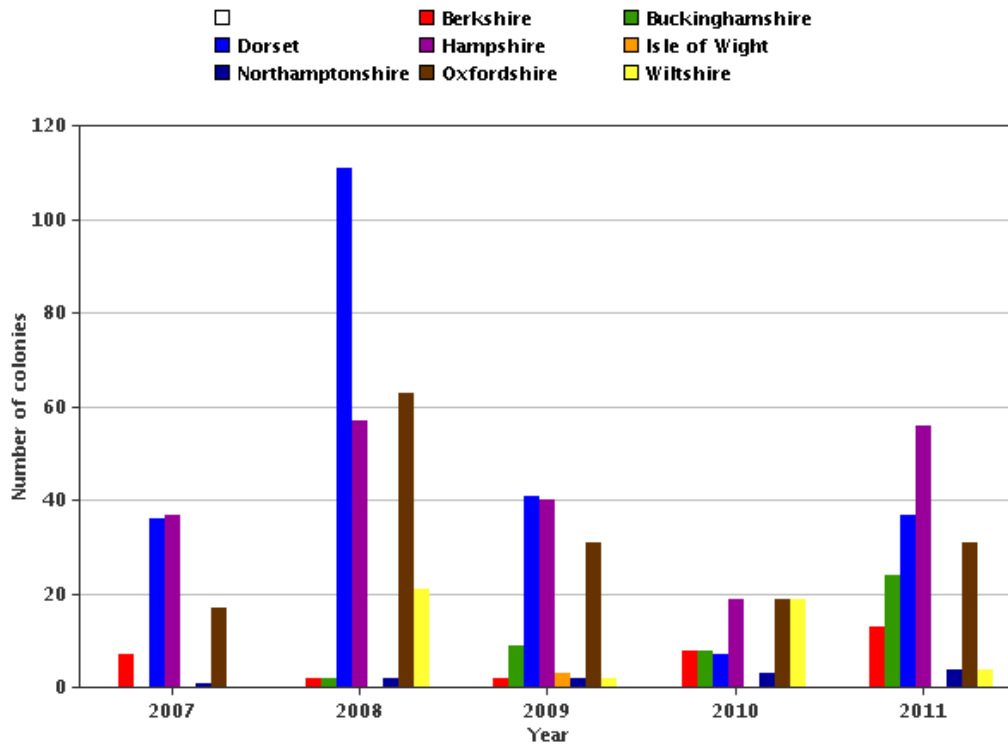


Unfortunately this year Southern region had the greatest number of colonies with EFB.

Regional Inspection and foulbrood summary

In 2011 the Southern region team inspected 5693 colonies in 1219 apiaries, and 169 colonies were diagnosed with EFB and 7 with AFB.

For comparison purposes below is a graph showing the number of colonies found with EFB in each county of Southern region over the last 5 years.



The table below shows the number of beekeepers, apiaries and colonies inspected in each county against the number found with EFB.

County	Beekeepers inspected			Apiaries inspected			Colonies inspected		
	No.	With EFB	% with EFB	No.	With EFB	% with EFB	No.	With EFB	% with EFB
Berkshire	55	5	9.1	66	5	7.6	446	13	2.9
Buckinghamshire	76	8	10.5	96	9	9.4	603	24	4.0
Dorset	138	12	8.7	205	16	7.8	1250	37	3.0
Hampshire	184	17	9.2	226	23	10.2	1178	56	4.8
Isle of Wight	9	0	0.0	12	0	0.0	57	0	0.0
Northamptonshire	83	2	2.4	103	3	2.9	450	4	0.9
Oxfordshire	95	10	10.5	140	18	12.9	1145	31	2.7
Wiltshire	112	2	1.8	130	2	1.5	553	4	0.7
Southern region Total	752	56	7.4	978	76	7.7	5682	169	3.0

Alternatively we can compare disease levels with the number of beekeepers, apiaries and colonies in each of the counties.

County	Beekeepers			Apiaries			Colonies		
	No.	With EFB	% with EFB	No.	With EFB	% with EFB	No.	With EFB	% with EFB
Berkshire	318	5	1.6	391	5	1.3	1531	13	0.8
Buckinghamshire	379	8	2.1	485	9	1.9	1775	24	1.4
Dorset	625	12	1.9	835	16	1.9	3623	37	1.0
Hampshire	988	17	1.7	1269	23	1.8	4222	56	1.3
Isle of Wight	103	0	0	129	0	0	643	0	0
Northamptonshire	263	2	0.8	376	3	0.8	1662	4	0.2
Oxfordshire	524	10	1.9	693	18	2.6	2909	31	1.1
Wiltshire	516	2	0.4	617	2	0.3	2280	4	0.2
Southern region Total	3716	56	1.5	4795	76	1.6	18645	169	0.9

Of course the real number of beekeepers, apiaries and colonies in Southern region isn't known, the figures above are only those registered on BeeBase. The increase in beekeepers over recent years has increased the workload placed upon the inspectorate and because of this we have less time for chasing beekeepers when disease turns up in an area. There is an assumption amongst new beekeepers that when they join an association that their details are automatically passed to us. Unfortunately this is not true in the majority of cases and please may I encourage everyone to check that they are registered on BeeBase.

