

# Disease Accreditation Scheme for Honeybees

**Keith Morgan** and **Jason Learner**, National Bee Unit, provide an update on the scheme

**B**y now, many Bee Farmers' Association (BFA) members will be aware of the Disease Accreditation Scheme for Honeybees (DASH) which was set up in 2013 as a collaboration between the National Bee Unit (NBU) and the BFA.

## Background

The scheme came out of the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) *Farming Regulation Task Force Implementation: Earned Recognition Plan*, the aim of which is to find ways of reducing the administrative burden of regulation on those who have a strong track record of reliability and adherence to standards.

The regulation has already been in effect for some time and in the livestock sector this risk-based approach is well established, for example with inspections of pigs and poultry, livestock welfare and dairy hygiene.

In this context, the NBU and the BFA hope the scheme will:

- reduce the costs associated with disease within commercial beekeeping operations
- improve the health of honey bees within the operations
- reduce the regulatory burden in the form of inspection visits.

In 2014, 26 entrants successfully gained accreditation and we are pleased that in 2015, 18 more bee farmers were accredited under the scheme.

Recently, the NBU held two initial accreditation events for those wishing to become fully accredited in 2016. The first of these events was held in the south of England, near Andover, and included nine bee farmers and four Rowse/BFA apprentices. The second event was held

in the north of England at Sand Hutton, near York, and was attended by a further 12 bee farmers and three apprentices.

During the winter months, all new candidates will have to update their records on BeeBase, adding or updating details of all of their apiaries. In 2016, a baseline inspection will be carried out by the inspectorate on all of the colonies of each candidate and, providing the bee farmer is proven compliant, a certificate of competency will be issued along with a DASH manual, appropriate paperwork and lateral flow devices (LFDs). From that point onwards, the bee farmer is free to carry out shook swarms or colony destructions in response to disease found within the operation; any disease that is found must be reported.

## Accreditation Events

Those BFA members who are not yet signed up to the scheme and wish to do so may wish to note the dates scheduled for initial accreditation events next year: 6 October 2016, in Cambridgeshire, and 13 October 2016 at a location to be confirmed (this will be chosen based on demand).

## Training Opportunities

Also in 2016, two practical training days will be available for both those accredited under the scheme and any other BFA member, particularly those interested in gaining accreditation. The key aim of the training will be to help bee farmers identify disease in its early stages, which is easily missed by the untrained eye. If disease gets out of control it may cost a business thousands of pounds, so this training may be well worthwhile.



These practical training days will also focus on:

- biosecurity measures: how to deal with disease, shook swarm technique, sterilisation of hives and equipment, establishing isolation apiaries
- recognition of exotic threats. Small hive beetle (SHB) has continued to remain a huge problem in Italy and eradication has so far proven unsuccessful. At the time of writing 22 additional cases of SHB have been found. With the continued risks associated with imports to this country and the emerging threat of Asian hornet in France, the training will include how to identify and monitor for SHB, *Tropilaelaps* spp and Asian hornet.

One of these training days will take place on 25 August 2016 at Sand Hutton, York; an additional date and venue is to be confirmed early in 2016. These courses will provide practical guidance and support and we would urge all bee farmers to attend.

## Impact of the Scheme

To date, out of just over 400 BFA members, 44 have been successfully accredited. In 2015, a total of 25 colonies with European foul brood (EFB) and one with American foul brood (AFB) were self-reported by five of those accredited under the scheme. This self-reporting has enabled the inspectorate to concentrate its efforts on other beekeepers in surrounding locations. □

## Further Information

For further information, to register interest in gaining accreditation or to attend one of the training events, contact the BFA Membership and Administration Officer in the first instance.

Further information about the Disease Accreditation Scheme for Honeybees can be found on BeeBase, the NBU's public website: [www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=360](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=360)

