



The Southern Region 2017 Season

2017 was a year that saw significant changes throughout the season for the Southern team. The changes started when Julian Parker was appointed National Bee Inspector following the retirement of Andy Wattam at the end of October 2016. After interviews in February, the Regional Role was taken on by Kevin Pope who many of you already know as he has been the Seasonal Inspector for Dorset for many years. In the early part of the season recruitment to fill vacant SBI roles was ongoing and in May we welcomed Bob Poole who took on Berkshire. At the beginning of July Kevin decided to step away from the RBI role to concentrate on his SBI role in Dorset and spend more time with the bees. Therefore, Rob Oliver who had been taken on to replace him, has taken on parts of East Dorset and West Hampshire for his first season. Also in mid-season, to provide RBI cover through the remainder of the season and the winter months, we (Meg Seymour (North Somerset and Avon, South-West Region) and Jonathan Palmer (Buckinghamshire)) jointly took on the Southern RBI role whilst also continuing to look after our respective areas and beekeepers. At the end of the season, the team said goodbye to Adrian Kelly who decided to retire after 6 years looking after West Hampshire. Latterly he had been covering East Hampshire for Debbie Burton who also left the team in 2017 after 6 years of working with the Bee Unit. We wish both Adrian and Debbie well in the future.

For the coming season, we continue with changes but hopefully to a full complement of staff and some stability for the region. We are saying goodbye to Gordon Bull who has been covering Northamptonshire for the last 2½ seasons, but our loss is Worcestershire's gain as Gordon will move to Western Region in 2018 and take on that county. As a result of Gordon's change of region, Bob Poole will be taking on Northamptonshire (where he lives) in 2018, a move that will cut down on Bob's heroic commutes to Berkshire. All of which leaves two SBI vacancies for 2018; one in East Hampshire and one in Northern Hampshire and Berkshire. Recruitment started for these posts in November 2017 and we aim to have these filled and the region back up to strength for the start of the 2018 season. Lastly, Jonathan and Meg plan to return to their SBI responsibilities in 2018 and so we are recruiting for a new Southern RBI to also be in post ideally before the start of the Bee Inspecting season.

Staffing issues aside, the beginning of the 2017 beekeeping season was characterised in many areas by higher varroa loads than normal as a result of the mild winter. The bees carried on breeding and therefore so did the mites which were therefore less well controlled by winter treatments. As described in a little more detail below, foulbrood disease levels were broadly similar to last year although vacancies during the season may mean some has been missed. Imports, especially of queens, have risen again resulting in additional inspection workload across the region – again see further information in the graphics produced from BeeBase records.

As in 2016 an unannounced Exotic Pest contingency exercise was run to test capabilities of the NBU to an outbreak. This year the "outbreak" of Small Hive Beetle was located in Leicestershire and a number of Southern SBIs took part in this valuable test and learning opportunity. Again as last year, we finished the season with a confirmed Asian Hornet nest in North Devon which was located and dealt with swiftly, reflecting the learnings from last year's outbreak at Tetbury. More on this below.

Update on Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle in Europe

Asian Hornet

Early this year surveillance for the Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*, was resumed and traps deployed in Gloucestershire and North Somerset following last year's discovery and destruction of a nest at Tetbury and individual hornets found in North Somerset. No further hornets have been found in those areas but an insect caught flying inside a large distribution warehouse near Glasgow, Scotland in March 2017 was confirmed as an Asian hornet. It can only be assumed that this hornet had travelled all the way from Europe inside a container and flew out into the warehouse when goods were unloaded. This is a stark reminder that Asian hornet (and other exotic pests) could arrive almost anywhere in the UK given the vast volume of traffic and goods arriving in the UK from across the channel and other countries where exotic pests are endemic. The Scottish incursion could well have been a mated queen emerging from hibernation and if released into the open, may have been able to establish a nest. All beekeepers are advised to monitor for Asian hornet using a suitable trap. Links to a leaflet (and a YouTube video) describing how to make one are here: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208> Monitoring the traps is advised in areas away from a confirmed outbreak as regular inspection will allow you to release other beneficial insects unharmed.

Further sightings of Asian hornets have been confirmed this year in the Channel Islands with 9 nests in various stages of development found and destroyed right through the season on Jersey. Any suspect sightings of the Asian hornet should be reported to the Native Species Secretariat at alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk and the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector. Many reports of possible sightings in the UK have been received this year and these are triaged in order that our limited resources (inspectors) are deployed to best effect. A photograph and/or dead specimen helps this process enormously. However, only one sighting that was reported by a beekeeper in late September near Woolacombe in North Devon was identified as an Asian hornet. Once a positive confirmation was made, the NBU Contingency Plan was activated and Bee Inspectors deployed in the area. Aided by lessons learned last year during the outbreak in Tetbury and perhaps also somewhat easier terrain to survey, the nest was quickly discovered and destroyed. The nest wasn't in a typical position, high up in a tree as in Tetbury, but hidden within a hedge. Cutting away the foliage revealed a nest of about 50 cm diameter (see picture right). Surveillance in the area for 13 days out to 10km after destruction of the nest has shown no further hornet activity.



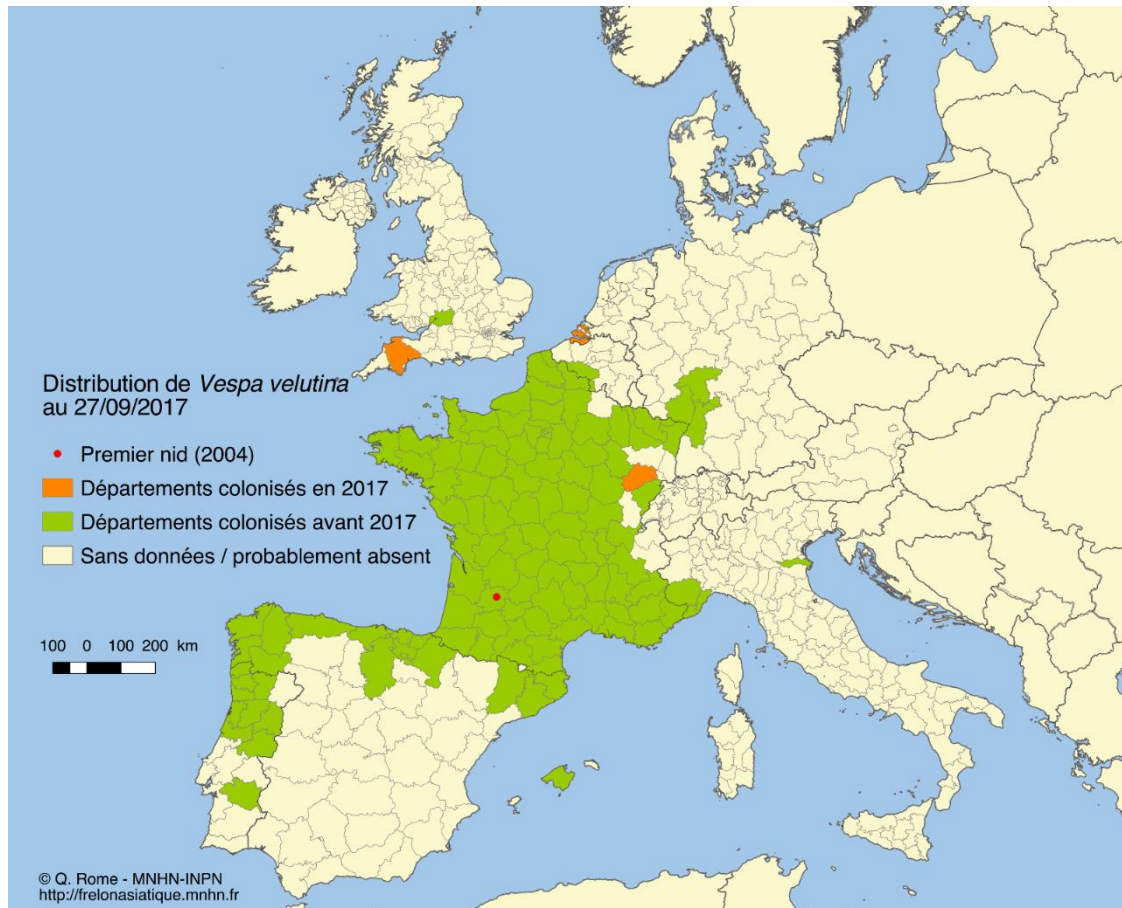
Initial laboratory examination and analysis of the nest indicate that this was a fresh incursion from the French Asian hornet population and not directly related to the nest discovered in Tetbury last year. DNA tests on the brood show that reproduction had reached the stage of drone eggs only. As with other *Vespa* species, drones are produced before gynes (virgin queens) and so we can be fairly certain that this nest was destroyed before it reached the stage of releasing queens capable of setting up new colonies next spring.



Asian Hornet hawking for returning foragers outside of a hive in France.