Associations can pass their lists to us by making sure they comply with the data protection act by including a phrase on your membership renew form that states that your details will be passed to the NBU. If there isn't a similar statement on your renewal forms then your details have not been passed to us.

A benefit of being on BeeBase is that if notifiable disease occurs within 5km of any of your apiaries then an automatic email is sent to you. If appropriate we will then contact you to arrange an appointment to check your bees. BeeBase is constantly being improved and this winter the beekeeper record pages have been updated. This should allow the easier amendment of personal and apiary details by beekeepers. To ensure you receive warning when disease comes close to your bees please add any new apiaries and please ensure that your email address and contact details are correct.

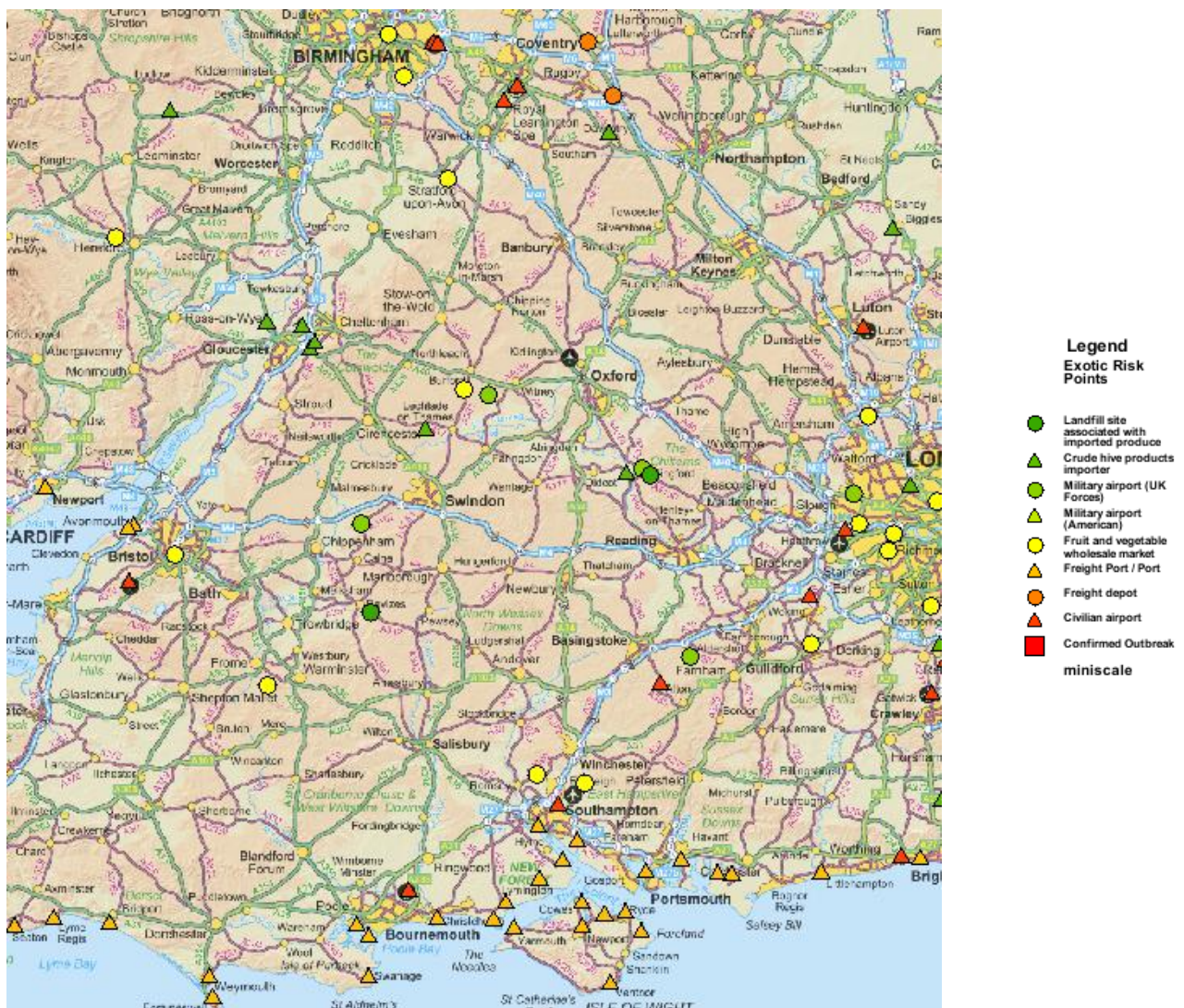
BeeBase can be found at www.nationalbeeunit.com and from the front page new beekeepers can sign up, and existing beekeepers can sign in to look at their apiary details. Alternatively you can ring either myself on 01264 338694, or the office at York on 01904 462510. If you require us to add apiaries please give us the postcode or the six figure grid reference of the apiary.

