



## National Bee Unit South East Region

### Annual Report 2019

#### Overview of NBU changes

Mike Brown Head of the National Bee Unit for many years retired. His calm and collected manner and wealth of experience has been missed by all who worked with him. Mike made contributions to Bee Health around the world and was admired and respected by all who had the good fortune to work with him.

Julian Parker, formerly National Bee Inspector (NBI), has now taken on the responsibilities of Head of the NBU. Sandra Gray formerly Regional Bee Inspector of the South East region has taken over the role of NBI.

In the NBU Office there have been some changes, with Jenna Cook, NBU support staff leaving for a new job in the Health and Safety Executive. She will be greatly missed as her knowledge of Beebase and all on the admin side of the NBU was exceptional. Also this spring saw Jason Learner (NBU Technical support) leaving to pursue a full time career in beekeeping. Jason provided technical assistance to Bee Inspectors as well as beekeepers. He also wrote articles for Bee Craft, BBKA News etc. and also helped with admin in the NBU office.

Neither Jenna nor Jason have been replaced due to a recruitment freeze in the Civil Service.

In the NBU office we still have Kate Wilson (Office Manager), Lesley Debenham (Admin and Support), Sarah Chadwick (Admin and Support – part time) and Rebekah Clarkson (Healthy bees plan Project Manager). They all do an impressive job under the circumstances and we thank them all. To help them all bee related enquiries should be addressed to your local SBI or myself.

#### South East team news

We said farewell to Michael Cooper, SBI Kent and East Sussex at the end of 2018, his team spirit and sense of humour is greatly missed.

2019 season started with a full complement of SBIs. We welcomed Thomas Bickerdike (London), Julie Parker (London and North Kent), and Stewart Westsmith (South London, Surrey and Kent) to the team. They have done very well to be trained and out competently inspecting in their areas in such a short time.

Diane Steele continues as SBI in East and West Sussex and has been busy inspecting and educating in this area. Hilary Hayward was SBI for Surrey and was kept busy with foulbrood inspections .Both helped considerably with training our new Bee Inspectors.

Hilary Hayward left the South East team at the end of September, she will be missed by us all .We wish her well for the future.

Sandra Gray moved from RBI South East to National Bee Inspector.

I took over as RBI South East in July, whilst still covering Kent as an inspector.

The South East region currently has 6206 beekeepers registered on Beebase and 7756 apiaries recorded .This season we inspected 801 apiaries and of these inspections 329 were classed as exotic pest surveillance inspections .This is where the apiary is close to a risk point for introduction of an exotic pest such as Small Hive Beetle or Tropilaelaps .We also carried out 30 import inspections , 1 export inspection and 5 suspect poisoning inspections.9 honey samples were taken across the region on behalf of the Veterinary Medicine Directorate as part of their screening programme for substances that should not be found in honey .We responded to 1 positive Asian Hornet sighting in our region and also helped Southern region with their Asian Hornet incursion.

In addition to our apiary inspection programme, South East inspectors have given talks to associations, attended Bee Safaris and Bee Health Days and staffed the NBU stand at the National Honey Show.

## Overview of Inspections

The early spring warmth meant colonies had built up well and by the time we were inspecting in April many colonies were already on the point of swarming .Many areas reported good honey crops but removal of a spring crop caused problems for some as there was a noticeable June(late May) gap in some places .It was unfortunately not uncommon to find colonies on the point of starvation , with no stores in the brood box..

Varroa again was found to be causing problems, with some colonies showing mites running across comb ,bees with signs of Deformed Wing Virus and in some cases colonies were found dying with signs of Parasitic Mite syndrome .The NBU advises an Integrated Pest Management approach to controlling varroa .See the advisory leaflet on BeeBase - Managing Varroa ,(www.nationalbeeunit.com ) for advice .Most importantly only use Authorised Veterinary Medicines and follow the manufacturer's instructions when using these varroicides . Failure to do so, means that at the very least the treatment may not work or at the worst could damage your colony .It is also a legal requirement to keep a record of the purchase ,application and destruction of any medications used .This needs to be kept for 5 years.

Chronic Bee Paralysis virus was also noted to be the cause of some colony losses. Hopefully ongoing research into this will help our management in the future

## Foulbrood Inspections

This year 3654 colonies were inspected in 801 apiaries in the South East region.

The number of colonies with foulbrood disease in the South East were

EFB 134 (77 in 2018)

AFB 3 (6 in 2018)

EFB distribution in the South East region 2018-2019 by number of colonies

	2018	2019
East Sussex	10	6
West Sussex	14	13
London	29	47
Kent	17	51
Surrey	7	17

AFB was only found in Kent this year in the South East region.

## Asian Hornet update

In 2019 three Asian Hornet nests have been located and destroyed by the National Bee Unit, following sightings by members of the public. The first one was near Tamworth, Staffordshire on 6th September.

On 4th October a further nest was destroyed following the confirmed sighting of an Asian hornet near Christchurch, Dorset and a second nest was destroyed nearby on 11th October. The latter is likely to be a primary nest, related to the nest destroyed the previous week. Genetic analysis will be carried out to investigate relatedness between the nests.

In addition there have been two confirmed individual sightings of Asian Hornets. The first was on 3rd July of a female Asian hornet in New Milton, Hampshire, based upon visual examination, the hornet was likely to be a queen. A further sighting was reported by a member of the public to the south west of Ashford, Kent, on 9th September where a single hornet was captured, surveillance continues in both areas. The NBU sent out an alert to encourage all beekeepers and members of the public to watch for Asian hornets in their apiaries, on fallen fruit and on flowering plants such as ivy.

We ask beekeepers and the general public to remain vigilant and report any suspect sightings using the iPhone and Android app 'Asian Hornet Watch', by filling out an online report form or by emailing [alernonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernonnative@ceh.ac.uk) .

- The 'Asian Hornet Watch' app is available to download free from the Apple and Android app stores.
- Members of the public can also report sightings by email to [alernonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernonnative@ceh.ac.uk) . Please provide a photo along with where you found it and a contact number to reply to.
- Reports can be sent via the online submission form on the Non-native Species Secretariat website, again with a photo.
- Details on the identification of an Asian hornet can be found on the Bee Base guide or the NNSS Asian hornet ID sheet.

## Small Hive Beetle (SHB)

On the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019, the presence of *A. tumida* (SHB) was again confirmed in eastern Sicily, in an apiary located in the municipality of Lentini in the province of Syracuse. Two adults of SHB were detected in two different colonies, this apiary had been under surveillance since May 2019 as on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, the authorities had intercepted a movement of 64 colonies from Sicily without any accompanying documents at the port of Villa San Giovanni on the Italian mainland.

The colonies were sent back to the apiary of origin in Sicily. Several inspections were subsequently carried out in this apiary to look for *A. tumida*. During one visit 13 colonies of unknown origin were discovered and SHB was detected in two of them. Epidemiological investigations showed that these 13 colonies had been stolen on 9<sup>th</sup> June in the protection zone of Reggio di Calabria located on the mainland.

*Aethina tumida* had only been detected once in Sicily prior to this outbreak, on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014. SHB adults were detected in a migratory apiary in the municipality of Melilli, located approximately 35 km away from Lentini. At the time, the epidemiological investigation had shown that the colonies were present in Gioia Tauro between April and August 2014. Gioia Tauro is the municipality of the Calabria region where the first detection of SHB appeared. Following this outbreak, surveillance was subsequently carried out every year with inspections in selected apiaries and sentinel apiaries.

As no new case had been discovered in the two years following this positive find, a Commission Implementing decision of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 had removed Sicily from the list of areas subject to protective measures in relation to SHB in Italy. A phylogenetic analysis was carried out on the specimens detected in June 2019. The results showed that the genetic profile of the specimens was similar to the one of other specimens previously isolated in the

Calabria region but different from the genetic profile of the specimens isolated in the previous outbreak confirmed in Sicily in November 2014. It confirms that the outbreak was due to an illegal movement of colonies from the protection zone of Reggio di Calabria and not a consequence of the spread of SHB in Sicily.

The infected apiary was destroyed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2019 and the soil was treated with a permethrin solution. A protection zone of 5 km radius around the site was set up and inspections are being carried out in the 54 apiaries registered in the zone.

No new outbreaks have been reported in the protection zone of Reggio di Calabria, the original outbreak site on the mainland, since November 2018 when the last detection occurred in a sentinel apiary. No new outbreaks have been reported in the province of Cosenza (situated in the North of Calabria) since September 2016. It has to be noted that surveillance is ongoing in Italy and not all the scheduled inspections have been carried out and reported, for the moment.



SHB larva and adult.

Early detection of the presence of SHB in the UK will be key to its eradication. To this end all beekeepers should be familiar with the signs of SHB, see Beebase [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) for more information.

