

National Bee Unit – Southern Region Update

A review of the 2012 season

February 2013

The Season

What a year, droughts to start followed by the wettest summer in recent history. American foul brood (AFB) levels have remained low but European foul brood (EFB) levels were particularly high with very large out breaks occurring in Devon and Somerset. The bad weather certainly increased stress levels in colonies and this probably was partially responsible for the high incidence of EFB this year.

Southern region participated with the South West and Western regions in a contingency exercise based in the Avon valley simulating the arrival of Small hive beetle (SHB) in this country. This was successful despite the appalling weather, and a lot was learned about the organisation of inspections immediately after the arrival of an exotic pest such as SHB or Tropilaelaps.



The Southern Team

Southern region was able to recruit two new Seasonal bee inspectors, SBI's, in 2012 but due to the recruitment freeze across the civil service it took us a while to get special permission to start the recruitment process. My thanks go to all the beekeepers who applied for the roles as we had more applicants than there were available posts.

The two new SBI's are Debbie Park from Alton and Adrian Kelly from Colden Common and they started with Southern region on the 11th June. They have been through a training period and have both settled in well having already done significant numbers of inspections and finding notifiable disease.

Because of the amount of traffic and difficulty in getting around in London during the Olympics the SBI for that area, Caroline Washington, sought shelter in Southern region and was active inspecting in the New Forest area. My thanks go to her for helping us out.

Recruitment for 2013

Margaret Holland has left us to spend more time with her family. She will be missed by Southern region and I wish her well in the future and am sure she will be frequently seen at beekeeping events in Northamptonshire.

This leaves me with a vacancy for a Seasonal Bee Inspector and I am glad to say that we have just been given the approval to recruit a replacement for Northamptonshire, and the top ends of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

If anyone is interested in becoming a SBI for this region please contact me to discuss (my contact details are at the end of this newsletter). We will be looking for an experienced beekeeper with good people skills that lives within the region.

Security

I am afraid there have been a small number of reports of some people attempting to imitate bee inspectors. All bee inspectors carry photo identity cards when inspecting and please feel free to ask to see it.

Bee Health Consultation

Since July 2011 the Department of food and rural affairs (Defra) policy department has been running a review of how best to manage bee pests and diseases and this has just been released for consultation with interested parties (beekeepers). The review was undertaken by the Food and Environment Research Agency, on behalf of Defra and the Welsh Government, with the NBU, representatives from commercial and amateur beekeeper associations and an independent scientist. They considered how best to manage pests and diseases in the future so that the optimum policies and interventions are in place; priorities for future collective action (partnership working) by government and beekeepers are clear; and we are making the best use of current public funding/resources for this programme in order to sustain a healthy honey bee population for pollination.

Over the past three years as your RBI I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you and talking to most associations and have frequently received suggestions for what the inspectorate should do. The topics and suggestions have been wide and varied and this consultation is your opportunity to speak to the policy makers and have a say in how the inspectorate operates.

I know the review contains a lot of information and is not light reading, however the Consultation document is the key one and the questions that they would like you to answer are summarised in Annex 2 on page 33.

This consultation is available at;

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2013/01/10/bee-health-1301/>

Alternatively you can call the Bee health Policy team on 01904 462158 or email them at beehealthinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk to request paper copies.

Responses should be sent to the following email address: Beehealthinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Or by post to: Bee Health Policy
 Defra
 Sand Hutton
 York
 YO41 1LZ

