



Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency

## **National Bee Unit South East Region**

### **Annual Report 2020**

When I wrote the annual report in 2019, I did not foresee what an effect the Covid-19 pandemic would have on all our lives. I hope that you all have been able to enjoy tending your bees throughout and have had a good Beekeeping year.

2020 brought changes in the NBU Office with Kate Wilson, Office Manager and Lesley Debenham, Admin Support taking temporary promotion to other roles within APHA. Adam Parker has moved into the role of Beebase and Advice Manager (from being a Welsh Seasonal Bee Inspector). Several Seasonal Bee Inspectors who have been unable to undertake field- based roles due to Covid-19 restrictions have also helped by fulfilling office roles.

### **South East Team News**

We are delighted to welcome Danyal Conn to the team. He joined us in August and has been in training since. He will be covering parts of South East London and Kent from April 2021.

Unfortunately, due to Covid19 all Bee Health days and Bee Safaris were cancelled this year.

Bee Inspectors are classed as keyworkers which enabled us to continue inspecting throughout the lockdown whilst observing strict Covid-19 precautions, including inspecting colonies either with the Beekeeper absent or if present keeping at the requisite 2m distance. Despite this, there have been inspections which we have not been able to undertake due to problems with either access or health risks.

### **Inspections Overview**

There are currently 6459 Beekeepers and 8113 apiaries registered on Beebase in the South East Region.

This year we did 891 apiary visits and inspected 3477 colonies. We were also assisted by inspectors from Eastern Region who helped in the area sweeps in North London looking for cases of European and American Foulbroods.

We undertook 10 honey samples for the Veterinary Medicine Directorate all of which were clear.

During the season we also attended several suspect poisonings of colonies. In many of the cases we attended, colony death was found to be due to either Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus or Parasitic Mite Syndrome (caused by Varroa). However, 3 samples were submitted for analysis and these were followed up by Natural England.

## European and American Foulbrood

Yet again this year we had significant finds of European Foulbrood (EFB) especially in the London area.

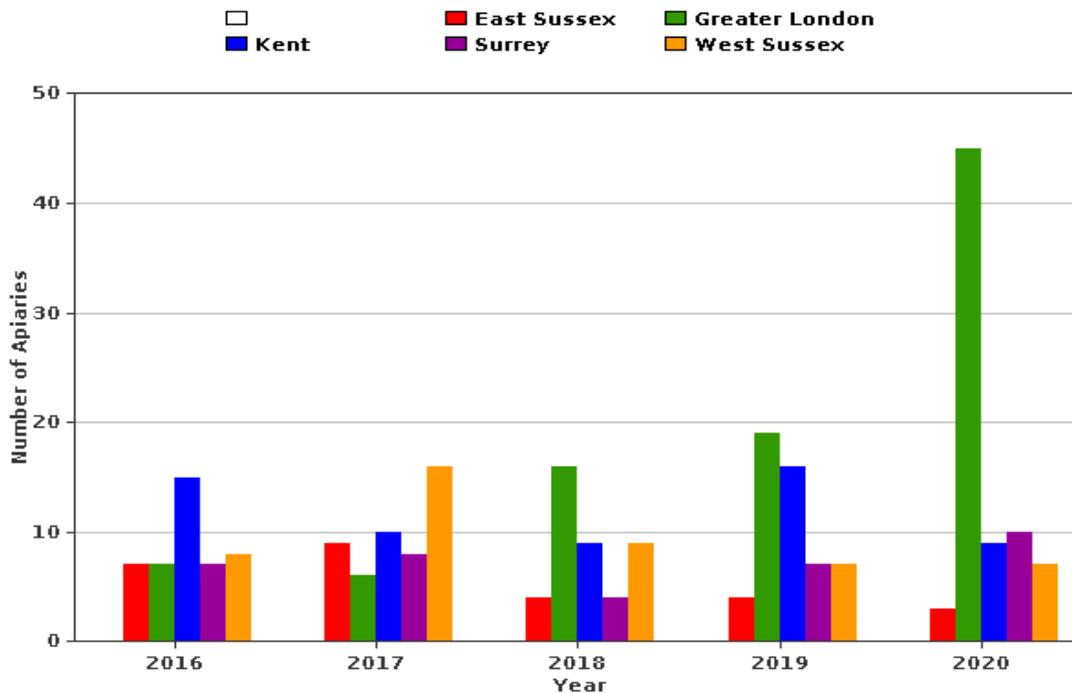


Chart showing number of apiaries with at least one colony infected with EFB

As you can see from the chart above there has been a significant increase in the numbers of apiaries found to be infected with EFB in the London area. This does have to be viewed against the fact that this year more inspections occurred in this area compared to 2016 and 2017. I would, however stress that is important to do regular bee disease inspections of your colonies in the active season and contact your local Inspector if you have any concerns.



Brood showing EFB, note twisted, discoloured larvae (Photo NBU)

American foulbrood (AFB) was found in 4 apiaries in London and East Sussex.



The picture shows AFB, note sunken greasy looking cappings. (Photo NBU)

Please do avoid feeding honey to your bees unless it is from that colony, to avoid disease transmission. A cheap jar of supermarket honey may contain AFB spores and turn out to be an expensive feed.

### **Varroa**

We have continued to see colonies lost to varroa this year. Do monitor your varroa levels and treat when necessary using approved varroicides (see the Veterinary Medicines Directorate website

<https://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/Default.aspx>)

You may also wish to consider using bio-technical methods of control throughout the season. See [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) for more information. If you are using medicines then do follow the manufacturer's instructions, again we have seen colonies lost due to incorrect usage of these products.



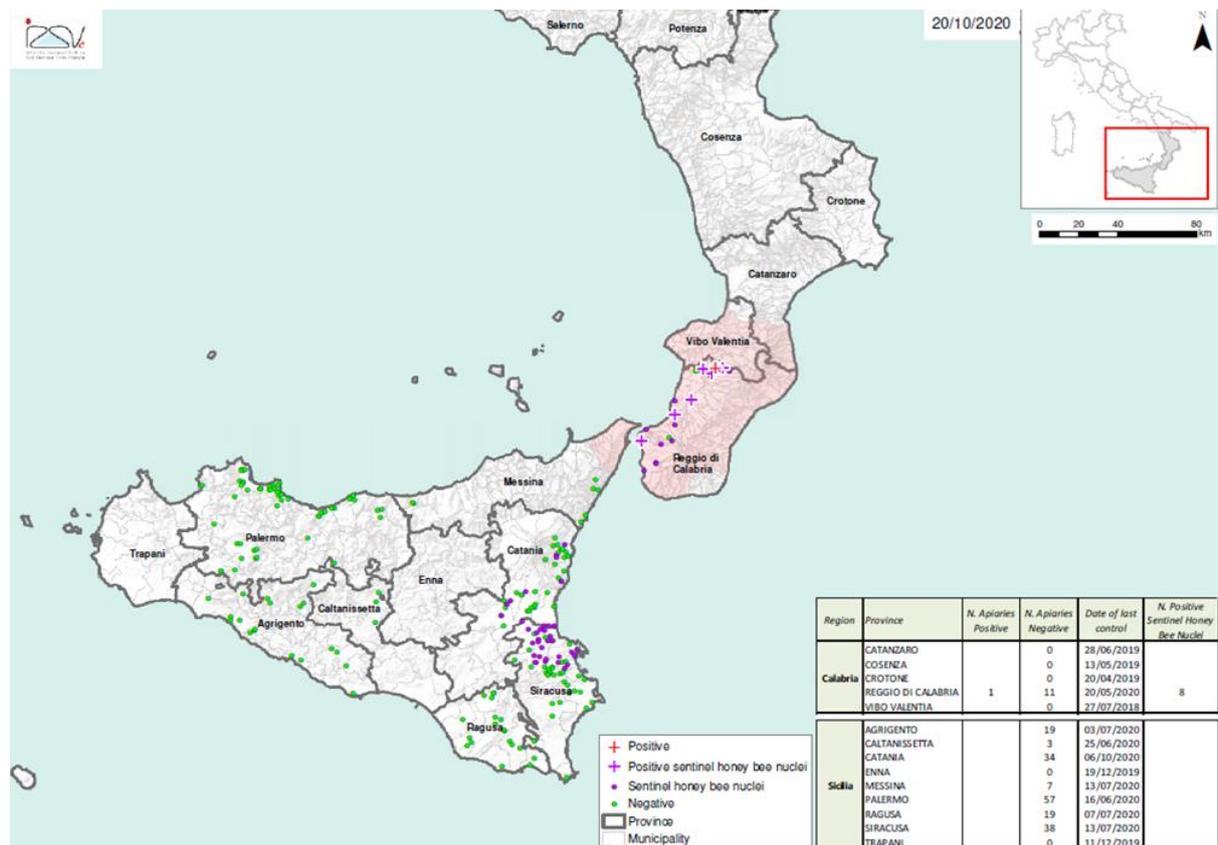
Varroa on top bars of a dead colony

Photo Kay Wreford

It is a legal requirement to keep a record for 5 years of any Veterinary Medicines that are used on your colonies.

## Small Hive Beetle

Information from the National Reference Laboratory for Apiculture in Italy below, updated in October 2020, shows extensive surveillance for Small Hive Beetle in Sicily with no positives found. Meanwhile in the Calabria region on the mainland one positive apiary and eight positive sentinel Nuclei have been found containing both larvae and adult beetles.



## Asian Hornet

This year has seen a reduction in confirmed Asian Hornet sightings in the UK with just one Asian Hornet nest found and destroyed by NBU inspectors in an apple tree in Gosport, Hampshire on Friday 11th September. This followed reports from two householders in the area, one of which was a beekeeper who had identified Asian Hornets feeding on his grapes. The nest was small, approximately 20cm in diameter, local beekeepers were made aware through the Asian Hornet Teams (AHTs) and monitoring has continued in the area but no further Asian Hornets have been sighted. The NBU has close ties with the Jersey Government's Asian Hornet Co-ordinator and team of volunteers, given their location between us and France. NBU inspectors have had field visits there in previous years so that we could learn from their experience. There haven't been as many Asian Hornet nests reported on Jersey this year either, with the tally of those destroyed on the island being 38 to date, which contrasts with 83 found by the end of 2019. The reduction will be partly due to the ongoing eradication of nests and founding queens in previous years. The other most likely reasons given

are the damp and variable temperatures between January and March this year making the over wintering queens more susceptible to fungal attack, and the reduction in traffic from France, due to Covid-19 restrictions, reducing the number of founding queens hitching a ride over from the French mainland in the spring.



Asian Hornet feeding on grapes

Photo Gordon Brooks



Gosport nest in apple tree

Photo Peter Davies

If you think you have seen an Asian Hornet or found a nest then please report this by either using the iPhone and Android app 'Asian Hornet Watch', by filling out an online report form or by emailing [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk). Please include a photograph if possible with your report.

### **Imports and Exports**

2020 saw 21,405 Queens imported of which 45% came from Italy. There were also 1,882 packages imported with 85% also originating in Italy. With the UK coming to the end of the transition period for leaving the EU on 31/12/2020 the rules concerning imports and exports have changed and apply even if you wish to import one Queen for your sole use. Please read the following guidance.

### **Importing or Exporting Honey Bees after 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

#### **The UK has left the EU, new rules apply from January 2021**

The transition period comes to an end this year on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. To find out how this affects Imports and Exports of honey bees as of the 1<sup>st</sup> January and what you can do to prepare please refer to guidance on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and the [Border Operating Model](#), which provide information on the new processes.

