



National Bee Unit – Southern Region Update

A review of the 2013 season

January 2014

The Season

In 2013, after a wet and extended cool spring, we had a good summer and both American foulbrood (AFB) and European foulbrood (EFB) levels were low compared to previous years. One possible explanation for this was that the extended winter in 2012 killed a lot of the weaker colonies and therefore those that survived into the spring of 2013 were the fittest. Additionally, the spring flows were held up by the cold weather and summer flows were good, leading to a reduced June gap in some areas. This meant that there was less stress on the colonies leading to a reduced susceptibility to foulbrood infection.

This winter has proved to be a rough one so far with storms around Christmas and torrential rain leading to flooding in many areas. The storms were quite impressive and have led to some colonies, even in what were considered to be sheltered sites, being blown over. However, aside from the winds, temperature wise, it has actually been a mild winter and in some colonies brood rearing has not stopped. For those using Oxalic acid please be aware that because of this it may not have been as effective as usual as the *Varroa* within brood is protected from the actions of oxalic acid. Another consequence of the relatively warm winter is that active colonies, especially those rearing brood, use more stores and are therefore at risk of starvation if there isn't adequate provisions in the colony. Providing fondant directly above the cluster should prevent any risk of starvation.

The Southern Team

In 2013, Southern region was able to recruit one new Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI) unfortunately, due to the recruitment freeze across the Civil Service, there was a delay in being able to begin the recruitment process. The new SBI was Rachael Hall and she started with us at the start of July. She had completed her training and was just getting into the routine of inspections in Northamptonshire when, in September, she broke a bone in her foot. She is fully recovered now and looking forward to a full inspection season in 2014.

My congratulations go to Julian Parker who has become Regional Bee Inspector (RBI) for the South East region following the retirement of Alan Byham who has moved to a quieter life in Northern Wales. Julian has been a key member of Southern region for the last four years and his promotion is well deserved. This does have consequences for Southern region as to enable Julian to work from his current home in Buckinghamshire, this area will move under the management of the South East region.

Recruitment For 2014

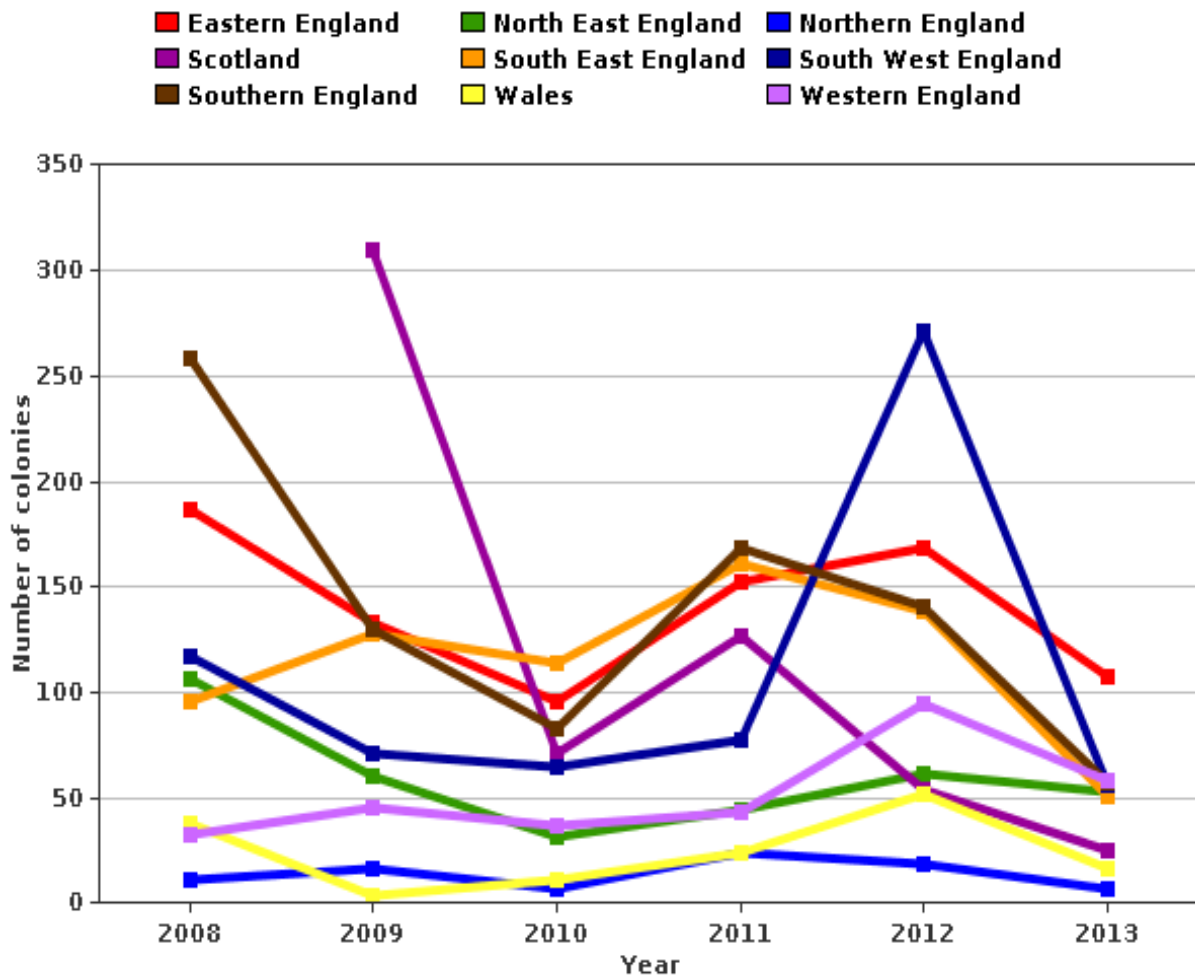
If anyone is interested in becoming a SBI within the Berkshire or Buckinghamshire areas please contact me to discuss (my contact details are at the end of this newsletter). We will be looking for an experienced beekeeper with good people skills and we hope to start the recruitment process soon.