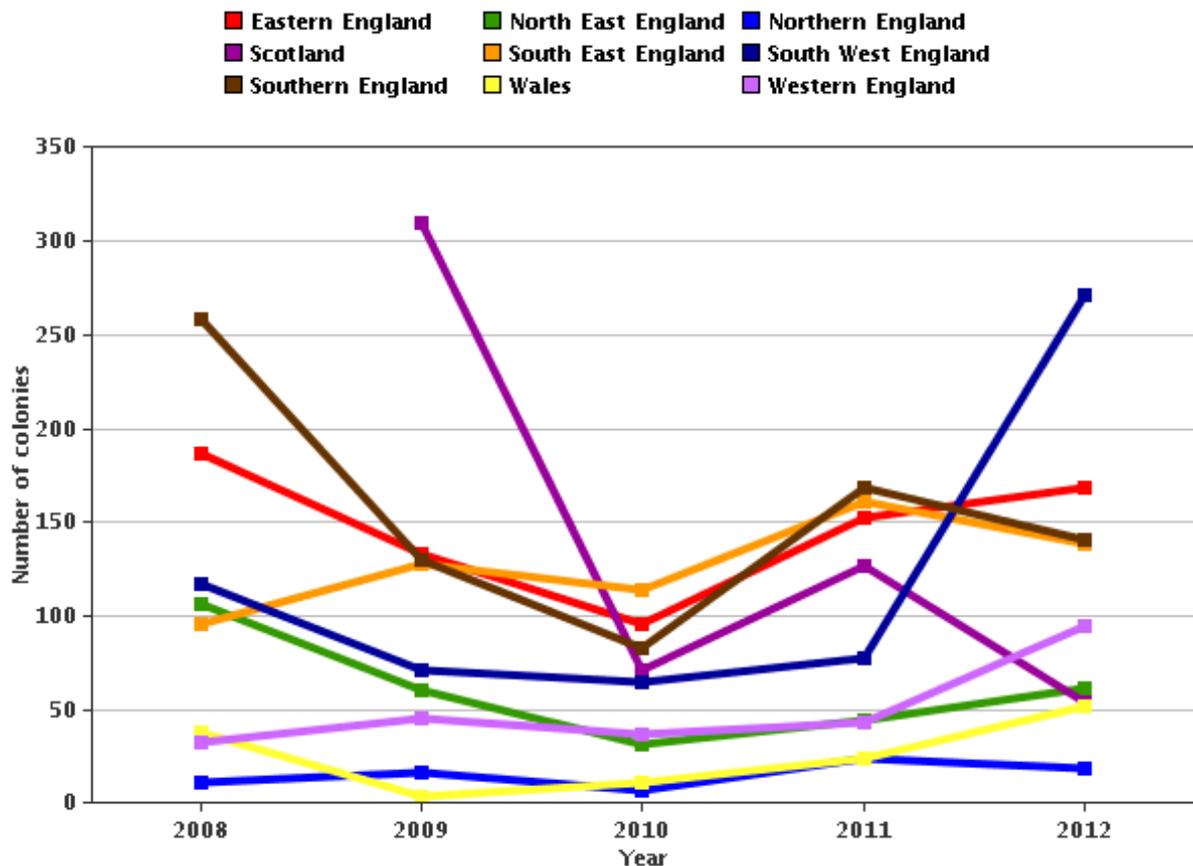
Please ensure that your responses are received by the 9th March 2013.

Please do not let this opportunity to have your views heard pass by, the review when finalised will guide what the inspectorate does and this is all beekeepers chance to have an input into it.

Inspection Programme

In 2012 in England, Scotland and Wales a total of 37,077 colonies were inspected in 6869 apiaries, and 1002 colonies were diagnosed with EFB and 66 with AFB.

Below is a graph showing the number of colonies with EFB in each of the regions of the inspectorate over the last 5 years.



Regional Inspection and Foul brood summary

This year 5371 colonies were inspected in Southern region and 141 colonies were found with EFB and 2 with AFB. More detailed information on the location of disease can be seen by visiting the disease incidence page on BeeBase:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/BeeDiseases/diseaseIncidenceMaps.cfm>

The following table shows the 10km squares in Southern region that had Foul brood in 2012.

