

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum
21st Meeting – 21st September 2017
Sand Hutton, York**

Present:

Richard Watkins (Chair)	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Kevin Beattie	
Louise Mount	
Mike Brown	Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
Nigel Semmence	
Kate Wilson (Secretary)	
Giles Budge	Fera Science Ltd (Fera)
Margaret Murdin	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
John Hendrie	
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
Paul McCullough 📞	Welsh Government (WG)
Simon Bilsborough 📞	
Norman Carreck 📞	International Bee Research Association (IBRA)
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government
Anna Burrows	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Chris Hartfield 📞	National Farmers Union

Apologies:

John Heard	BFA
John Mellis	
Ken Basterfield	NDB
James Smith	Defra
Willem Roelofs	
Ivor Davis	NDB
Irene Allen	WG
John Bowles	WBKA
John Hill	British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA)
Julian Parker	Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone and set conditions for the meeting. Introductions were given by each member of the Forum, with a special welcome to SB and PM from Welsh Government who have taken over as policy leads from Irene Allen and Jane Jones. SB gave a brief introduction into their background and explained the rationale for the policy move.

2. Minutes of last meeting & Highlight report

Amendments to previous meeting:

- Incorrect assignee to action 1, should be assigned to Margaret Murdin, not Ginman.
- Education contacts: 'Melanie' should be identified as Melanie Swann (DEFRA)

3. Contingency Planning including an update on Asian Hornet

NS presented an update on contingency planning and the Asian Hornet (*Slides circulated to attendees*).

Highlights included:

- Two contingency plans established – one for SHB and Tropilaelaps and a separate one in conjunction with NNS for the Asian Hornet. Abbreviated versions will be made available on BeeBase shortly. Transfer out of responsibilities for maintenance on these plans has now transferred from Defra to APHA.
- Latest update from Italy on SHB: 5 positive apiaries in Calabria, plus 5 sentinel apiaries also positive. Approx. 20km average spread per year (in line with records of natural spread by SHB), also now moved over the mountain range to east coast (approx. 100km) but no movement recorded any further north. Movement to Cosenza in 2016 was identified as an illegal movement by a bee farmer.
GB asked if there are records of the numbers of apiaries per region, and questioned how confident we can be in the number of inspections being a true picture of absence.
MM asked whether their approach was still to try and eradicate. Indications to date assume so, but may be moving towards containment within original outbreak zone.

Action 1: MB to request further clarity from Italian authorities.

- What the UK is doing? Contingency exercises and routine exotic surveillance at high-risk points of entry and sentinel apiary programmes. The NBU completed an unannounced contingency exercise earlier this year, kicked off by a simulated spiked sample into the NBU lab. Exercise included alerts to beekeepers within 15km, set up of LDCC, 4-day inspection period with specific focus on communications between control centres. SS added that the Scottish Inspectors who also participated found it particularly useful. NS confirmed more effort was being focussed on communications to beekeepers on correct procedures for importation to try and reduce import risk.
MM asked why illegal imports weren't automatically destroyed. MB advised that whilst we have the powers to do so, and occasionally this does happen, we would need to be very careful on the enforcement of this. More joined up approach with APHA, HMRC and Border Force at POE has improved interception rates and procedures.

GB asked how much stock of each consignment was being looked at. NS advised it was being done on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the NBU, dependant on risk and cooperation of importers.

- Key lessons identified from the 2016 Asian Hornet outbreak and improvements implemented;
 - Importance of local contingency plans; local offices and facilities, key contacts for area and ideal forage sources and places of interest.
 - Contingency boxes containing day 1 equipment.
 - Extension to SBI season into second week of October.
 - Localised response critical in first days to include obtaining lines of sight as a priority.
 - Brief science update including DNA analysis, tagging and UAV's.
 - Triage of suspect sightings – development of AH app, and improvements to alert system and data sharing. 6000 downloads to date this year and over 1000 suspect records submitted to date.
 - Enhanced surveillance by NBU and response to 'credible' suspect sightings.
 - Citizen Science – encouraging beekeepers use of monitoring traps. MM offered any assistance from BBKA, particularly in relation to launch of new website.
 - Update from outbreaks across Channel Islands – not for further disclosure.

NC added that IBRA has released a new book by Steven Martin, The Asian Hornet: Threats, Biology and Expansion, available from next Tuesday.

Action: Forum members to consider ways to collate Citizen Science data and send ideas to NS.

Action: MM made a request for the NBU deliver training to BBKA Head Office at Stoneleigh to improve triage of suspect Asian Hornet sightings.

