

## National Bee Unit - South East Region

December 2010

The 2010 overview of the activities of the SE region team of bee inspectors

### The South East Team

This year the season began on 29<sup>th</sup> March, and as usual, we all immediately went up to the National Bee Unit's (NBU) offices, which are part of the Food and Environment Agency (FERA) at Sand Hutton, York, for our annual inspector's conference. This is a time for training and getting up to speed with any changes to legislation and working practices that have occurred in the winter season, and a chance to hear about the latest research that is ongoing in the laboratory. It is also a great chance for inspectors to catch up with colleagues from other areas, as we only get together once a year and any other contact has to be by phone.

At the beginning of the season, the SE team started out with 5 inspectors plus myself but, due to the fact that the funding was kept at the high 2009 level, was soon made up to 6 with the addition of Brian McCallum who started with us during May. He was out with the more experienced inspectors initially, whilst completing his training but was soon inspecting on his own. Unfortunately for the team, Nick Withers indicated that he wished to retire and finished at the end of the season, 1<sup>st</sup> October. I don't yet know what the situation will be regarding a replacement of Nick but we all wish him well. He has worked as a bee inspector since 2002 mostly in East Sussex and the adjoining part of Kent. He was well known and well liked and respected, always ready with a useful practical comment, mostly from his own wealth of experience with bees.

At the end of 2010 the team consists of:

Telephone

Brian McCallum	London, South	07775 119478
Caroline Washington	London, North	0208 209 0065
Diane Steele	West Sussex	01903 745667
Michael Cooper	East Kent	01622 891226
David Rudland	Surrey	01883 622788

At this moment, I haven't made choices about work areas for inspectors for the 2011 season, as I'm hoping that it will be possible to recruit for a replacement for Nick.

## Inspection Programme

Again this year we kept up the higher rate of inspections from the previous season as the team totalled 7 in all. A total of 4091 colonies/860 apiaries were inspected during the season. Of the 4091 colonies inspected, 114 were diagnosed with EFB. (approx 2.8% infection) The number of colonies with EFB has fallen from 128 in 2009 to 114 this year, with an average of approximately 5.8% apiaries inspected showing symptoms of EFB. As in recent years, no AFB was diagnosed in the SE region.

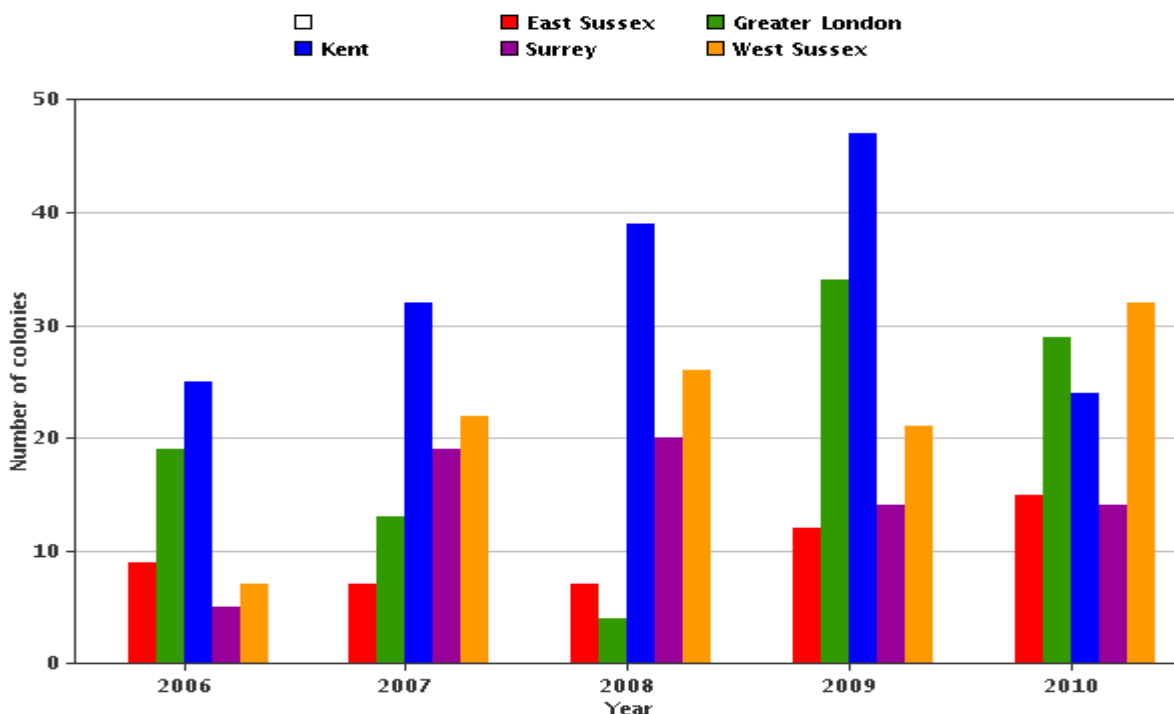
### Regional inspection and foulbrood summary