County	10 km square	Area name	Colonies with EFB	Colonies with AFB
Berkshire	SU76	Shinfield	1	
	SU86	Crowthorne	7	
	SU78	Henley on Thames		1
Buckinghamshire	SP63	West Buckingham	1	
	SP70	Haddenham	1	
	SP80	Wendover	4	
	SU89	High Wycombe	16	
Dorset	ST80	Blandford Forum	1	
	ST81	Iwerne Minster	4	
	ST90	Tarrant Rushton	1	
	SU00	Ferndown	3	
	SY69	Stratton	2	
	SY88	Wool	5	
	SY89	Bere Regis	2	
	SY98	Wareham	10	
	SY99	Lytchett Maltravers	1	
Hampshire	SU11	Fordingbridge	1	
	SU22	White Parish	1	
	SU31	Totton	3	
	SU36	Inkpen	1	
	SU41	Southampton	5	
	SU42	Winchester South	2	
	SU43	Winchester North	1	
	SU45	Litchfield	2	
	SU46	Newbury	1	
	SU51	Bishops Waltham	1	
	SU60	Portsmouth	2	
	SU70	North Hayling	2	
	SU72	Petersfield	14	
	SU85	Farnborough	1	
Northamptonshire	SP56	Daventry	1	
Oxfordshire	SP30	Bampton	2	
	SP32	Enstone	1	
	SP40	Cumnor	7	
	SP50	Oxford	2	
	SP51	Islip	3	
	SP52	Bicester	5	
	SP53	Brackley	3	
	SP63	West Buckingham	1	
	SP68	East Wallingford	3	
	SP44	Banbury		1
Wiltshire	SU04	Shrewton	6	
	SU21	Nomansland	11	

Four areas stand out as having high levels of EFB; High Wycombe (Bucks), Wareham (Dorset), Petersfield (Hampshire), and Nomansland (Wiltshire).

Honey Survey

Thank you to all who contributed to our honey survey. This is asked for by Defra and is used to calculate how much honey is generated across the country.

I had 196 responses from across the region. 71 people answered the question regarding honey price and it varies considerably from £2.50 to £7.00, with an average of £4.50 per pound. Many beekeepers remarked that they didn't sell honey but used it for their own consumption and to give to family and friends.

The average amount of honey produced per colony owned was 18lb, and the average per producing colony was 30lb. As you would expect this did vary greatly and there was a lot of people who got zero or very low amounts of honey this year.

Knowing where your hives are

In the UK we currently have quite a contradictory system of voluntary registration of beehives combined with the expectation that if notifiable disease turns up in an area that all the colonies close to it will be inspected by us. This means we have the legal right to inspect when colonies are at risk (i.e. close to other colonies with notifiable disease) but you don't have to tell us where your bees are located!

Therefore we rely on three ways of detecting colonies; voluntary registration on BeeBase, association membership lists, and being told about neighbouring apiaries when disease is found.

Voluntary registration is very important and can be done online at www.nationalbeeunit.com or by calling our office on 01904 462510. This should be followed by periodic updating of your apiary details. To do so you will need a username and password and this can be obtained when registering or by calling the office. Once into your records click on "my apiaries" where new apiaries can be added by clicking on the green plus sign and entering a name for the apiary and a map reference. Alternatively if you left click on the map over the location of the new apiary it will ask you if you want to move the apiary location.

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. If you are registered on BeeBase and we have your current email address then you will receive an automated disease alert when notifiable disease turns up within 3km of any of your current apiaries.

Abandoned hives and nuisance complaints about bees

Every year we receive lots of calls about abandoned colonies and we are very happy to receive them as if they are close to disease then we will handle finding the owner. However if they are not close to disease I am afraid we don't have the time to investigate these and we will leave it to the local association to contact the landowner and get permission to deal with the colonies appropriately.

We also get contacted regarding nuisance complaints about bees and I am afraid these do not fall under our remit and are the responsibility of the local beekeepers association to help with.

2013

I can already see that 2013 will be a busy season and with the bee health review coming to a conclusion there will be plenty of changes for us to implement in the future. Hopefully the weather will improve and it will be a productive season for all beekeepers.

Thank you.

Nigel Semmence

RBI, Southern region

Southern region contact details

Seasonal Bee Inspectors;

Robert Carpenter Turner	Wiltshire	07775 119464
Phil Spillane	Oxfordshire and West Berkshire	07775 119470
Julian Parker	Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire	07775 119469
Kevin Pope	Dorset	07775 119466
Debbie Park	East Hampshire and Isle of Wight	07775 119468
Adrian Kelly	South West Hampshire	07901 517983
Vacancy	Northamptonshire	

Regional Bee Inspector;

Nigel Semmence	North West Hampshire	01264 338694
nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk		