



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Guidance on Importing Bees into England

June 2026

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We're responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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Foreword

This note has been produced to provide informal, non-statutory guidance that aims to clarify the requirements that apply to imports of bees into England from certain parts of the British Isles, from the EU and the rest of the world. It does not provide comprehensive coverage of all conditions laid down in legislation and has no legal force. Similar legislation is in place in Scotland and Wales. Different arrangements are in place for Northern Ireland in accordance with the Northern Ireland Protocol.

This guidance reflects the current import conditions for the EU. On 19 May 2025, the UK government and the European Union (EU) agreed to pursue a new Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement which will impact how we trade with the EU. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-eu-sps-agreement-information-for-businesses>

We will keep importers up to date with developments.

Import controls overview

The aim of the legislation is to prevent the introduction and spread of bee pests and diseases, particularly the Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mite. If you are importing bees, whether for your own use or to sell on, it is important that you comply with all the import conditions in order to protect the health of honey bees in the UK.

The key requirements for imports from EU member states and the rest of the world are:

1. You must **notify** all imports in advance via the IPAFFS system;
2. You must ensure that consignments from other countries are accompanied by a **health certificate** which has been obtained from the relevant competent authority (check you have the latest version on gov.uk);
3. Imports from countries other than EU member states must enter via a **border control point**. Imports from EU member states will be **checked at destination** on a risk basis until the end of the beekeeping season. We will continue to keep you informed of developments;
4. You **cannot import packages of bees from any country** other than New Zealand;
5. You should check that the area the bees are being exported from is not subject to a **safeguard measure** for notifiable bee diseases or pests;
6. You must comply with the **post-import controls** applying to consignments imported from all countries.

In addition, we would strongly encourage you to keep records of beekeepers to whom you have sold any imported bees. This will enable beekeepers to be contacted quickly by the Animal and Plant Health Agency's National Bee Unit (NBU) in the event of any notifiable pests and diseases being found in the imported consignment.

Please note that you must satisfy yourself that consignments are imported in accordance with all the relevant legislative conditions. Failure to comply with the requirements laid down in the Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Bee Diseases and Pests Control (England) Order 2006 may lead to your consignment being destroyed and to potential prosecution.

If you have any queries about the import requirements for honey bees, please contact the Bee Health Policy Team at BeeHealth.Info@defra.gov.uk or the National Bee Unit at nbu@apha.gov.uk.

Legislation

If you wish to import bees into England, you must comply with the following legislation:

The Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations 2011 (the TARP Regulations) which lay down the controls that apply to imports of *Apis mellifera* (honey bees) and bumble bees (*Bombus* spp) from other countries. These regulations have been updated as the UK has left the EU so should be read in conjunction with amending regulations.

The Bee Diseases and Pests Control (England) Order 2006 (the Order) which lays down the enforcement provisions for post-import controls that apply to all imports of bees imported from another country.

Assimilated Commission Regulation (EU) 206/2010 which lists the countries from which bees may be imported (subject to requirements relating to notifiable pests and diseases – see page 6), health certificate requirements and the post-import controls. (Retained EU legislation as amended by the Import of, and Trade in, Animals and Animal Products (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.)

Assimilated Commission Decision 2006/855/EC which lays down the health certification requirements and the post-import checks (packaged bees) for bees imported from New Zealand.

The national legislation is available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/> which also contains retained EU legislation.

Imports of Bees from Channel Islands and Isle of Man

The Channel Islands and Isle of Man are not part of the UK; they are Crown Dependencies. Health certificates are required for movements of bees from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man to England.

The health attestation is laid down in Annex 1. A model certificate can be obtained from the National Bee Unit.

Whilst the focus of this guidance is on imports, you should note that Isle of Man is officially recognised as free of varroosis. Hence, the introduction to that territory of bees in any stage of their life cycle, used hives, skeps or any receptacle used to house bees, is strictly prohibited unless from an area officially recognised as varroa free. Exports of bees to the Isle of Man from England are therefore prohibited.