For movements both ways between Northern Ireland and GB guidance may be found in the [Northern Ireland Protocol](#).

If you are planning to import or export bees it is your responsibility to follow these new rules and protect GB biosecurity.

Guidance on changes for businesses and citizens may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/transition> where you may use the Brexit checker to obtain a personalised list of actions.

### **If you import Bees:**

- [\*\*Check what you need to do to import from the EU from 1 January 2021\*\*](#)  
You risk not being able to bring or receive goods from EU countries from 1 January 2021 if you are not prepared for the end of Transition
- [\*\*Check what you need to do to import animals, animal products, high risk food and feed into Great Britain from 1 January 2021\*\*](#)  
There will be new processes that importers must follow. These processes to import from an EU country will be introduced in 3 stages:
  - [1 January 2021](#)
  - [1 April 2021](#) (included for completeness but only relevant to animal products and high-risk food and feed)
  - [1 July 2021](#)
- **You will need to register for the UK's new Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS)**  
You will no longer be able to import using the TRACES system from 1 January 2021.

More information:

[Importing animals, animal products and high-risk food and feed not of animal origin from 1 January 2021](#)

EU law prohibits or restricts the import of specific goods from third countries that are deemed to present an unacceptable level of animal, plant or public health risk. These prohibitions and restrictions will be transposed into UK law at the end of the Transition Period.

As GB and the EU are expected to be treating each other as third countries from a bee health point of view, these restrictions and prohibitions will currently prevent or restrict mutual trade in bees.

As a result, importers will only be able to import queens from the EU. Any associated packaging (including queen cages and attendant workers) will have to be sent to a designated laboratory for examination and for honey bees this is Fera Science. Importing packages or colonies will no longer be possible after the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 imported queens will have to pass through a Border Control Point (BCP). Currently, only BCPs at Heathrow and Manchester airports will accept imports of invertebrates, which includes bees. The National Bee Unit will continue to carry out physical checks on consignments of queens according to risk.

## **If you export Bees:**

- [Check what you need to do to export to the EU from 1 January 2021](#)  
You risk not being able to send or take goods to EU countries from 1 January 2021 if you are not prepared for the end of Transition.

The position regarding exports is similar to imports. The EU would also consider the UK to be a Third Country. This will mean that the EU would only accept exports of queens from the UK – providing we are listed as a third country approved to export to the EU. The export of packages and colonies will no longer be possible.

## **Further Advice:**

Please review the Gov.uk pages linked above for more detailed and the most up to date guidance. [BeeBase pages](#) containing Import and Export guidance will be updated on a regular basis for easy reference.

## **The South East Team needs your help.**

There are 15 Beekeepers in our region who have agreed for their apiaries to be Voluntary Sentinel Apiaries. This involves twice a year taking floor debris samples from their hives and submitting this to the NBU laboratory where it is examined for the presence of Small Hive Beetle. This forms part of our surveillance for the arrival of this pest. We do need more volunteers to join this scheme. If you would like to take part or would like to know more details, then do contact me.

How else can you help us?

If you are reading this but are not currently registered on Beebase then can I, please ask that you do register by going to

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/register.cfm?>

You are not automatically registered by your Beekeeping Association.

If you are already registered, then thank you! However, a register is only as good as the information that it holds, so please take some time and update your entry, so that we have correct contact details for you and the correct locations of your apiaries.

## **And finally,**

The Seasonal Bee Inspectors start back on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021. If you need help before then please contact me:

Kay Wreford [Kay.Wreford@apha.gov.uk](mailto:Kay.Wreford@apha.gov.uk) Tel: 07775119483

The contacts for the team are:

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On behalf of the South East Region Team may I wish you a good Beekeeping season in 2021.

Kay Wreford

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