4. EU Exit – Day 1 Issues

LM presented key issues across Bee Health sector and what we can do over the next 18 months to mitigate any issues.

5. Education Contracts

MM (representing NDB as well as BBKA) presented a progress report. Both NDB and BBKA will meet all their obligations under the contract. Demand for courses is greater than the contract allows for. General husbandry course delivered in 9 venues across England and the advanced husbandry programmes is running 2 courses at Stoneleigh. Pass rate for both courses increased quite significantly and satisfactory feedback received from all.

MG presented a progress report on behalf of the BFA.

Aiming for 4 new intakes into the apprenticeship scheme this year (the 4th year of intakes). The

BBC's Countryfile programme recently interviewed latest recruit. Positive feedback from sponsor. The 6 apprentices from year 1 all qualified, 2 with distinctions - 1 specific mention for one individual. Queens award for innovation for supplier of BFA eLearning.

Action: MM and MG to send progress reports to NS.

- Break for lunch -

N.B. SB and CH left the meeting.

6. Hive Count

Purpose of count is to estimate number of UK colonies in support of EU apiculture obligations but also to keep BeeBase as up to date as possible as an effective frontline tool.

National figures calculated at 223,167 hives in 2016.

The chair requested members help in updating BeeBase information and would like to maintain same methodology to monitor year-on-year trends.

JH asked how many beekeepers registered at present. MB confirmed ~40,000 across UK.

WS asked if any analysis had been completed on the demographic of respondents, as believes this could present significant bias. RW advised the methodology uses a number of assumptions. MB confirmed no analysis of this had been completed by NBU, but advised GB had looked at bias of electronic communications of husbandry survey. WBKA had not had the support of its members to provide annual return and worries this could also have an effect on beekeepers being discouraged from registering.

Count will likely run from start of November. MM advised article will be required this week if to be published in December issue. NS advised a BeeCraft article was also scheduled for release.

Action: Defra/NBU to communicate hive count comms to forum members by end of month.

7. Update on Queen Rearing Project

KB advised that the national apiculture consultation received responses from all 3 major stakeholders encouraging government to look at queen rearing in the UK.

Defra have set up a working group created to look at different options involving representation from BFA, APHA, DEFRA, and BBKA, with 2 meetings held to date. The different stakeholders would like to see different approaches which has stimulated some interesting discussions. Defra propose a similar approach to Scottish Government to try understand the motivations behind the import

sector and appetite for queen rearing. They are looking to produce two different surveys; one directed at importers and the second directed to the recipients of imported stock. A copy of the survey will be circulated to forum members prior to release.

KB invited forum members to feedback:

MM – official policy of BBKA is to discourage importation of bees to reduce spread of pests and diseases. BBKA have developed a bee breeding course, with the idea of providing a 'kite mark' approval system for successful bee breeders. NDB run a short-course on queen rearing and stock improvement, of which they would like support of the group. Raised concerns that the NBU bees are from imported stock, and several ABI's actively import and sell imported stock and this could cause conflict. MB responded that this is perfectly legal practice.

GB asked whether the kite-mark confirmed freedom of disease, MM confirmed, freedom of disease and locally bred however could not guarantee temperament.

MG – BFA has a broad range of members and opinions; and would like to see the survey also aim to gauge beekeepers attitude to queen replacement. NS encouraged MG to ensure the view of BFA 'non-beekeeper' bee suppliers are represented.

WS – important to look at the demand and drivers towards importation. WBKA and WG would like to make Wales self-sufficient in bee breeding. A lot of associations now have individuals dedicated to breeding local stock for members, Anglesey particularly have seen success in this area.

NC - COLOSS carried out research at 16 sites around Europe and tested 16 different strain of bees, monitored across two years. The significant stand out results was the survival of local strains. Papers of this project are open access.

SS – would exercise word of caution, reminding members that a particularly bad winter can be disastrous for UK breeding which then brings a need for reliance on imported stock and questioned how re-imported stock mated in warmer climate be viewed? Consensus amongst members that the pest and disease risks remain the same. Investigated options for inspecting locally bred nucs and providing 'official' certification for marketing.

GB advised that the husbandry survey enquires about the sources of bees.

WS commented that he is not saying that genetic diversity is a bad thing, but continuously diversifying can cause issues.

Next Steps: continue working group, compose and run survey and use results as evidence base to look at options going forward. Draft survey expected to be available in the next month.

8. AOB/Comms/News

No comments raised.

LM questioned members for agenda items for next meeting; TRACES, queen rearing (consider bring workshop into next meeting).