



National Bee Unit - South East Region

November 2006

A brief overview of the past seasons achievements by the SE region team of bee inspectors

Inspection Programme

The season started with a seasonal inspector short (for the Surrey area), as unfortunately, Tim Burke decided not to carry on for a third season. Having had no response to the adverts nationally and the contacts with local associations proving unfruitful, I asked a local beekeeper, David Rudland, who had expressed some interest in working as a bee inspector, to start on a casual basis. He came 'on board' at the end of April and was involved in the usual round of practical training before he was able to venture forth on his own. David is a knowledgeable beekeeper and has, I hope, settled in well and found his feet in Surrey; I look forward to working with him in future seasons.

It was, as usual, a busy year in the South East with a total of 626 apiaries/2837 colonies inspected during the season. Of the 2837 colonies inspected 65 were diagnosed with EFB, presenting inspectors with a heavy load of disease control work and meaning there were many other colonies to be checked in the 3 mile 'at risk' areas near to these outbreaks. No AFB occurred until the end of October when one colony was diagnosed in North London, and I was able to do the destruction whilst en route to the National Honey show. Full details of the inspections carried out in the SE are shown on the NBU website beebase.csl.gov.uk check 'bee diseases' and look at 'live reports', ranging from foulbrood inspections to resistance tests and bee import figures. A brief summary of inspection data is at the end of this report.

Exotic pest surveillance programme

This season we continued with the exotic pest surveillance programme, checking apiaries seen to be 'At risk' from the import of exotic species such as *Aethina tumida* (Small Hive Beetle) and *Tropilaelaps spp.* mites. A total of 89 apiaries/369 colonies were inspected and several callouts were attended urgently, where beekeepers had seen something suspicious. Apiaries are selected on criteria such as closeness to: airports, seaports, container freight ports, importers of raw bees-wax, wholesale fruit markets, etc. and form a part of the regular inspection programme. I have to make a plea here, there are only 5 inspectors in the SE region and the number of colonies that we are capable of looking at is therefore limited. So you should be checking your colonies regularly for exotic pests and if you see anything suspicious call the NBU or myself. If you are not sure what SHB or *Tropilaelaps* look like, leaflets are available or check beebase.csl.gov.uk and look under 'advisory leaflets', or check out the PowerPoint presentation on SHB. It is crucial that any incursion of these exotic pests to the UK should be picked up immediately, so that we can act promptly to stop the pest spreading. Earlier this year there were consultations with interested parties (BBKA, BFA, etc.) and a contingency plan has been produced detailing how the NBU would

deal with such an outbreak. Details of the plan are currently available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/disease-bees/index.htm>

European Foulbrood research

This research programme, into the geographical distribution of European foulbrood throughout England & Wales, has been funded by Defra and is known as SID 3. (Science in Defra - 3) Bee inspectors were asked to collect samples of both adult bees and larvae from colonies that were either:

1. Diagnosed as having EFB
2. Not infected but in an apiary with infected colonies
3. From an apiary without any apparent infection

Colonies would be revisited on a regular basis for further samples with the final sample to be taken in the Spring 2007. 179 colonies have been sampled in this manner and are now being analysed for the presence of EFB. I am sure the results of this research will make interesting reading. Full details of the research plan are at <http://www2.defra.gov.uk/research>

Resistant varroa

74 varroa resistance tests were carried out but it is obvious that resistance to pyrethroids is spreading all across the SE region. It is now a case for beekeepers to put into practice knowledge gained about Integrated Varroa Management. Check your colonies now for varroa levels (using an open mesh floor) and act quickly if mite levels are higher than you expected. Looking forward to next spring, if you lose colonies and are tempted to buy to replace your losses, make sure you inspect the bees before you purchase. I know this will mean two visits, one to inspect the colony and one to collect if you decide to buy, but this simple precaution can save you a lot of heartache later. Inspection is the only way to see if the colony really is worth the money you are spending, so check it out!

Honey

I have, so far, had 45 responses to my recent request for honey information and I will write up this data separately. Thank you to all who gave details. Generally across the region honey crops were low due to the prolonged dry spell. Low ground-water levels stopped many plants from producing nectar in quantity. Of course, if you were lucky enough to have moisture in the soil, honey crops were good, as there were many long fine days for bees to forage.

Educational events

On the events scene we were involved in apiary tours for 16 Associations, some of which were over 2 days. Other educational work included: 15 apiary demonstrations and over 20 talks, together with special events such as IPM days (5) and 3 disease workshops. I am hoping that Associations will pick up on the bee disease workshops; these were offered for the first time this season and were most enjoyable, a mix of practice and theory. If you think you might like to run one for your Association this coming season, please contact me, contact details are at the end of this report. I also attended both Brinsbury and Plumpton bee auctions and the National Honey Show in an advisory capacity.

I am now planning events for next year so please contact me if you would like your Association to be involved in any of the above, or similar activities

Alan Byham

Below is a brief summary of the inspection figures for the SE region:

Regional inspection and foulbrood summary

County Code	Apiaries Inspected	Colonies Inspected	%EFB Apiaries	%AFB Apiaries	% EFB Colonies	% AFB Colonies
ESU	66	263	4.6%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%
GRL	147	618	6.2%	0.7%	3.1%	0.2%
KEN	259	1269	3.1%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%
SUR	79	420	3.8%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%
WSU	75	267	5.33%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%
Totals:	626	2837				

For further information about bee disease in the South East please contact:

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