Imports of Bees from countries outside the EU

Bees are only allowed into England from those countries listed in Part 1 to Annex II of Assimilated Commission Regulation (EU) No 206/2010. This is on the provision that American foulbrood, *Aethina tumida* (Small hive beetle) and *Tropilaelaps* spp (Tropilaelaps mite) are confirmed as notifiable disease/pests throughout the exporting country, territory or disease-free area, and the export area is free of these disease/pests.

If you wish to import bees from any of the countries listed, you should check with the relevant authority in the country concerned, that it is able to comply with the above import requirements. You may need to provide details of the exporting country's controls on these disease/pests to the National Bee Unit.

Imports of honey bees are restricted to consignments of queen bees and attendant workers only (except New Zealand). Each queen bee must be contained in a single cage and accompanied by no more than 20 attendant worker bees. Packages or single colonies of bumble bees (a maximum of 200 adult bees per container) are permitted, provided that they are bred under environmentally controlled conditions within recognised establishments.

Each consignment must be accompanied by an original health certificate (photocopies are not acceptable) modelled on 'Model QUE' (honey bees) or 'Model BEE' (bumble bees), available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bees-health-certificates>. The health certificate must be issued no more than 24 hours prior to despatch by the relevant authority in the country of origin and is valid for 10 days from the date of issue. The health certificate conditions are at Annex 2. Make sure that the exporter has the latest version of the certificate.

Assimilated Commission Decision 2006/855/EC permits the import of queen honey bees, packaged honey bees (a queen bee accompanied by approximately 15,000 attendant workers) and bumble bees into the UK from New Zealand under a bilateral veterinary agreement. Consignments must be accompanied by an original health certificate modelled on Annex VI of the Decision issued by the New Zealand authorities. The health conditions are at Annex 3 of this document.

Border Control Posts

All bees imported from countries outside of the EU must enter through an approved border control post (BCP).

You must give at least one working day's notice of the consignment's anticipated arrival date to the APHA office responsible for the BCP. This should be done via the IPAFFS system. Information about the system and details regarding how to register can be found on gov.uk - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/import-of-products-animals-food-and-feed-system>. A Common Health Entry Document (CHED) must be submitted with part 1 completed. Please copy the documentation to the NBU. Verbal or telephone notifications are not acceptable. Details of BCPs approved for bees are on gov.uk – you will need to look for an entry which contains the code LA-O and check the comments column to see if bees are accepted. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-border-control-posts-animal-and-animal-product-imports>

Please note that consignments arriving by airmail are sent to the Parcelforce depot at Coventry and then returned to the BCP for the necessary veterinary checks to be carried out. In order to avoid these transit delays, consignments should be sent by cargo as these will be transported directly to the BCP on arrival at the airport.

On arrival at the BCP, the original health certificate will be retained and part 2 of the CHED will be completed by the official veterinarian confirming that all the veterinary checks have been carried out. The consignment will then be released. A copy of the completed CHED should accompany the consignment to its destination.

Charges for veterinary checks

The costs of the checks carried out on imports of live animals from third countries are recovered from the importer under the provisions of the official control regulations. To find out how much the BCP check is, you should contact the relevant BCP.

Post-import Controls

These controls are aimed at reducing the risk of the introduction and spread of exotic bee pests, in particular Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mite (which are notifiable in the UK). The person or business named as the importer on the health certificate must:

1. Transfer the queens to new queen cages before they are introduced to any local colonies upon receipt; and
2. Send the original cages, attendant worker bees and other material that accompanied the queen bees from their country of origin, to Fera Science Ltd. **within 5 days of receipt** for examination for the presence of the Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mite.

Bee packages from New Zealand are subject to a percentage check (depending on the quantity imported) at the destination apiary.

You must destroy the container in which any colony of imported bumble bees was transported and all material that accompanied the bees either during or immediately at the end of the lifespan of the imported colony.

Imports from EU Member States

Currently imports of bees do not need to come through an approved BCP but must comply with the rules set out below, including post-import controls. The latest position on trade with the EU can be found in the Border Operating Model.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-border-operating-model>

Queen bees may be imported from any EU Member State as American foulbrood, Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mite are all notifiable throughout the EU. The Calabria and Sicily regions of Italy are unable to export due to safeguard measures imposed for an outbreak of Small hive beetle.

