

THE NATIONAL BEE UNIT'S PROGRAMME

Beekeeper Education

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The work of the National Bee Unit (NBU) and its bee inspectors is guided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Welsh Government (WG) under the Healthy Bees Plan 2009 (HBP).

The overall aim is 'to achieve a sustainable and healthy population of honey bees for pollination and honey production in England and Wales via strengthened partnership working between government and other stakeholders'.

The Bee Health Advisory Forum (BHAFF) was formed under the HBP and this includes representatives from: the NBU, Defra, WG, British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA), Welsh Beekeepers' Association, Bee Farmers' Association (BFA), National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB), Veterinary Medicines Directorate, International Bee Research Association and National Farmers Union.

An apiary demonstration



Beekeeper Education

In 2013 a policy review on 'improving honey bee health' was undertaken which included a consultation with beekeepers and other stakeholders. From the responses, we identified a need to build on our efforts to collaborate with stakeholders on beekeeper education.

Each year the BBKA, BFA and NDB have received money from the HBP for the training and development of beekeepers. In recent years, allocations have been used by the BBKA to develop its intermediate and advanced training, the BFA for its apprenticeship scheme and the NDB for its training courses.

With the arrival of small hive beetle (SHB) in Italy and the establishment of Asian hornet in mainland Europe, the NBU has increased the number of exotic pest inspections around risk points such as ports and airports. This results in more pressure on the inspectors' time and hence the need to prioritise which education events inspectors undertake.



The NBU stand at the National Honey Show, 2016

Beekeeping Safaris

The NBU's beekeeper education programme is varied and includes beekeeping advice to individual beekeepers during apiary inspections through to apiary safaris, apiary training sessions, day workshops and large-scale lectures.

On a safari a bee inspector inspects a small number of apiaries in a day with a group of beekeepers in attendance. This serves the dual function of being an official inspection while also educating a number of local beekeepers. The safaris, run in coordination with the beekeeping association and with beekeepers volunteering their apiaries, usually focus on husbandry, apiary hygiene and disease recognition.

Apiary Demonstrations

Apiary demonstrations tend to be at one apiary and consist of an inspection followed by an

informal discussion covering a wide range of topics including hygiene, disease recognition, integrated pest management and chemical treatments.

Day Workshops

Day workshops can vary but tend to be Bee Health Days, run by the regional bee inspectors (RBIs) in coordination with county-level beekeeping associations. They usually consist of a series of lectures followed by practical workshops covering pests and diseases, husbandry and hygiene, and exotic pests such as small hive beetle and Asian hornet.

Bee Health Days often afford the opportunity for beekeepers to observe and examine frames containing foul brood under controlled conditions, to improve recognition skills. Typically, 3–5 seasonal bee inspectors (SBIs) will assist the RBI at these events, leading various workshops during the day.



An Association Forum

RBI will generally aim to deliver several Bee Health Days within their region each year, as these make best use of resources and reach as many beekeepers as possible. They are therefore increasingly unlikely to participate in evening small-scale speaking engagements at a branch or division level.

Prioritising

In prioritising our training events to where we can be of most benefit we may not be able to attend all training courses when requested. This is not to say that inspectors cannot assist their local association and provide talks or training, much like any other member in a private capacity. But they may be required to do this as a local member and not as an inspector.

We do, of course, encourage all new beekeepers to attend beginners' courses where they can build their knowledge and gain valuable insight into how to keep their bees healthy.

Talks to Associations

SBI still retain some capacity to provide talks for associations at branch level, but these too now have a tighter focus as we do not have the resource to cover the more general topics that have been considered in the past.

The subjects that SBIs can offer include an advanced level of exploration around a variety of foul brood topics, Asian hornet, SHB and varroa management.

Inspectors are able to accept talks that provide bee health education rather than general entertainment. The often quoted: 'Day in the life of a bee inspector' springs to mind as an example that may entertain, but delivers little towards improving bee health.

Major Events

Members of the NBU are often invited to speak at events such as the BBKA Spring Convention, Welsh Beekeepers' Convention, National Honey Show, Bee Tradex and many others. We often have stands at these events and our colleagues from Fera Science frequently give talks on the science that forms the foundation of the inspection programme.

Association Forums

Additionally as a consequence of the policy review, the NBU was encouraged to run Association Forums in each region.

These are run annually by each RBI who invites representatives of beekeeping associations within their region to discuss topics such as the local inspection programme,

notifiable disease prevalence and exotic pests.

Another source of regional information which provides a round-up of pests and diseases and often previews news of Bee Health Days and Forums that are going to be offered regionally in the coming year may be found in the Regional Newsletter, usually produced mid-December by RBIs and published on Beebase here: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=168>.

Your RBI will usually circulate this as a pdf to County Secretaries for forwarding to branches for circulation to members.

For those lucky enough to live within driving range of Yorkshire, some of the training mentioned above can be done at the NBU facilities at Sand Hutton, including visits to the apiaries and lab.

Sign Up!

Finally, although not compulsory, it is important that you sign up to BeeBase so that we can help to protect your colonies.

By registering, you will receive local pest and disease alerts which will enable you to take extra precautions when examining your colonies. It is important that as many beekeepers are registered on BeeBase as possible.

If we don't know where apiaries are, then in the event of a foul brood or exotic pest outbreak, we will not know where to send our bee inspectors and our eradication and containment efforts will be seriously jeopardised.

If you have not already done so, you can register your details on BeeBase by visiting www.nationalbeeunit.com



NDB Courses

"Advancing Beekeeper Education"

These in-depth courses are useful for BBKA Modules, Microscopy Certificate and the Advanced Husbandry Assessment and are for small groups, in excellent facilities and designed to raise your knowledge, enjoyment and skill levels.

NDB Short Courses 2018

15, 16 September	Anatomy and Dissection	Devon
15, 16 September	Teaching Beekeeping	Manchester

Winter 2018/19

The NDB Board will be arranging courses on

**Bee Behaviour,
Swarming
Seasonal Management**

at Stoneleigh during the winter months.

Full details will be available shortly.

Please visit the website:

<http://national-diploma-beekeeping.org/>