Photo courtesy of Jean Haxaire

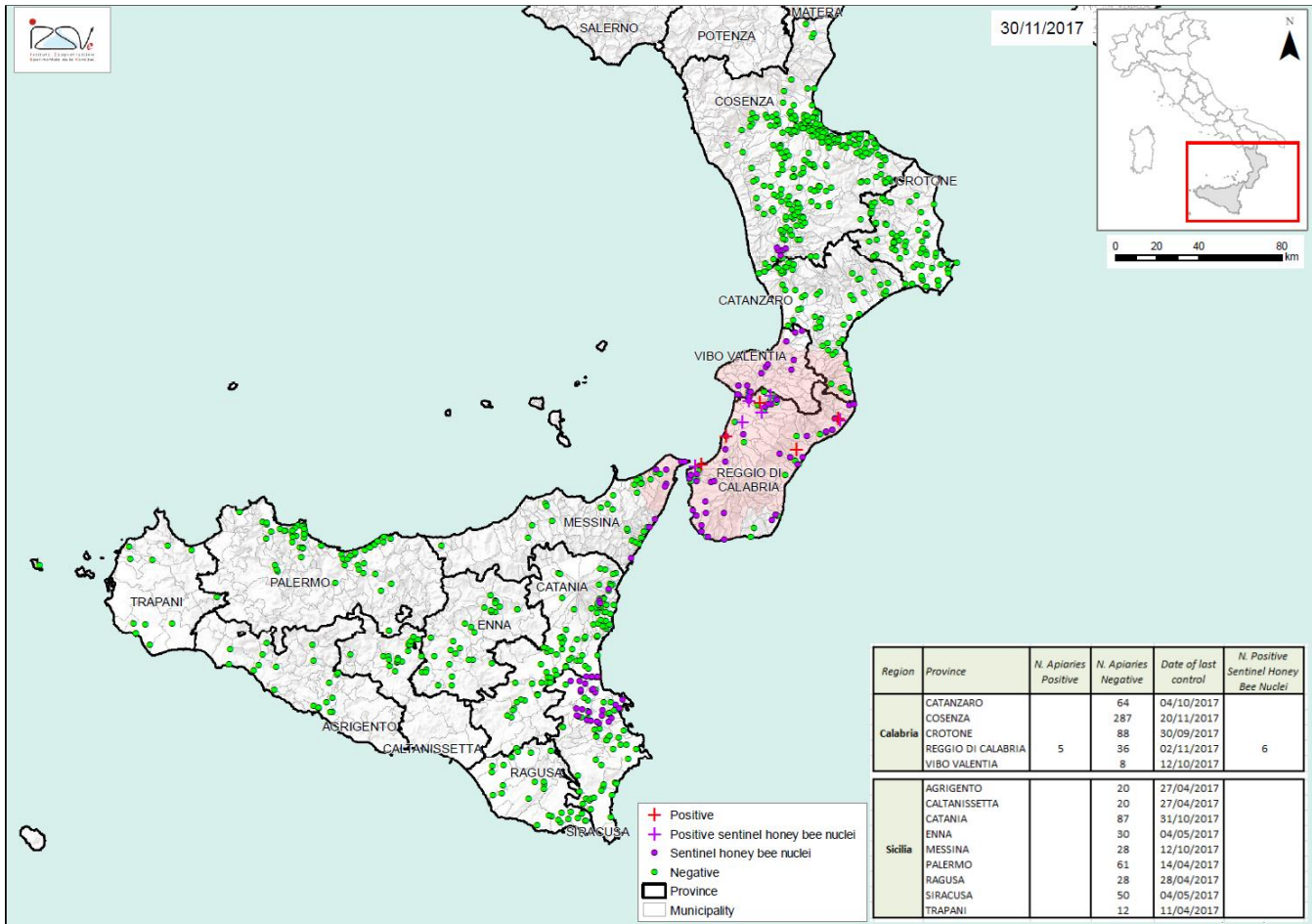
The map illustrated below (updated September 2017) shows the 2016 and 2017 nests and individual hornet incursions within the UK and the continuing spread of Asian hornet in Europe, north into the Netherlands and east across northern Italy. Please check BeeBase News items for regular updates and the dedicated page at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208> for further information including the Asian hornet ID sheet, videos and useful links.



