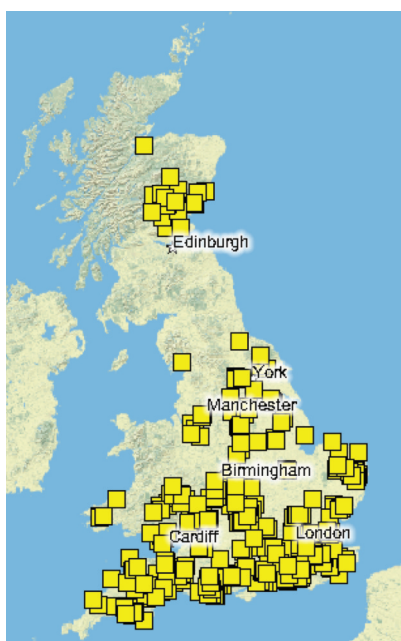


Signing up to BeeBase



The BeeBase online database

The National Bee Unit (NBU) delivers the Bee Health Programmes on behalf of the Welsh Government and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs in England and Wales. We also provide support for the inspection programme in Scotland. In 2012 alone our Appointed Bee Inspectors (ABIs) examined a total of 35,671 honey bee colonies in 6,631 apiaries (belonging to 5,107 beekeepers). Clearly an inspection programme of this magnitude generates an enormous amount of data every year. In order to compile this information so that we can monitor annual incidence and year-on-year-trends in honey bee pests and diseases (especially the foul broods) the NBU uses a very sophisticated online database called BeeBase. BeeBase allows us to prioritise inspections and plan programme delivery. BeeBase also represents a powerful research tool for modelling and epidemiological studies.



Distribution of European Foulbrood Inspections in England, Scotland and Wales 2012. This map is available from the public pages of BeeBase and all images are provided courtesy of The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), Crown Copyright; images supplied by the National Bee Unit at Fera.

The BeeBase database was especially constructed in the early 1990s to help us manage the varroa outbreak of 1992 by holding data on all the inspections made by staff of the NBU as well as laboratory samples submitted by beekeepers. It has evolved and expanded ever since. BeeBase includes custom-designed mapping,

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and spatial analysis capabilities. BeeBase contains all the apicultural information relating to the statutory bee health programme in England and Wales. In 2005, IT specialists at the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) launched the BeeBase online website. This was unique, as for the first time it could allow registered Welsh and English beekeepers to access specific information about their own apiaries and their colonies' diagnostic histories over the web. Recently (since 2009), data from Scotland has also been added to BeeBase and since June 2010 registered Scottish beekeepers have also been able to access their records.

Why it is important to register on BeeBase

The programme of inspection followed by the ABI team is risk-based. All registered apiaries have an attributed risk category. This means that those apiaries identified as being at risk of infection by a notifiable disease (European foul brood or American foul brood) or infestation by exotic pests (e.g., small hive beetle or *Tropilaelaps* mites) will be visited as a priority. This, for example, would include apiaries located in an area where a statutory disease has been confirmed as present. Where necessary, during a visit, samples will be collected from affected colonies and submitted for laboratory

diagnosis. However, beekeepers do not need to fall into an at risk area to receive an inspection. Should any beekeeper have concerns about the health of his/her bees then they can contact their local inspector or the NBU team at Sand Hutton in York to arrange a visit (contact details are provided at the end of this article). It is really important that inspectors are able to visit every apiary within an area of confirmed disease, so it is vital to have beekeepers' apiaries logged onto BeeBase to make sure that no potentially infected and/or at risk colonies are being missed.

Those registered beekeepers who have provided us with an email address as a point of contact will also receive our 'Disease Alert' electronically. This automated message is sent each time a new case of foul brood is found, to all registered beekeepers who have apiaries within 3km of the outbreak. The e-mail asks you to be vigilant and examine your colonies carefully. Each email supplies a link (<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/downloadDocument.cfm?id=7>) to the latest copy of our foul brood leaflet for reference, along with contact details for the field and office staff should there be any concerns. Many beekeepers find this service very valuable.

