

National Bee Unit – Southern Region

February 2010

An overview of 2010

As my first full season as RBI I have had a lot to learn and there have been many challenges. Thanks to all associations and individuals who have provided me with support. Overall it has been a very enjoyable year and I look forward to the next season.

The Bee inspector's season began early in April with the annual inspector's conference held at the National Bee Unit's (NBU) offices, which are part of the Food and Environment Agency at Sand Hutton near York. This was a busy three day meeting, with plenty of lectures and training, to ensure everyone is up to date with any changes in working practice and to prepare us for the season ahead.

In the early part of the season we welcomed Kevin Pope as SBI for Dorset. Kevin, along with the other new SBI's, attended a training course up at the NBU in York in May, and as he has had previous experience as a bee inspector he has settled into his role admirably. In total the Southern region now has eight inspectors and the region is divided roughly as follows.

Northamptonshire	Margaret Holland
Oxfordshire	Phil Spillane
Buckinghamshire	Julian Parker
Berkshire	Bob Loades
Wiltshire	Robert Carpenter Turner
Hampshire	Bob Loades, Nigel Semmence, and Fraser Young
Isle of Wight	Fraser Young

With beekeeping becoming ever more popular 2010 was very busy in the Southern region and as well as routine inspections we did many events, including talks, apiary safaris and disease days.

Varroa

This year as a bee inspector has certainly driven home to me that the biggest threat to colony survival is Varroa and this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. Keep checking your mite drop regularly and carry out control methods as necessary. Beebase contains lots of information about [Varroa control](#) as well as the [Managing Varroa leaflet](#).

One research project recently completed by the NBU indicated that colonies which tested positive for Deformed wing virus (DWV), a virus closely associated with Varroa infestation, were half the size of those which tested negative for the virus. This enormous difference in size could have a huge impact on the ability of your colonies to survive the kind of harsh winter we have experienced recently. These results really do highlight the importance of good Varroa control.

Jersey

At the end of June an outbreak of American Foulbrood (AFB) was discovered in Jersey and as they don't have a resident bee inspection service, Adam Vevers, David Packham and I were invited out there, by the States Veterinary Officer. We spent 10 days inspecting all 408 colonies on the island. About 8 weeks later we returned and inspected the apiaries that had positive colonies previously and any other apiaries at high risk of infection. On both trips, in total, we found 84 hives with AFB, 100 times higher than levels we see on the mainland. As an inspector this was an interesting experience and many lessons were learned, however it was devastating for many beekeepers on the island and showed the consequences when a bacterial brood disease such as AFB goes unchecked.

It is difficult to guess when AFB arrived in Jersey but it had probably been there for a number of years without being detected. A joint project between Jersey's environment dept, Defra, the National Bee Unit, and the University of Newcastle is currently underway to investigate how long the disease had likely been there and how it may have spread.

Map of the distribution of uninfected and infected apiaries in Jersey in 2010.