<http://frelonasiatique.mnhn.fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/07/Carte-Vespa-velutina-Europe-Q-Rome-MNHN-e1469556132917.png>

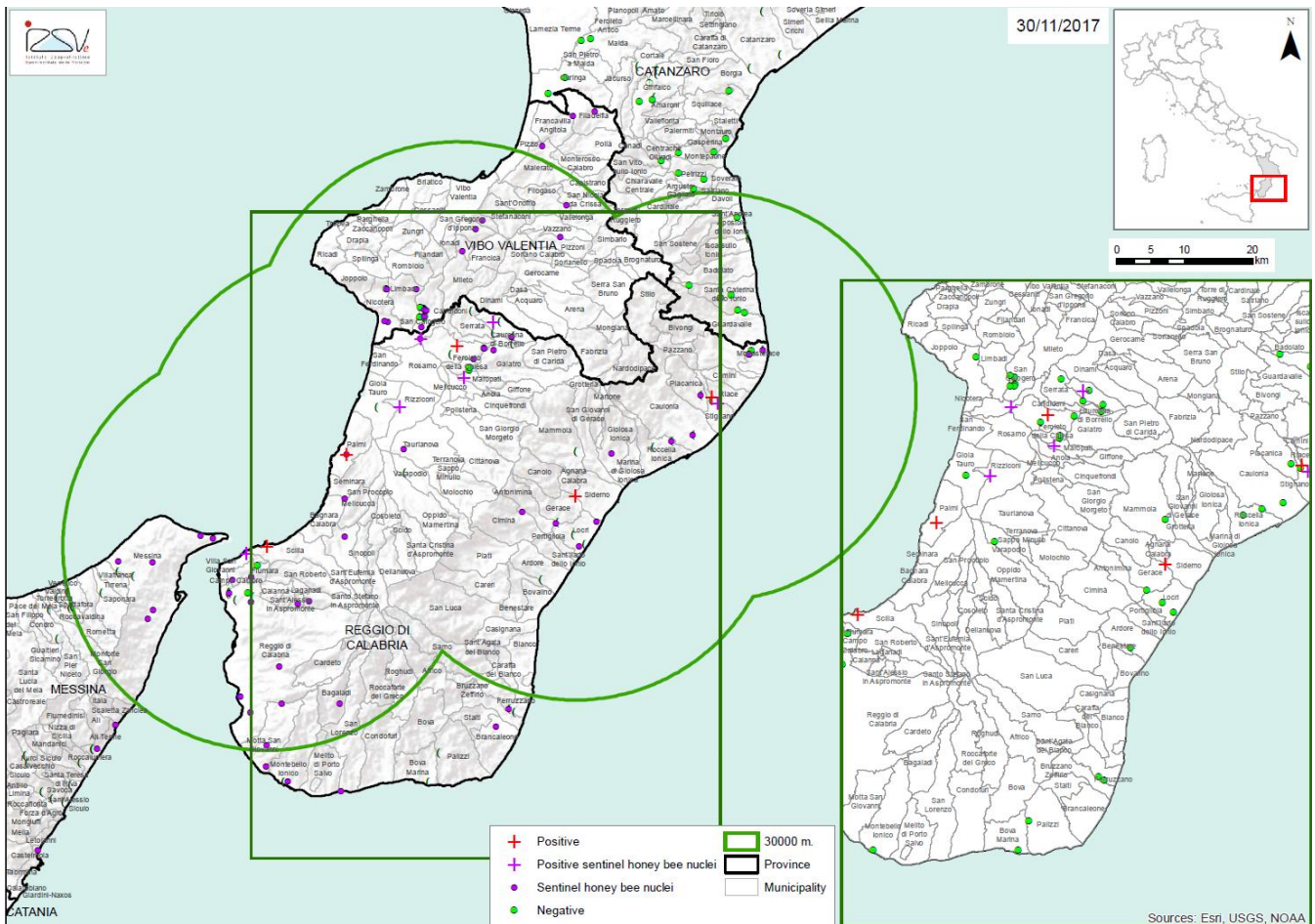
Small Hive Beetle

At the time of writing (5th Dec) there have been a total of just 11 apiaries reported positive for Small Hive Beetle in the province of Reggio Di Calabria in the region of Calabria, southern Italy. Two of these were feral colonies and 6 others were sentinel apiaries set up by the authorities.



The map above indicates that SHB is now present right across the region of Reggio Di Calabria with three new positives in two of the eastern provinces. The Italian web site was updated on 30th November and it should be noted that nearly all the positives reported in previous years have come from mid-September to December. Surveillance inspections in Sicily (336 apiaries) and in the more Northern Regions of Cosenza, Crotona and Catanzaro (439 apiaries) have all been clear. This may indicate that the secondary outbreaks in Sicily in 2014 and Cosenza last year (the latter due to the illegal movement of colonies) have been eradicated.