Registration on BeeBase

The total number of beekeepers registered on BeeBase, at approaching twenty-nine thousand, is the highest it has ever been. In the last two years alone there have been over nine thousand new registrations. This is a wonderful achievement and marks a

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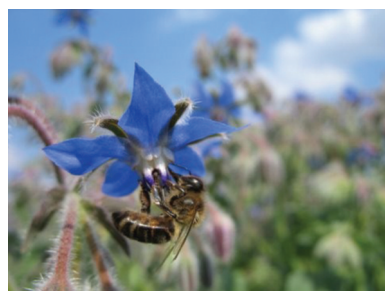
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significant improvement in bee health security; the more beekeepers that are registered, the more rigorous our bee health surveillance can be and, crucially, the better our chances of intercepting and eliminating exotic pest threats like the small hive beetle. Thank you to long-time registered beekeepers and welcome to all recent members. We need to keep up this momentum as it is believed that up to 50% of beekeepers may still not be on the database. If you are not yet registered please visit the public pages of BeeBase where you can sign up. Otherwise get in touch with the NBU office team who will be happy to help (contact details at the end of article). By telling us who you are you will be playing a very important part in helping to maintain and sustain honey bees for the future.

How do I know that my details will be secure?

All of the information that you provide for the purposes of registration on BeeBase is covered by the Public Service Guarantee on Data Handling. In addition, all data will be handled according to rules stated in the Data Protection Act, 1998. All levels of access to BeeBase are protected in the same way as online banking. Your personal access is password protected. When you first register you are allocated a temporary password, which is valid for your first visit only. You will then be prompted to set your own password. You need to ensure that your own password remains confidential. You will also be allocated a personal ID Number, which relates solely to you. As a personally registered beekeeper, once



Honey bee visiting a meadow flower. This image is available from the public pages of the BeeBase website.

you have received an inspection visit, you can check your own record on BeeBase. If you wish, you can make use of the apiary records system if you want to record your apiary visits. Your Seasonal Bee Inspector, Regional Bee Inspector, National Bee Inspector and NBU staff at Fera in York will have access to your records, but no inspector or the NBU will ever disclose to others that you have been inspected or any details about your bees or beekeeping without your consent. Although BeeBase includes public pages containing information such as disease, colony losses, leaflets, useful links and much more of general information, the public has no access to any beekeepers' details.

How to sign up to BeeBase

Online at: www.nationalbeeunit.com
Email: nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk
Phone: 01904 462510

The public pages of the BeeBase website

In addition to these secure pages of the BeeBase website, that can only be visited by registered users, the public pages of BeeBase provide a wealth of additional information on the activities of the NBU. BeeBase also contains details about available training and information for beekeepers, guidelines for importing and exporting bees, and the relevant legislation surrounding this and other aspects of apiculture in the UK. It introduces the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS), that monitors the effects of pesticides

on wildlife and beneficial insects, including honey bees, and explains what to do if you suspect that your bees have been poisoned, and how to submit a sample to the scheme (see *BBKA News*, 209: 24–26, January 2013 for further information about the WIIS). BeeBase holds details of all the NBUs current research and development projects, studentships, and international collaborative research initiatives. Other useful resources include up-to-date information about honey bee pests and diseases, their recognition and control, interactive maps, relevant publications, advisory leaflets and plenty of helpful contacts. BeeBase's image gallery is populated

with a range of colour photographs of healthy and diseased bees. It is intended that these will be useful identification aids, and they can be downloaded and used free of charge.

How to provide feedback

We are constantly updating BeeBase and we welcome your feedback to help us make improvements. Please let us know what you think. You will find a link 'Send us some feedback' on BeeBase's home page, or email nbuoffice@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Gay Marris, Mike Brown and Jenna Cook,
National Bee Unit



The American foul brood ropiness test. This image is available from the public pages of the BeeBase website.



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