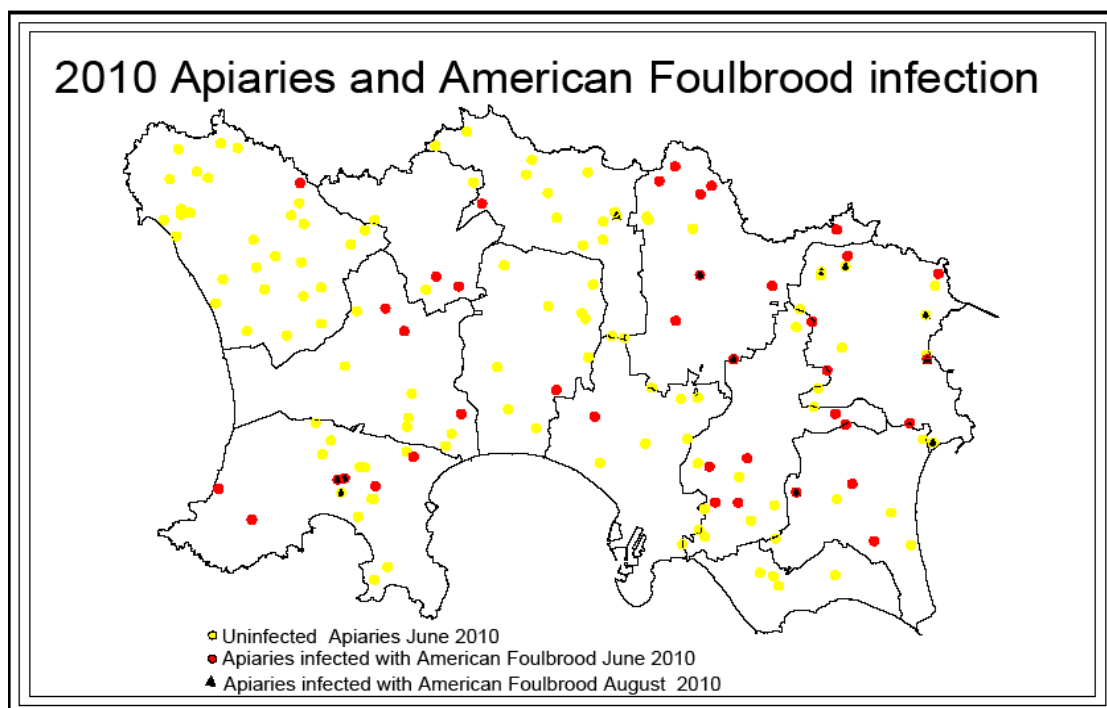


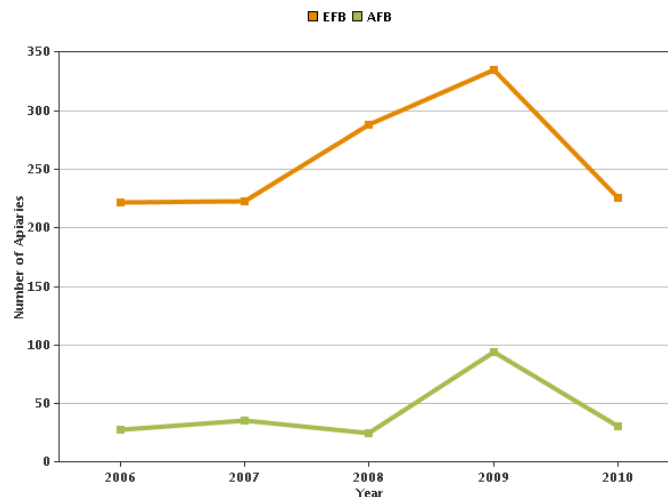
Image below: AFB-ropiness test

One interesting point to note is that not one case of European foulbrood (EFB) was found on the island during all the inspections; however a lot of Varroa damage was seen.



Foulbrood Summary

The number of different apiaries with Foulbrood disease in England, Scotland and Wales over the last five years is shown in the graph below. 7,292 apiaries were visited in 2010 with 226 apiaries having EFB and 31 with AFB. This is lower than the levels seen in 2009 but on par with the previous three years.



In 2010 in England and Wales a total of 588 colonies were found with EFB and 93 colonies with AFB. The table below shows the number of colonies with Foulbrood, including recurrent ones, occurring in each county of the Southern region over the last four years.

	European Foul Brood				American Foul Brood			
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2007	2008	2009	2010
Berkshire	7	2	2	8	0	2	0	0
Buckinghamshire	0	2	9	8	0	0	0	0
Dorset	36	111	41	7	0	0	1	1
Hampshire	35	57	40	19	0	0	3	0
Isle of Wight	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0
Northamptonshire	1	2	2	3	4	5	1	4
Oxfordshire	17	63	32	19	6	34	14	7
Wiltshire	0	21	2	19	0	0	0	0
Total	96	258	131	83	10	41	21	12

In 2010 in the Southern region 1100 apiaries were visited, and 4274 colonies inspected, a total of 83 colonies were infected with EFB and 12 with AFB. For those interested in seeing more details of disease incidence including maps and disease trends please visit [BeeBase](#).

10 Km squares with AFB in the Southern region in 2010

County	10km Square	Area name
Dorset	SY88	Wool
Northamptonshire	SP87	Kettering
Northamptonshire	SP96	Rushden
Northamptonshire	SP97	Little Addington
Oxfordshire	SP33	Hook Norton
Oxfordshire	SP43	Bloxham
Oxfordshire	SU58	Blewbury
Oxfordshire	SU68	East Wallingford

10 km squares with EFB in the Southern region in 2010

County	10km Square	Area name
Berkshire	SU68	East Wallingford
Berkshire	SU87	White Waltham
Berkshire	SU98	North Slough
Buckinghamshire	SP63	West Buckingham
Buckinghamshire	SU98	North Slough
Dorset	SY99	Bere Regis
Dorset	SY98	Wareham
Dorset	SZ09	West Bournemouth
Hampshire	SU21	Nomansland
Hampshire	SU33	Stockbridge
Hampshire	SU40	Hythe
Hampshire	SU44	Hurstbourne Priors
Hampshire	SU46	Newbury
Hampshire	SU51	Bishops Waltham
Hampshire	SU70	North Hayling
Hampshire	SZ29	New Milton
Hampshire	SZ39	Lymington
Northamptonshire	SP87	Kettering
Oxfordshire	SP32	Enstone
Oxfordshire	SP51	Islip
Oxfordshire	SP52	Bicester
Oxfordshire	SU69	Benson
Oxfordshire	SU78	Henley
Wiltshire	ST86	Bradford on Avon
Wiltshire	SU04	Shrewton
Wiltshire	SU14	Amesbury
Wiltshire	SU28	Bishopston

Random Apiary Survey (RAS)

The RAS aims are to understand the national prevalence of a range of honey bee pests, pathogens and diseases, and to investigate the factors that may influence the occurrence of each. To this end, over 4600 apiaries will be surveyed across England and Wales. The survey involves the taking of a small sample of bees (approximately 60) from each hive (up to a maximum of five hives per apiary). The bees are then sent to the NBU and will be analysed for a range of bacteria, viruses and fungi which affect honey bees.