County Code	Colonies Inspected	EFB Colonies	%EFB Colonies	Apiaries Inspected	EFB Apiaries	%EFB Apiaries
ESU	571	15	2.63%	131	7	5.34%
GRL	978	29	2.97%	208	7	3.37%
KEN	1060	24	2.26%	263	15	5.70%
SUR	530	14	2.64%	128	8	6.25%
WSU	952	32	3.36%	132	13	9.85%
<b>Totals:</b>	<b><u>4091</u></b>	<b><u>114</u></b>		<b><u>860</u></b>	<b><u>50</u></b>	

As last year, I have shown the figures in terms of the numbers of beekeepers that have been visited:

	ESU	GRL	KEN	SUR	WSU	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>
Number of beekeepers visited	118	254	219	125	108	<b><u>824</u></b>
Number of beekeepers with EFB colonies	4	9	14	6	8	<b><u>41</u></b>
Percentage of beekeepers visited with EFB colonies	3.39%	3.54%	6.39%	4.72%	7.41%	

This year I have added a graph showing the trends of EFB in the counties over the past 5 years. It is interesting to note in previous years that, although West Sussex usually has the highest percentage of colonies/apiaries inspected with EFB, Kent often has the highest actual number. This is due in part to how the different counties are populated. Kent often has the highest number of inspections made each year but the population is quite spread over the county. West Sussex, with this season only 100 less inspections than Kent, has a large population in the coastal strip stretching from Brighton to Chichester. As a consequence of this it is more likely that apiaries are closer together and that disease can therefore spread more easily between those colonies. I have to say that it is becoming a big worry that disease will become a more serious problem, particularly in Greater London, as more beekeepers crowd bees into the urban areas.



The following table shows 10 km squares where European foulbrood has been found in the 2010 season, in the South East area:

County	10 km Squares EFB Found	Area Name	Number of Positive EFB Diagnoses	Month EFB Found
East Sussex	TQ31	BURGESS HILL	3	June
East Sussex	TQ40	NEWHAVEN	2	July
East Sussex	TQ41	N.E. LEWES	8	June
East Sussex	TQ43	FOREST ROW	1	April
East Sussex	TQ43	FOREST ROW	1	May
Greater London	TQ29	BARNET & FINCHLEY	2	April
Greater London	TQ29	BARNET & FINCHLEY	3	June
Greater London	TQ29	BARNET & FINCHLEY	1	September
Greater London	TQ36	CROYDON	3	June
Greater London	TQ36	CROYDON	1	August
Greater London	TQ36	CROYDON	1	October
Greater London	TQ37	S.E. LONDON	9	May
Greater London	TQ37	S.E. LONDON	2	August
Greater London	TQ37	S.E. LONDON	1	September
Greater London	TQ39	ENFIELD	3	April
Greater London	TQ39	ENFIELD	2	June
Greater London	TQ46	BROMLEY & ORPINGTON	1	August
Kent	TQ36	CROYDON	3	July
Kent	TQ46	BROMLEY & ORPINGTON	2	September
Kent	TQ47	WOOLWICH & ELTHAM	1	July
Kent	TQ55	SEVENOAKS	3	September
Kent	TQ66	MEOPHAM	1	April
Kent	TQ73	CRANBROOK	2	May
Kent	TQ74	STAPLEHURST & MARDEN	1	August
Kent	TQ74	STAPLEHURST & MARDEN	1	September
Kent	TQ75	MAIDSTONE	1	April
Kent	TQ75	MAIDSTONE	2	August
Kent	TQ77	N. ROCHESTER & HOO	1	July
Kent	TQ84	HEADCORN	2	May
Kent	TQ84	HEADCORN	1	July
Kent	TQ84	HEADCORN	1	August
Kent	TQ94	W. ASHFORD	1	July
Kent	TR03	ROMNEY MARSH	1	June
Surrey	TQ06	WEYBRIDGE	1	April
Surrey	TQ16	KINGSTON & ESHER	3	September
Surrey	TQ17	RICHMOND & HOUNSLOW	2	June

Surrey	TQ24	S. REIGATE & HORLEY	1	April
Surrey	TQ26	EPSOM & SUTTON	3	April
Surrey	TQ36	CROYDON	4	September
West Sussex	SU71	WEST MARDEN	1	May
West Sussex	SU80	CHICHESTER	1	May
West Sussex	SU80	CHICHESTER	1	August
West Sussex	SZ89	SELSEY	4	May
West Sussex	SZ89	SELSEY	1	August
West Sussex	TQ10	WORTHING	1	May
West Sussex	TQ10	WORTHING	1	August
West Sussex	TQ11	STEYNING	4	April
West Sussex	TQ11	STEYNING	4	May
West Sussex	TQ11	STEYNING	2	June
West Sussex	TQ11	STEYNING	3	July
West Sussex	TQ20	SHOREHAM & HOVE	3	June
West Sussex	TQ20	SHOREHAM & HOVE	1	August
West Sussex	TQ21	HENFIELD	2	March
West Sussex	TQ21	HENFIELD	1	May
West Sussex	TQ21	HENFIELD	2	June

All the figures presented here can be found on the public pages of the National Bee Unit website, Beebase, at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) click on Bee Diseases in the menu and then on Disease Incidence and Maps. I suggest that it becomes a regular practice to review these pages, to assess whether there is any foulbrood disease in your area. However, this year the NBU has introduced a system called 'Alerts' which will automatically contact a beekeeper by email if they have an apiary within 5km of a known disease outbreak. For this system to work it relies on Beebase having up-to-date email addresses, so please check your personal details on your own Beebase web page and add or correct an email address as necessary.

### Exotic pest surveillance programme



The above map shows locations where, in 2010 inspections have been made with the express purpose of checking for exotic pests, IE Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps. The fact that the inspections are shown in green indicates that no exotic pests were found!

The NBU intends to continue with this programme of checking apiaries that are considered to be in high risk areas IE close to points of entry to the UK and several other risk locations such as fruit importers, raw wax importers, plant importers etc. as SHB is known to survive and be transported in such mediums.

Of course in the coming seasons it will be important for us all to be on the look-out for the Asian Hornet, which is now well established in France and moving northward towards us. The NBU has carried out a risk assessment of the likely impact of the Asian Hornet to the UK for the Great Britain Non-native species secretariat:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/home/index.cfm>

Further information is available on Beebase. If you think you have seen this hornet, collect a sample if possible or take a photo and then immediately contact me or one of my colleagues.



Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina nigrithorax*

### **Random Apiary Survey**

We are now well on the way to completing the random apiary survey, the last samples will be collected at the end of May 2011. I would like to thank all those of you who have agreed to samples being taken and would appreciate your assistance if you are asked for samples this coming spring. If you have had a sample taken, results for some of the pathogens are now being posted on your own web page of Beebase and the blank results boxes will be filled in as time goes on, so please keep checking. It will take quite some time for all the results to be analysed, as there will be over 5000 apiaries sampled, so please be patient, this is a research project, not a diagnostic service. As a guide we are checking for: Nosema spp, Acarine & 8 different virus types, as well as foulbrood and exotic pests. The results for any foulbrood picked up by the RAS will not be shown, as this may lead to confusion as to whether a colony is infected or not.

### **Varroa**

As always, varroa remains the biggest threat to colony survival and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Keep checking the mite drop regularly and carry out varroa control as necessary. Don't forget that Beebase has much information about controlling varroa, including a varroa calculator to help you decide when to take action. As I indicated last year, Apilife var. was newly registered in the UK. Since then a further product has been registered, Thymovar, produced by Andermatt, Biovet. It is hoped that it will assist beekeepers with the fight against varroa. Check out the VMD website for more information: [www.vmd.gov.uk/VetSQP/Bee/bee.htm](http://www.vmd.gov.uk/VetSQP/Bee/bee.htm)



## **Imports and Exports**

I'm sure you will be interested to know how many queens have been imported to England and Wales this season:

From the EU – 7290 queens were imported from Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia & Spain. These imports included 352 nucs from Cyprus and 100 from Spain.

From 3<sup>rd</sup> countries – 2430 queens were imported from Australia, Hawaii & New Zealand. 730 of these came from Hawaii early in the year but as Small hive beetle was confirmed on the Large Island, imports have been stopped.

Those of you who import queens in the South East area will receive a visit to check that they have the correct paperwork and that the queens establish healthy colonies. If you wish to import queens to the UK, either from the EU or beyond, guidance notes and forms are available on our website at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) click on Legislation and scroll down to Imports and Exports.

## **Honey**

As usual, I would like to thank all the 250 beekeepers that have given data about honey crops and prices. This year the average honey crop per colony in the SE is 44lbs, which is much better than last year's low of 35lbs. In many areas a good spring crop was followed by a similar summer crop even though the weather was hot and dry in many areas. As in 2009 there was similar very sharp cessation of the honey flow early in July. In many areas of the South East no further nectar was collected, and generally the heather didn't yield due to the lack of ground moisture. I am about to publish the Honey Survey 2010, but I am waiting for some figures from other regions for a comparison of yields and prices.

Again this year I have concerns about winter stores. Many colonies stopped collecting nectar early and seen to be consuming their stores at a great rate. Check your bees and ensure they have enough food to pass the winter, if they are low on stores then feed candy but remember once you start feeding you will have to carry on until the bees can fend for themselves in the spring.

## **Educational events**

This season we have participated at 76 events, which comprised, amongst other things, apiary tours for Associations, talks, apiary demonstrations, IPM days, Bee Health workshops, Organic acid workshops, visits to schools and WIs etc. We also ran workshops on microscopy for Nosema and Acarine. Talks are on a wide range of beekeeping topics, husbandry, disease, exotic pests etc. and often include an involvement in basic beekeeping courses, in which I give instruction in varroa and disease management. We had a stand at the Sussex Bee auction at Heathfield and intend to repeat this and also have a stand at the West Sussex Bee auction at Brinsbury in 2011.

All these events are an opportunity for us to meet beekeepers and, likewise, for you to meet with bee inspectors. I very much hope that they form a bridge to the inspectorate that makes working together easier. I, personally, enjoy meeting with beekeepers and building relationships with Associations. I look forward to meeting you at one of these events in 2011.

Please contact me if you would like me or one of the team to give a talk or demonstration to your Association, or to be involved in any of the above activities.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Seasonal Bee Inspectors who make up the SE team for all their hard work during the season: Caroline Washington, Diane Steele, Nick Withers, Michael Cooper, David Rudland & Brian McCallum.

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Alan Byham

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