On the basis of information received from the Italian competent authorities relating to their experience with small hive beetle occurrences in Southern Italy the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2017/2174 of 20 November 2017 has been passed, amending Annex E to Council Directive 92/65/EEC as regards the health certificate for trade in bees and bumble bees such that in respect of SHB, as well as meeting other measures, honey bee queen exports must originate from an area at least 30 km distance from the limits of a protection zone of at least 20 km in radius around confirmed occurrence(s) of the small hive beetle. The previous 100km exclusion zone remains in place in respect of *Tropilaelaps* sp. mites.



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

We would like to thank all the beekeepers in the Southern region and beyond who volunteer through the Sentinel Apiary Programme to help with the NBU exotic pest surveillance in the UK. The Italian experience does suggest that early detection and immediate action before SHB becomes established may enable a small localised outbreak to be eradicated and once again we 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'. See the dedicated pages for SHB on BeeBase <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=125> for links to the leaflet, a video and much more detailed information.



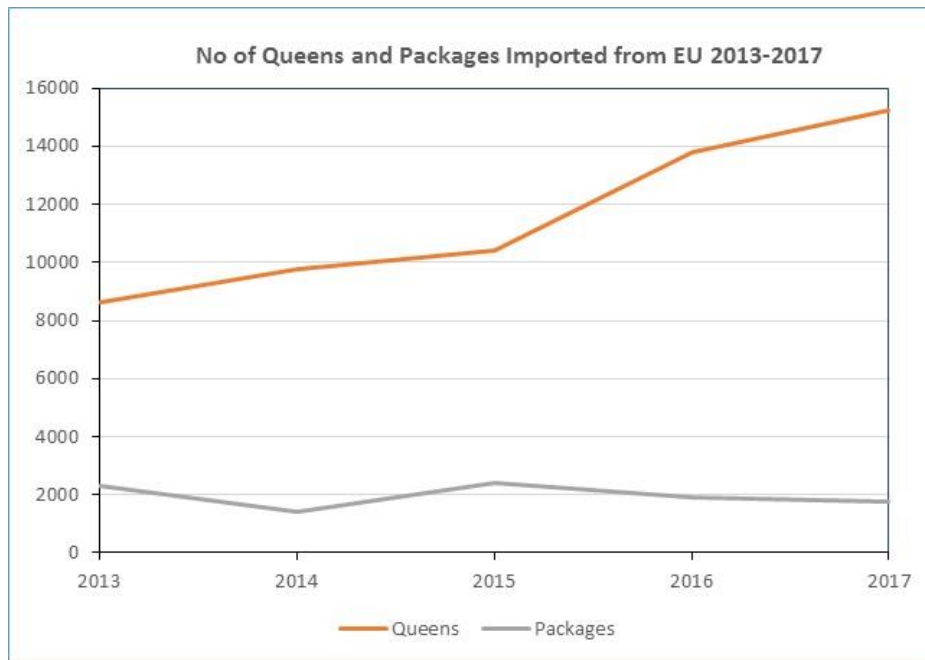
The image gallery on BeeBase <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/gallery/index.cfm> contains several pictures of Asian hornet and Small Hive Beetle as well as other pests and pathogens and general beekeeping topics. All images are subject to © Crown copyright 2010 but may be used free of charge in any format for non-commercial research, private study or internal circulation within your organisation. When reproducing images, please associate the phrase "Courtesy The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Crown Copyright" alongside each image.

Imports 2017

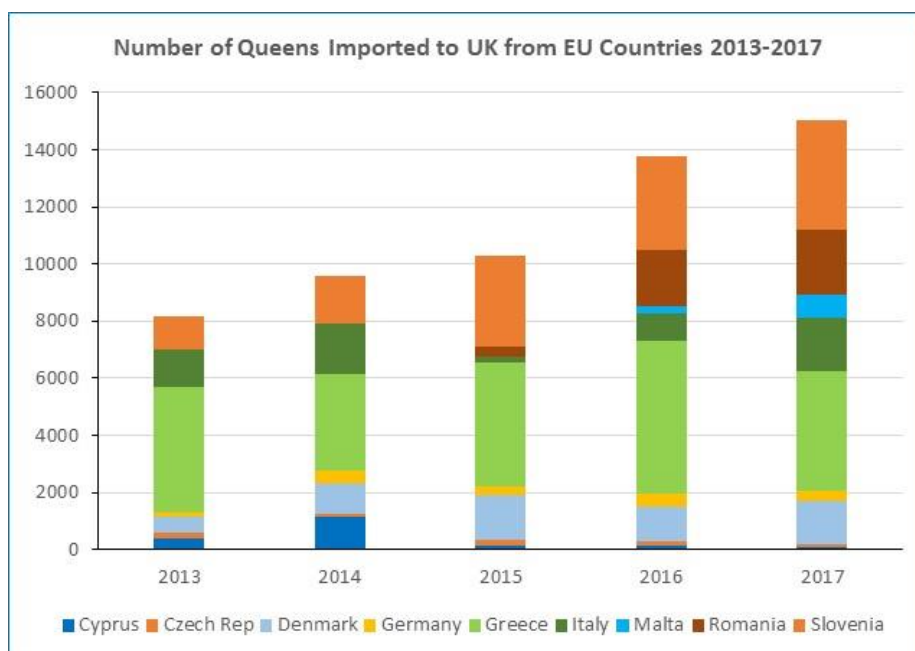
As of the end of November 2017 imports for the year totalled (2016 numbers in brackets):

- 15,210 Queens imported from EU (13,924)
- 1,776 Packages of Bees imported from EU (1,924) of which 1,301 were from Italy (1,354)
- 19 Nucs imported from EU (225)
- 0 Full colonies imported from EU (0)
- 525 Queens from Third Countries (all Argentina)

Trends over the last 5 years for the importation of queens and packages from the EU to the UK are shown below:

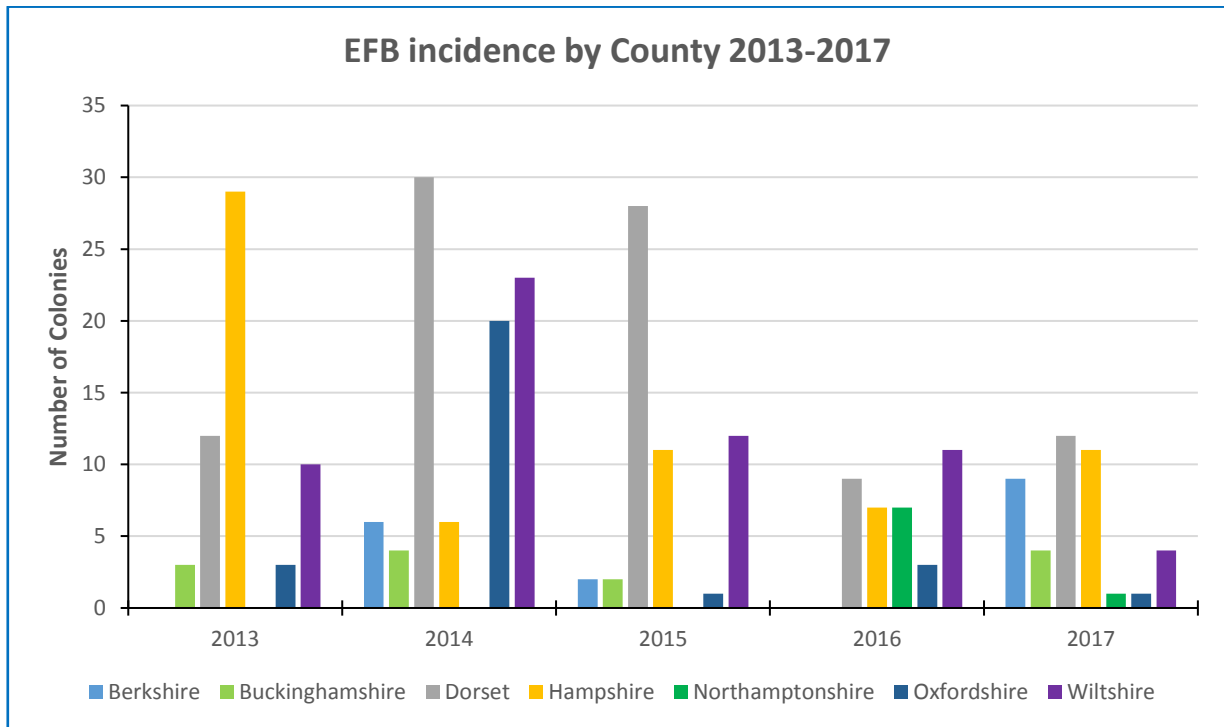


While the number of packages imported in 2017 remains relatively stable at just under 2000 with Italy continuing to be the major supplier (73% of all packages), the number of queens imported continues to grow year on year with Greece, Slovenia and more recently Romania being the major suppliers. After a sharp reduction in 2015 (immediately post-SHB), numbers from Italy are increasing again.

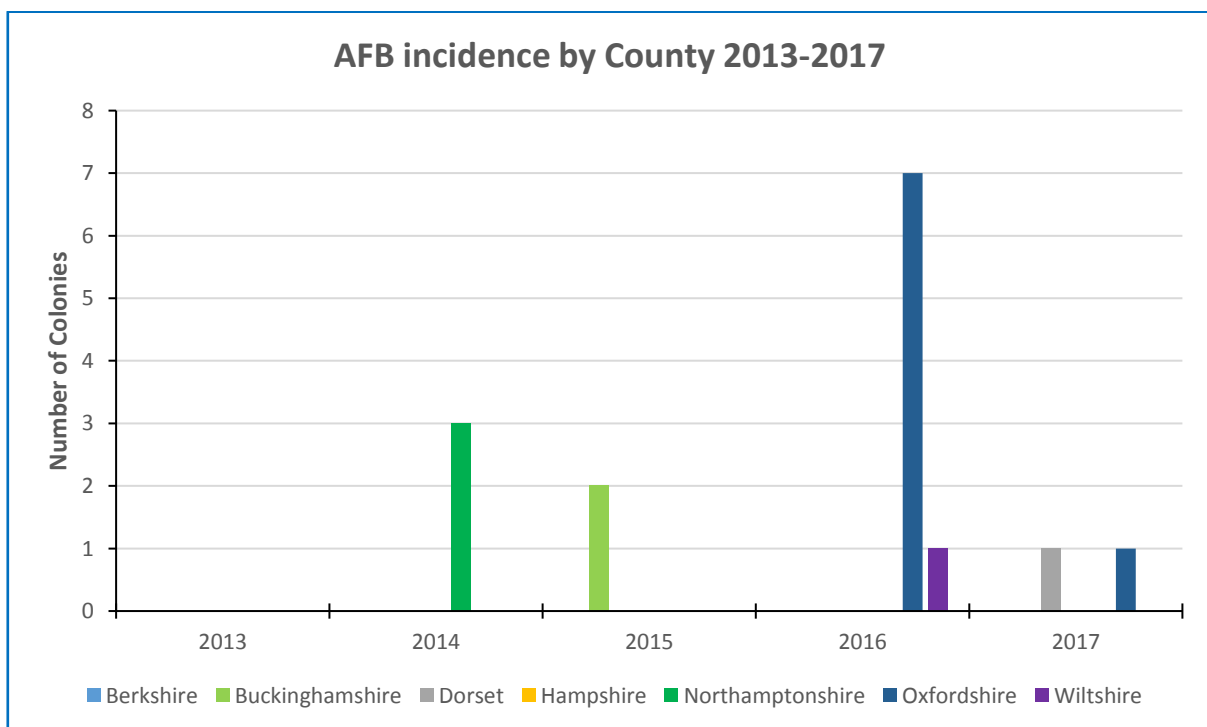


Foulbrood Disease 2017

The number of colonies found to be infected with EFB in the Southern Region during the 2017 season was 42, up from 37 in 2016 but still lower than the 2013-2015 seasons (56-89). The Southern numbers for EFB were reflective of those for England which saw 364 cases in 2017 and 342 in 2016. The split by county for Southern over the period 2013-2017 is shown below:



AFB infection was, as in previous years, somewhat unpredictable with just two colonies affected in Southern in 2017, one in Oxfordshire and one in Dorset. This compares to 8 in 2016, although this was driven by a spike in Oxfordshire. The countrywide figures for AFB in England were 43 in 2017 and 45 in 2016.



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. However, 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 your RBI if you are unsure. Self-registration is recommended as it gives beekeepers secure password protected access to personal details and inspection records.

Update on Varroa Treatments

During 2017 three new authorised varroa treatments have become available to the UK beekeeper; VarroMed Dispersion (formic acid and oxalic acid in single use sachets (75mg+660mg) and 550mL bottles (5mg/mL + 44mg/mL)), PolyVar Yellow 275mg Bee-hive strips (flumethrin, strips for location at the hive entrance, same active ingredient as Bayvarol) and Apivar 500mg Bee-hive strips (amitraz, an alternative to Apitraz 500mg Bee-hive strips).

The full list of Authorised Varroa Treatments available in the UK can be found on the Veterinary Medicines Directorate website <http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/> . Select the “Current Authorised Products” tab and then click on the filter symbol under “Target Species” and then “Contains” from the drop down list and type “bee” and hit return for the current list. In addition to listing all the authorised treatments, you can access further documents with information on the authorised indications for the treatment and the proper use of the treatment.

For those of you that do not wish to use chemical treatments or would like to combine them with practical, husbandry methods (Integrated Pest Management – IPM), then the ‘Managing Varroa’ leaflet is available to download free from ‘BeeBase’ the National Bee Unit website www.nationalbeeunit.com. There are also leaflets available about the foulbrood and other bee disease and information sheets on all aspects of beekeeping e.g. carrying out a shook swarm, buying second hand equipment, queen rearing and so on.

Education and Training for 2018

As in previous years, we aim to offer 3 Bee Health Days at a County level, where a number of Authorised Bee Inspectors will run a bee health and disease day including the opportunity to see foul brood in the comb at close quarters. Due to increasing calls on inspector’s time our resources are limited and so we can only offer these days when a County association is confident that attendance will exceed 60 beekeepers, allowing us to target events where we can achieve the greatest impact. The limitations on resource also mean that we cannot repeat these events year after year in the same area and instead need to move around the region for best coverage. Therefore, repeat events to the same County association will not be available within 3 years of the last anniversary. We understand that this may disappoint some County associations that have historically sought these events more frequently, but increasing demands on time and not least the clear and present danger from Asian Hornet means that the available inspector’s time must be used to the greatest efficiency and that we have resources available to deal with exotic pest incursions throughout the season. Keep an eye out for e-mails and adverts for these days in the early part of the 2018 season.

Regional Contact Details

Please note that your Seasonal Bee Inspectors only work between April and September, outside of this time please contact your Regional Inspector.

Southern Region Seasonal Bee Inspectors:

Wiltshire

Robert Carpenter Turner 07775 119464 robert.carpenter-turner@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Oxfordshire

Phil Spillane 07775 119470 philip.spillane@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Dorset

Kevin Pope 07775 119466 kevin.pope@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Northamptonshire

Bob Poole 07990 138894 robert.poole@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Buckinghamshire

Jonathan Palmer 07900 405018 jonathan.palmer@apha.gsi.gov.uk

West Hampshire

Rob Oliver 07557 157358 robin.oliver@apha.gsi.gov.uk

East & North Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Berkshire

Use Beebase "Find my nearest Inspector":

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/Contacts/contacts.cfm>

Beebase Registration and Association Membership Lists



An annual plea to register on Beebase and to keep your apiary details up to date. For effective disease (and pest) control we rely on three ways of knowing where honey bee colonies are located; voluntary registration on BeeBase, association membership lists, and being told about neighbouring apiaries during visits. Of these the most effective is registration on BeeBase.

Voluntary registration is very important and can be done online at www.nationalbeeunit.com or by calling the NBU office on **0300 303 0094**. Once registered, periodic updating of Beebase records ensures that we know which apiary sites and beekeepers are current and approximately how many colonies are likely to be on each site. To update BeeBase, you simply need to log in and update your colony information. You will need a BeeBase username and password and these can be obtained when registering or by calling the office. If you are registered on BeeBase and we have your current email address then you will receive an automated disease alert when notifiable disease is found within 3km of your apiary.

Your association can send us their list of members if they wish, but can only do this if they satisfy the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The easiest way to do this is to amend the membership renewal form to contain the following phrase;

"Please note that a condition of membership is your agreement to membership details being held on a computer. This information will be used for the efficient running of the association by its officials, for the distribution of the BBKA magazine, for BBKA Insurance, for Bee Disease Insurance, and passed to the Regional Bee Inspector for inclusion on BeeBase to aid them in the control of notifiable bee diseases".

These lists are very useful to us as they allow us to identify new beekeepers and to update contact details for existing beekeepers. **Secretaries** – if you currently have this in place, please email your current membership list, so we can ensure our records are as accurate and complete as possible. This is something that will be incredibly important if we are unfortunate enough to find Small Hive Beetle or Asian Hornet in the UK in the coming season.

Finally

We have had an enjoyable, if busy, half-season as joint RBIs in the Southern Region and aim for a smooth handover to the new, permanent, Southern RBI prior to the 2018 season starting. We would like to acknowledge the support of the Southern Seasonal Bee Inspectors over this period and of course thank them for their hard work during the season.

We hope that your colonies come through winter well and wish you a successful and trouble free beekeeping season in 2018. However, if the worst happens we are here to help and on that note, our contact details follow below:

Jonathan Palmer & Meg Seymour Joint Regional Bee Inspectors, Southern Region

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Tel: 0300 303 0094

Email: nbu@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.nationalbeeunit.com