The following table shows the 10km squares in Southern region that had Foulbrood in 2011.

County	10 km square	Area name	Colonies with EFB	Colonies with AFB
Berkshire	SU46	Newbury	2	
	SU56	Thatcham	6	
	SU86	Crowthorne	1	
	SU87	White Waltham	3	
	SU88	Marlow	1	
Buckinghamshire	SP63	West Buckingham	8	5
	SP70	Haddenham	1	
	SP80	Wendover	2	
	SU89	High Wycombe	3	
	SU98	North Slough	10	
Dorset	ST80	Blandford Forum	1	
	ST81	Iwerne Minster	2	
	SU00	Ferndown	4	
	SU10	Ringwood	15	
	SY78	West Knighton	1	
	SY89	Bere Regis	1	
	SY99	Lytchett Matravers	2	
	SZ08	Brownsea Island	1	
	SZ09	West Bournemouth	10	
Hampshire	SU10	Ringwood	1	
	SU24	North Tidworth	1	
	SU31	Totton	2	
	SU33	Stockbridge	1	
	SU34	Andover	3	
	SU35	Hurstborne Tarrant	1	
	SU41	Southampton	1	
	SU43	Winchester North	4	
	SU45	Lichfield	5	
	SU51	Bishops Waltham	18	
	SU60	Portsmouth	5	
	SU62	West Meon	1	
	SU72	Petersfield	10	
	SU85	Farnborough	1	
	SZ39	Lymington	2	
Northamptonshire	SP63	West Buckingham	1	
	SP87	Kettering	1	
	SP96	Rushden	1	1
	TL09	Fotheringhay	2	
Oxfordshire	SP20	Broadwell	1	
	SP21	Burford	3	
	SP22	Kingham	1	
	SP30	Bampton	1	
	SP31	North Witney	1	1
	SP32	Enstone	2	
	SP33	Hook Norton	1	
	SP40	Cumnor	10	
	SP50	Oxford	4	
	SP51	Islip	7	
	SP70	Haddenham	1	
Wiltshire	ST86	Bradford on Avon	1	
	SU04	Shrewton	3	

Exotic pest surveillance programme

The map below shows the current risk locations registered on BeeBase. These are the places where the NBU considers there is an increased risk of the entry of exotic pests, such as Small Hive Beetle (SHB) and Tropilaelaps, and where inspectors will make higher numbers of inspections especially to look for them.



Further action to combat the entry of exotic pests has been the establishment of sentinel apiaries. In an area of risk a beekeeper is asked to check their colonies for exotic pests. All the necessary equipment and paperwork is supplied, and the beekeeper collects floor scrapings, according to a sampling programme, and sends these to the NBU laboratory at York for checking. SHB floor inserts are supplied and these are checked at normal colony inspections, anything unusual is sent to the NBU for identification. We (NBU) value this work by local beekeepers, as you check your colonies in a risk area many times in a season, whereas the inspector is only likely to visit once and may I add my thanks to all who take part in it.

Asian Hornet

There has been much interest in the Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*, and there have been many articles on them. The latest in BBKA news, Dec 2011, by Dr Gay Marris and Mike Brown of the NBU mentions the making of traps for catching the queen Asian hornets when they emerge in the spring. This could prove a useful method for monitoring the arrival of the Asian hornet and subsequently for reducing the amount of queens and therefore nests that are established in an area. The traps can be quite simply made and below is a photo of one I made this morning.



The lid at the bottom of the funnel should have a hole of no more than 7mm in diameter in order to prevent the entry of our native hornet *Vespa crabro*. The traps should be hung in trees from February at about head height and a mixture of beer and sugar can be used as bait. A small board above the funnel can be used to keep most of the rain out.

If you catch any specimens please report it and send a photo to alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk To ensure a rapid response please copy me in on all correspondence.

Educational events

This year the Southern team have been active at over 60 events, including giving a large number of lectures, apiary demonstrations and safaris. We also ran bee health workshops and represented the NBU at the National Honey Show, Weybridge.

All these events are an opportunity for us to meet beekeepers and, likewise, for you to meet with bee inspectors. They enable us to build links with associations and to further develop beekeepers knowledge of good husbandry along with helping to improve disease identification and prevention.

Finally I would like to thank the Seasonal Bee Inspectors of Southern Region for all their hard work and dedication in 2011; Margaret Holland, Robert Carpenter Turner, Julian Parker, Phil Spillane, Kevin Pope, Fraser Young & Bob Loades.

Nigel Semmence

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