Prior to export you must obtain a unique reference number from APHA (this will be generated through the IPAFFS system). This number must appear in the certificate provided by the exporting country. Information about the system and details on how to register can be found on gov.uk - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/import-of-products-animals-food-and-feed-system>.

Each consignment must be accompanied by an original health certificate (photocopies are not acceptable) modelled on 'Model QUE' (queen honey bees and queen bumble bees) or 'Model BEE' (bumble bees), available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bees-health-certificates>. The health certificate must be issued, no more than 24 hours prior to despatch, by the relevant authority in the country of origin and is valid for 10 days from the date of issue. The health certificate conditions are at Annex 2. You must provide prior notification of the consignment via IPAFFS by completing a CHED-part 1.

Risk-based checks will be carried out at destination to ensure that the consignment is compliant with the import conditions.

Post-import Controls

These controls are aimed at reducing the risk of the introduction and spread of exotic bee pests, in particular Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mite (which are notifiable in the UK). The person or business named as the importer on the health certificate must:

1. Transfer the queens to new queen cages before they are introduced to any local colonies upon receipt; and

2. Send the original cages, attendant worker bees and other material that accompanied the queen bees from their country of origin, to Fera Science Ltd. **within 5 days of receipt** for examination for the presence of the Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mite.

Imports from Northern Ireland

Information on trade with Northern Ireland is provided on the gov.uk website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-northern-ireland-protocol>

The Northern Ireland Protocol sets the principle of unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses to Great Britain. Northern Ireland businesses may export to Great Britain under the same bee health conditions in place prior to the end of the transition period. This means that NI beekeepers may continue to export packages and colonies to the UK. There will be no border checks on consignments despatched from Northern Ireland.

Safeguard measures

When an outbreak of a notifiable bee pest occurs in another country, we introduce safeguard measures to protect honey bees in GB. The measures can require additional controls before dispatch or at destination or prohibit imports until the situation is resolved. There are 3 safeguard measures in place as of April 2026.

- Bees and apiculture products from Calabria, Lazio and Sicily for Small hive beetle
- Bees and apiculture products from Reunion for Small hive beetle
- Bees and apiculture products from Ukraine for Tropilaelaps mite
- Bees and apiculture products from Honduras

You can check the current position and see details of existing safeguard measures on this webpage.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/imports-exports-and-eu-trade-of-animals-and-animal-products-topical-issues>

Other Information

Packing precautions

When sending bees and other material for examination, please use matchboxes or small cardboard containers, as bees travel well in such containers and arrive in good condition. Tin boxes, polythene bags or other airtight containers cause the sample to sweat and lead to rapid decomposition of the bees, making an examination difficult.

Sales of Bees

It is good practice to keep records of beekeepers to whom you have sold any imported bees. This will enable them to be contacted quickly by the NBU in the event of any pests and diseases being found in the imported consignment. Beekeepers registered on the NBU's BeeBase database (www.nationalbeeunit.com) can record a purchase, sale or gift of bees within their BeeBase records.

A suggested form for keeping records of sales/purchases of bees is also included in the Healthy Bees Plan best practice publication [Advice for obtaining honey bees](#), available on the advisory leaflets page of BeeBase.

Annex 1

Honey bees and bumble bees from Isle of Man and Channel Islands should be provided with relevant health attestations:

Either: (a) the bees/bumble bees come from an area which is not the subject of a prohibition order associated with an occurrence of American foulbrood (AFB) (the period of prohibition has been continued for at least 30 days following the last recorded case and the date on which all hives within a radius of three kilometres have been checked by the competent authority and all infected hives burned or treated and inspected to the satisfaction of the competent authority);

Or (a) the bumble bees come from an environmentally isolated structure recognised by and under the supervision of the competent authority which is free of American foulbrood and was inspected immediately prior to despatch and all bumble bees and breeding stock show no clinical signs or suspicion of disease;

And (b) the bees/bumble bees come from an area of at least 100km radius which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with the suspicion or confirmed occurrence of the Small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) or the Tropilaelaps mite (*Tropilaelaps* spp.) and where these infestations are absent;

Or (b) the consignment consists only of cages of queen bees, each containing one single queen with a maximum of 20 accompanying attendants, and comes from an area of at least 100km radius which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with the suspicion or confirmed occurrence of the Tropilaelaps mite (*Tropilaelaps* spp.) and from an establishment that fulfils all the following requirements:

It is situated at least 30km distance from the limits of a protection zone of at least 20km in radius around confirmed occurrence(s) of the Small hive beetle, and

It is situated outside of a zone restricted by protective measures established by the Union due to the occurrence of Small hive beetle, and

It is situated in an area where annual surveillance for the detection of Small hive beetle by the competent authority is ongoing to provide a confidence level of at least 95% of detecting Small hive beetle if at least 2% of the apiaries were infested, and

It is inspected every month by the competent authority with negative results to provide a confidence level of at least 95% of detecting Small hive beetle if at least 2% of the hives were infested, and

Where each cage or the whole consignment is covered by a fine mesh of maximum 2 mm pore size immediately after the visual examination for the health certification;

Or (b) the bumble bees come from an environmentally isolated structure recognised by and under the supervision of the competent authority, which is free of Small hive beetle;

And (c) the bees/bumble bees as well as their packaging have undergone a visual examination to detect the occurrence of the Small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) or their eggs and larvae, or other infestations in particular the *Tropilaelaps* mite (*Tropilaelaps* spp.) affecting bees.

Annex 2

Queen honey bees and queen bumble bees from countries other than New Zealand must:

Come from a territory in which AFB, Small hive beetle and *Tropilaelaps* mites are notifiable throughout the whole territory;

Come from a breeding apiary which is supervised and controlled by the competent authority;

Come from an area which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with an occurrence of AFB and where no such occurrence has taken place within at least 30 days prior to the issue of the present certificate. Where an outbreak has occurred previously, all hives within a 3km radius must have been checked by the competent authority and all infected hives burned or treated to the satisfaction of the competent authority within 30 days of the last recorded case;

Come from hives (or colonies in the case of bumble bees) from which samples of the comb have been tested and found negative in the last 30 days for AFB as laid down in the WOAHP Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals;

Come from an area of at least 100km radius which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with the occurrence of the Small hive beetle or the *Tropilaelaps* mite and where these infestations are absent;

Have undergone detailed examinations to ensure that all bees and packaging do not contain Small hive beetle or their eggs or larvae, or other infestations in particular *Tropilaelaps* mites affecting bees;

Come from hives (or colonies in the case of bumble bees) which were inspected immediately prior to despatch and show no clinical signs or suspicions of disease including infestations affecting bees;

The packing material, queen cages, accompanying products and food are new and have not been in contact with diseased bees or brood combs and all precautions have been taken to prevent contamination with agents causing diseases or infestations of bees.

Bumble bees must:

Have been bred and kept under a controlled environment within a recognised establishment which is supervised and controlled by the competent authority;

Come from an establishment referred to above which was inspected immediately prior to despatch, with all bumble bees and breeding stock showing no clinical signs of suspicion of disease including infestations affecting bees;

Have undergone detailed examination to ensure that all bumble bees, brood-stock and packaging do not contain the Small hive beetle or its eggs and larvae, or other infestations, in particular *Tropilaelaps* mites, affecting bees;

Travel with packing material, containers, accompanying products and food which are new and have not been in contact with diseased bees or brood combs, and where all precautions have been taken to prevent contamination with agents causing diseases or infestations of bees.

Annex 3

Honey bees and bumble bees from New Zealand must:

Come from a breeding apiary, which is supervised and controlled by the competent authority;

In the case of honey bees, hives come from an area which is not the subject of any restrictions associated with an occurrence of AFB, and where no such occurrence has taken place within at least 30 days prior to the issue of the present certificate. Where an outbreak of AFB has occurred previously, all hives within a 3km radius have been checked by the competent authority and all infected hives burned or treated and inspected to the satisfaction of the competent authority within 30 days following the last recorded case;

Be from hives or come from hives or colonies (in the case of bumble bees) which were inspected immediately prior to despatch (normally within 24 hours) and show no clinical signs or suspicion of disease including infestations affecting bees;

Travel with packaging material, queen cages, accompanying products and food which are new and have not been in contact with diseased bees or brood combs and where all precautions have been taken to prevent contamination with agents causing diseases or infestations of bees.