

Healthy Bees Plan Quarterly Newsletter for all those interested in honey bee health

Issue 2 - January 2010

Quarterly newsletter on progress with implementing the Healthy Bees Plan (www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/growing/bees/news/plan.pdf) which the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) is implementing on behalf of Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

Highlights:

- The NBU's BeeBase wins award! BeeBase has won the Prestigious 2009 Whitehall & Westminster World Civil Service Award for Knowledge Management and Analysis. The team from Fera won the award from over 800 nominations and was chosen for its innovative work on BeeBase as an important disease control tool – congratulations!
- Nearly 60 beekeepers from 26 associations across England and Wales will be funded by the Healthy Bees Plan to take up the accredited 'Train the Trainer' course. The Healthy Bees Project Management Board, which includes amateur and professional beekeepers, fully supports this initiative as it will improve teaching skills of trainers/beekeepers who train other beekeepers. This is an important first step towards improving beekeeping skills which is a key objective of the Healthy Bees Plan.
- The NBU enjoyed further recognition in a study by the European Food Safety Authority entitled 'Bee Mortality and Bee Surveillance in Europe'. The NBU were noted for their active colony loss surveillance and their overall approach to surveillance of honey bee pests and diseases.
- Some 3000 additional beekeepers have registered on BeeBase during 2009. **If you haven't already registered please do so** by visiting www.nationalbeeunit.com or by phoning the NBU on 01904 462510. By letting us know that you keep bees and the location of your hives, you will be helping in our ongoing battle against disease and our efforts to sustain honey bee populations. More on the benefits to you from registration can be found on pages 4 and 5 of this Newsletter.



Working with others to raise awareness about BeeBase and the importance of registration:

- Following the WI's visit to Fera in October, we are continuing to work with them to raise awareness of BeeBase and the importance of registration for disease control.
- Fera has written to partner organisations, such as other Defra agencies and bodies, beekeeping suppliers, smallholding associations, and wildlife/countryside associations requesting they include a link to BeeBase on their websites and providing them with further details on the benefits of registration (see pages 4 and 5 of this Newsletter). We've received very positive feedback and many have already added the link. Additionally letters have been sent to large landowners requesting they encourage any beekeepers with apiaries on their land to register on BeeBase.

- If anyone reading this Newsletter would like to help encourage beekeepers to register on BeeBase, particularly given the benefits to beekeepers and for control of honey bee diseases, the Healthy Bees Project Manager would be delighted to hear from you, contact details below. This may simply involve including the BeeBase address (www.nationalbeeunit.com) on your own websites or publicity material.

Update on medicines for bees:

- The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) continues to implement its action plan to increase the availability of authorised medicines for honey bees and also to ensure their correct use, which is paramount for food safety. Residues in honey, due to improper use of medicines, could also undermine its image as a healthy natural product. Further details are given in its Action Plan - www.vmd.gov.uk/VetSQP/Bee/actionplan.pdf - which is regularly updated. Optimal use of available medicines by beekeepers is also important to sustain their effectiveness in treating pests and diseases.
- The VMD, NBU, BFA and BBKA hold a list of veterinary surgeons who have an interest in apiculture. Each of these vets have indicated that they are willing to help beekeepers to apply for a Special Import Certificates (SICs), so that products authorised in other Member States can be imported to treat bee diseases under the Cascade. It should be noted that **any** veterinary surgeon can apply for an SIC to import a product for use under the Cascade.
- In addition to authorisation in 2009 of ApiLife Var, an essential oil product, for use in the UK, the VMD have also approved five products, which are authorised in Greece, France, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Spain for use under the SIC scheme. These are Checkmite, Apivar, Nonosz, Formidol, Oxypharm PLV Sol and Ecoxal.
- Miteaway, which is authorised in Canada and the USA as a pesticide, is now being marketed in the UK as a hive cleaner. There are no restrictions on the supply of this product to UK beekeepers.

Upcoming Key Activities:

- As agreed by the Healthy Bees Project Management Board, **4 Pilot Roadshows** will be held over the coming months in Wales, South West, North West and Eastern regions. The theme of these Roadshows will be Varroa control and good husbandry practices to combat colony loss. A key aim is to attract new beekeepers to attend, and also beekeepers who do not usually attend training events or who are not members of local associations. If these 4 events are well received and effective, then we may consider extending to other regions.

Wales 16/02/2010 Media Resource Centre, Llandrindod Wells - contact Amy Byrne for registration 01267 245007 amy.byrne@wales.gsi.gov.uk

North West 06/03/2010 Location tbc – contact Ian Homer for registration - 01308 482161 ian.homer@fera.gsi.gov.uk

South West 20/03/2010 Uplowman Village Hall – contact Adam Vevers for registration
01364 653474 adam.vevers@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Eastern 28/03/2010 Peterborough Regional College – contact Ian Homer for registration
01308 482161 ian.homer@fera.gsi.gov.uk

If you know any new beekeepers or beekeepers who are not members of associations who may benefit from these training events, then we would much appreciate it if you would let them know about these events.

- The detailed work of **implementing the Healthy Bees Plan** continues. During the coming months, the Project Management Board will consider draft workplans prepared by the Science and Evidence Advisory Group and by Husbandry and Education Groups. A Healthy Bees communications strategy has been developed by the Communications Working Group. Check the BeeBase news pages for further information about detailed implementation activities.
- Defra has commissioned a **study of beekeeping practices** and the guidance available to both new and experienced beekeepers particularly on husbandry and on pests and diseases. Beekeepers' opinions and experiences are a very important part of the study. Defra's researchers will be aiming to gather the views of beekeepers from across England and Wales. **If you are a beekeeper and would be willing to participate in this study, please follow the link; www.pspq.com/beestudy**
- The **risk assessments commissioned by Defra on small hive beetle and on nosema** will be completed by the end of March and will be used to review disease control policy, including updating the contingency plan for small hive beetle which we're aiming to publish in the spring.

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BeeBase - An award winning tool designed and run by beekeepers for beekeepers to help you keep healthy bees

Why use BeeBase – what’s in it for me as a beekeeper?

- Request free advisory visits from your local Bee Inspector
- Be alerted to pest and disease problems in your area
- Access to up-to-date pest and disease management leaflets
- Have secure access to your own (and only your own) inspection history and apiary information
- Access to current legislation
- Interactive maps of disease outbreaks
- Post code search facility to find your local Bee Inspector
- Easy access to contact information of NBU support staff
- Access to up-to-date Research & Development information
- You’ll be playing your part as a member of the beekeeping community in helping to sustain honey bees for the future



What is the advantage of an apiary visit?

Our Bee Inspectors are experienced beekeepers who can offer a wealth of beekeeping expertise to help you care for your bees. A typical visit includes; checking brood for notifiable diseases, answering any husbandry queries and offering advice on varroa control and good beekeeping practices.

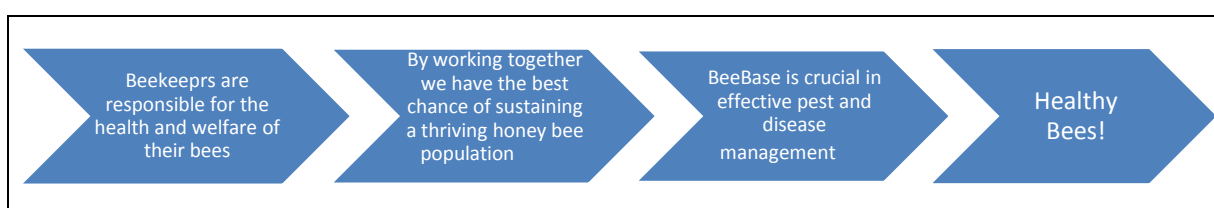
Why is it so important to register on BeeBase?

BeeBase is an important tool in the control of bee diseases and pests. Where pests are confirmed, the NBU can use BeeBase to identify apiaries at risk in the local area and as a result target control measures effectively. By knowing where the bees are, we can help you manage disease risks in your apiaries. Such risks could include the incursion of new pests eg. small hive beetle.



How to register on BeeBase

Registration is easy, simply log on to www.nationalbeeunit.com click register and fill out the one page form. No computer? No problem – you can also register by phoning the NBU on 01904 462510.



FAQ's

What Happens after I register?

Once registered, BeeBase will inform the Regional Bee Inspector who may then contact you directly to check whether you would like to arrange a free advisory visit to your apiary by your local Bee Inspector. After the visit your local Bee Inspector will be on hand to offer free advice and support.

In the event of finding notifiable disease (AFB, EFB) the Bee Inspector will implement controls and check nearby colonies within 3-5Km radius of the initial outbreak. He/she will also advise on what steps you can take to minimise the risk of re-infection.

How secure is the database?

Access to the secure part of BeeBase is by user name and password only which means that registered beekeepers can only access their own records. BeeBase is run over https, the same technology used by banks to secure websites requiring a username and password to ensure neither can be intercepted.

Will any details be passed on to anyone else?

No, BeeBase is registered with the Information Commissioner and all Fera employees including the NBU and its Bee Inspectors are bound by the terms of confidentiality and the Data Protection Act. No details are passed to any third parties, including other Government Departments.