Thanks once again go to those beekeepers in the region who volunteer through the Sentinel Apiary programme to actively monitor their colonies for the exotic pests, SHB and Tropilaelaps. If you would like to join this programme then please get in touch with me.

## Imports

The number of imports from the EU continues to rise. In 2018 there were 15,946 Queens imported, 974 Nucs , and 996 packages .The table below shows the situation in 2019

Queen Bees or nucleus colonies imported from the EU into England, Scotland and Wales in 2019						Report for year
						2019 ▼
Country of origin	Number of consignments imported	Batched number of queens	Batched number of nucleus	Batched number of packages	Batched number of Colonies	Number of consignments inspected
Bulgaria	1	3	0	0	0	1
Cyprus	18	318	0	0	0	10
Czech Republic	7	159	0	175	0	1
Denmark	43	2574	0	0	0	20
France	1	0	0	0	15	1
Germany	25	203	0	20	1	11
Greece	88	4928	0	0	0	18
Italy	85	3304	0	2428	0	57
Malta	36	3529	0	0	0	26
Netherlands	4	12	0	0	0	3
Poland	3	40	30	0	20	1
Romania	37	2806	0	0	0	11
Slovenia	65	2205	0	0	0	21
Spain	1	0	0	0	100	1
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>20081</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2623</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>182</b>

Import or export of bees, (including queens, packages and colonies) is permitted only if accompanied by an Official European Union (EU) or Third Country health certificate issued by the competent authority where the bees originated. It is a **legal** requirement that you notify the **National Bee Unit** of imports of bees from outside the UK. You can do this by completing the Importer Notification Form and posting, faxing or emailing it to us.

Alternatively, if self-registered, you can log in to the Beekeeper pages of BeeBase and click the 'Import Notifications' link from the left hand index. It is of course illegal to import bees, queens or any bee-related products from within the SHB exclusion zone around the affected areas in southern Italy. Further details can be found on the Imports/Exports pages of BeeBase [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) .These pages will also contain up to date information regarding the situation on EU exit.

## Education

With foulbrood inspections ,exotic pest surveillance inspections and import checks you might wonder that the South East team has time for anything else , but we also ran 2 successful Bee Health days .These were at Guildford and Wisborough Green and involved a total of 120 Beekeepers .These events are a way of learning in groups about various pests and diseases and , most importantly getting to see and handle diseased combs .If your association would like to host a Bee health Day in 2020 then get in touch with me .All such events need to take place in the active season and during a weekday.

## And finally.....

I hope that all of you reading this are registered on BeeBase but if not, please can I encourage you to register .It is free and all your details are kept confidential .The benefits to you are email alerts when foulbrood or exotic pest( including Asian Hornet) are found in the area of your apiaries .The benefit to the wider beekeeping community is that inspectors know where to look for disease or pests so that outbreaks can be quickly brought under control. Just because you are a member of the BBKA does not mean that you are automatically registered on Beebase .If you are registered ,then thank you, but please do keep your apiary locations updated .If you have lost your Beebase password then contact the NBU office for a reset.

The Seasonal Bee Inspectors will start back on 30.03.2020.If you need help or advice prior to this then contact me.

The contacts for the team are

Thomas Bickerdike	<a href="mailto:Thomas.Bickerdike@apha.gov.uk">Thomas.Bickerdike@apha.gov.uk</a>	07775119464
Julie Parker	<a href="mailto:Julie.Parker@apha.gov.uk">Julie.Parker@apha.gov.uk</a>	07769933191
Diane Steele	<a href="mailto:Diane.Steele@apha.gov.uk">Diane.Steele@apha.gov.uk</a>	07775119452
Stewart Westsmith	<a href="mailto:Stewart.Westsmith@apha.gov.uk">Stewart.Westsmith@apha.gov.uk</a>	07769933172
Kay Wreford	<a href="mailto:Kay.Wreford@apha.gov.uk">Kay.Wreford@apha.gov.uk</a>	07775119483

On behalf of the South East team I would like to wish you all a fantastic 2020 beekeeping season .May it be the best one you have ever had!

Kay Wreford

Regional Bee Inspector South East Region

07775119483

Head Office : National Bee Unit

The Animal and Plant Health Agency

National Agri-Food Innovation Campus

Sand Hutton

York YO41 1 LZ

Phone 0300 303 0094 email [nbu@apha.gov.uk](mailto:nbu@apha.gov.uk)

Website [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)