Thank you to everyone who have taken part so far and we would appreciate your cooperation if you are asked for samples this coming spring. The collection of samples should be completed by June this year and results will be published on BeeBase. It will take time to complete the analyses, so whilst this is a research project and not a diagnostic service, we do appreciate your patience in waiting for your individual results to appear on your secure area of BeeBase. The current plan is that results will become available from now until August, when every result will be completed.

Honey survey

Every year we are asked to provide DEFRA with information on honey yields and prices that are used to form part of the annual statistics for food production. To help me to do this I conducted a honey survey this autumn within the southern region. Eighty eight beekeepers from across the Southern region responded and a huge THANK YOU to all of you for your contribution.

The prices and yields for all regions are shown below. For the Southern region the average yield was 15kg (34lb) per colony, the highest was 48 Kg (105lb). Talking in lb's flower honey, when sold direct, was sold at an average of £4.12 per lb, the lowest price asked for flower honey per lb was £3.00 and the highest £5.50.

Region	Flower Wholesale	Flower Direct Sales	Heather Wholesale	Heather Direct Sales	Flower Bulk Sales	Cut comb	Maincrop yield yield (kg)	Heather yield yield (kg)
	£/kg	£/kg	£/kg	£/kg	£/kg	£/kg		
Western	£6.75	£9.56	£9.00	£14.62	£5.06	£20.25	40	5
Wales	£8.58	£11.88	£11.00	£13.20	£5.50	£18.66	10	6
Northern	£8.67	£9.47	£10.51	£11.21	£5.85	£22.11	22	8
South								
East	£8.17	£9.49	n/a	n/a	£5.34	£16.27	21	0
Southern	£7.79	£9.08	n/a	n/a	£6.61	£15.06	15	0
Eastern								
South								
West	£7.70	£9.50	n/a	n/a	£4.00	£17.00	20	0
North								
East	£7.97	£9.44	£8.49	£11.23	£4.96	£13.55	32	9
Average	£7.85	£9.79	£9.75	£12.69	£5.27	£17.01	22	3

Beekeepers New and Old

At the risk of being accused of repetition please could I take this opportunity to say that the basis of the inspection program is “risk based” meaning that we try our best to inspect all colonies within the locality of outbreaks of notifiable disease as these are at the greatest risk. Therefore we are completely dependent on having a good knowledge of where hives are, otherwise the system fails and disease will be spread from unchecked hives. To this end we use a database called BeeBase. Registering yourself on it can be done very easily by contacting the NBU office, contacting myself or your local SBI, or online from the home page of [BeeBase](#). Once registered you can access your own inspection records and update apiary details etc.

This year the NBU has introduced a new system whereby when notifiable disease is found BeeBase will automatically send an email to all recorded beekeepers with an apiary within 5km of an outbreak. This is a very powerful feature but will only work if apiaries are on BeeBase and an up-to-date email address has been entered. Please check your records on BeeBase and update them if necessary.

Brochures

The NBU produces a range of brochures all of which can be downloaded from [BeeBase](#).

National Bee Unit – Protecting the honey bee

Foul Brood Disease of Honey Bees - and other common brood disorders (updated May 2009)

Managing Varroa (updated May 2009)

Tropilaelaps: parasitic mites of honey bees

The Small Hive Beetle: a serious new threat to European apiculture (updated Nov 2010)

Events for 2011

Inspectors from the Southern region are all happy to help with talks, demonstrations or apiary safaris at events organised by beekeeping associations. Please contact us at the earliest opportunity to discuss topics and availability.

On the 26th February the BBKA’s Train the Trainer day is being held for the Southern region at Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire. This is part of a national initiative under the Healthy Bees Plan to increase the number of beekeeper trainers and I would encourage anyone interested in a future training beekeepers to attend. Please contact Bill Cadmore; preferably by email, bill.cadmore@ntlworld.com or on 0113 2160482, for further details.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Seasonal Bee Inspectors of the Southern team for all their hard work: Robert Carpenter Turner, Margaret Holland, Bob Loades, Phil Spillane, Julian Parker, Fraser Young and Kevin Pope.

Nigel Semmence

Contact details

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Seasonal Bee Inspectors (Available from 04 Apr to 01 Oct 2011)

Robert Carpenter Turner	Wiltshire
Tel: 01672 852265	Mob: 07775 119464
Margaret Holland	Northamptonshire
Tel: 01327 857328	Mob: 07775 119465
Bob Loades	Berkshire and North Hampshire
Tel: 01189 619631	Mob: 07775 119467
Phil Spillane	Oxfordshire
Tel: 01865 396383	Mob: 07775 119470
Julian Parker	Buckinghamshire
Tel: 01494 955271	Mob: 07775 119469
Fraser Young	South Hampshire and Isle of Wight
Tel: 01590 682977	Mob: 07775 119468
Kevin Pope	Dorset
Tel: 01305 854858	Mob: 07775 119466

Regional Bee Inspector (Available all year)

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