Inspection Programme

In 2013 in England, Scotland and Wales a total of 33,330 colonies were inspected across 6704 apiaries. 432 colonies were diagnosed with EFB and 45 with AFB.

Figure 1. Below is a graph showing the number of colonies with EFB in each of the regions of the inspectorate over the last 6 years.

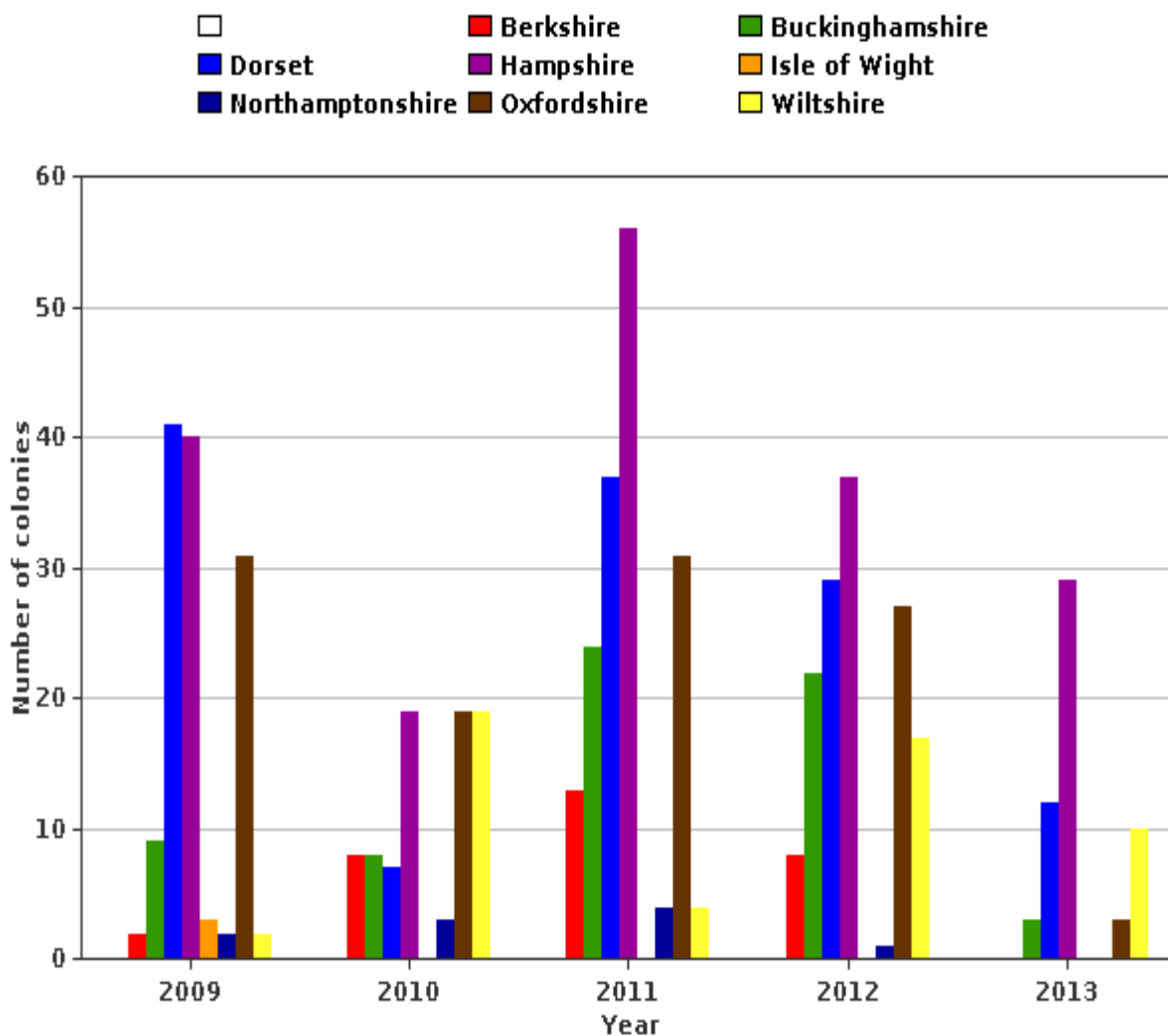




Regional Inspection and Foulbrood Summary

This year 4310 colonies were inspected in Southern region; 58 colonies were found with EFB and 0 with AFB. According to BeeBase, Southern region currently has 5052 current beekeepers with approximately 21,000 colonies.

Figure 2. The distribution of EFB amongst the counties of Southern region is displayed on the graph below.



More information on the location of disease can be accessed by visiting the disease incidence page on BeeBase:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/BeeDiseases/diseaseIncidenceMaps.cfm>



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Figure 3. The following table shows the 10km squares in Southern region that had foulbrood in 2013.

County	10 km square	Area name	Colonies with EFB	Colonies with AFB
Buckinghamshire	SP80	Wendover	2	
	SU89	High Wycombe	2	
Dorset	SY49	Bridport	2	
	SY68	Broadwey	2	
	SY79	Puddletown	1	
	SY88	Wool	2	
	SY99	Lytchett Maltravers	1	
	SZ09	West Bournemouth	1	
	SY19	Christchurch	3	
	Hampshire	SU31	Totton	4
SU41		Southampton	2	
SU45		Litchfield	2	
SU51		Bishops Waltham	1	
SU56		Thatcham	1	
SU61		Hambledon	1	
SU63		Four Marks	3	
SU70		North Hayling	6	
SU72		Petersfield	3	
SU73		Alton	6	
Oxfordshire	SP21	Burford	1	
	SP40	Cumnor	1	
	SU48	East wantage	1	
Wiltshire	ST86	Bradford on Avon	5	
	SU04	Shrewton	2	
	SU21	Nomansland	3	
Totals			58	0



Bee Health Consultation

In 2011/12, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) began a review into bee health policy. The review was undertaken by the Food and Environment Research Agency's Bee Health Policy team, on behalf of Defra and the Welsh Government, with representatives from the National Bee Unit (NBU), commercial and amateur beekeeper associations and an independent scientist. They considered how best to manage pests and diseases in the future so that the optimum policies and interventions are in place; priorities for future collective action (partnership working) by government and beekeepers are clear; and we are making the best use of current public funding/resources for this programme in order to sustain a healthy honey bee population for pollination. In Jan 2013 the stakeholders were consulted and there were 184 responses and the results can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-honey-bee-health>. An in depth article was published in **BBKA News, 221 Jan 2014 pages 11 to 15**, and this explains the consultation process and the recommended proposals.

We are now in the implementation phase and this is being guided by the Bee Health Advisory Forum (BHAF), <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=339>. This will be a 'work in progress' for a while but ultimately will guide the functioning of the National Bee Unit and its Inspectors.

The rest of this article will outline the proposals from the implementation plan that we will be implementing in Southern region this year:

a) Association Forums.

Each RBI is being encouraged to hold regional forums in their areas at which representatives of the local associations are invited to discuss matters of mutual concern and the implementation of the bee health review. The overarching goal is to develop the relationship between the inspectorate and local beekeeping associations to aid in the combating of bee diseases and pests.

In Sept 2013 the first Southern region forum was held at Picket Piece Village Hall near Andover in Hampshire as this is central to the region. We discussed the role of the Bee Inspectors, the bee health review, and the implementation plan. Thank you to all who attended as it was a productive day. My thanks must also go to all my team as they helped organise and run the day, and especially to my co-presenters Andy Wattam and Kevin Pope.

The next forum will be held at Picket Piece Village Hall on Wednesday 30th April 2014, and I will send out invites and a detailed agenda in due course.



Figure 4. Southern Region association forum.



b) BeeBase Registration of Beekeepers and Association Membership Lists.

In the UK we currently have quite a contradictory system of voluntary registration of beehives combined with the expectation that if notifiable disease turns up in an area that all the colonies close to it will be inspected by us. This means we have the legal right to inspect when colonies are at risk (i.e. close to other colonies with notifiable disease) but you don't have to tell us where your bees are located!

Therefore we rely on three ways of detecting colonies; voluntary registration on BeeBase, association membership lists, and being told about neighbouring apiaries when disease is found.

Voluntary registration is very important and can be done online at www.nationalbeeunit.com or by calling our office on 01904 462510. This should be followed by periodic updating of your personal and apiary details. To do so you will need a username and password and this can be obtained when registering or by calling the office. Once into your records click on "my apiaries" where new apiaries can be added by clicking on the green plus sign and entering a name for the apiary and a map reference. Alternatively, if you left click on the map over the location of the new apiary it will ask you if you want to move the apiary location.



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Your association can send us their list of members if they wish but can only do this if they satisfy the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The easiest way to do this is to amend the membership renewal form to contain the following phrase;

“Please note that a condition of membership is your agreement to membership details being held on a computer. This information will be used for the efficient running of the association by its officials, for the distribution of the BBKA magazine, for BBKA Insurance, for Bee Disease Insurance, and passed to the Regional Bee Inspector for inclusion on BeeBase to aid them in the control of notifiable bee diseases”.

These lists are very useful to us as they allow us to identify new beekeepers and to update contact details for existing beekeepers. If you are registered on BeeBase and we have your current email address then you will receive an automated disease alert when notifiable disease turns up within 3km of any of your current apiaries.

c) Streamlining Training Events

Training events are a key part of the education remit of the NBU; however, we are under a lot of pressure to ensure these are delivered in an efficient and professional manner. We will only deliver education events that cover pests and diseases and associated husbandry. The RBI's are focussing on county level talks with large attendances (>50), bee health days and comb workshops. SBI's will focus on bee safaris and apiary demos and will help the RBI at bee health days. We will no longer give talks for beginner's courses on diseases or "health and hygiene" as this can be handled by the local association trainers.

Where possible, events such as bee health days, safaris and apiary demos should be run during the week to reduce demand on the Inspector's weekends. It may come as a surprise to some beekeepers but Inspectors do have their own bees and families.

d) Better Regulation Approaches

The Disease Accreditation Scheme for Honeybees (DASH) has been set up in collaboration with the Bee Farmers Association (BFA) as an accreditation scheme for beekeepers with large numbers of colonies. People who join the scheme are trained in disease recognition and barrier management and will carry out self diagnosis, reporting and treatment of foulbrood infected colonies. When disease is present an improvement in disease management practices will be expected. They will be audited and there will be rules and penalties for non-compliance.

The first tranche of 28 companies have been trained and inspection of apiaries will begin in 2014 before they are accepted into the scheme.



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e) Bee Health Advisors

Bee Health Advisors (BHA's) are experienced beekeepers who volunteer to provide a first line of advice for local beekeepers in an association and have previously been known as Disease Liaison Co-ordinators, Disease Liaison Contacts or Disease Liaison Officers. They are not paid, and are additional to Bee Inspectors, helping local beekeepers when they have a suspected disease or unidentified problem in a colony. BHA's have no powers of entry and will only inspect a colony when invited.

The reason we are encouraging associations to set up BHA's is so the support for local beekeepers is increased and to hopefully increase the discovery of foulbrood by beekeepers. This will formalise something that already occurs in some associations. BHA's will be provided with a day's training at which they will be shown how to detect foulbrood and issued with lateral flow devices for identification of it in the field.

With some 5000 known beekeepers in Southern region we will be running this training at county level. If an association can come up with some names of people with the appropriate knowledge and experience who are willing to provide this service to local beekeepers, and contact me then I am happy to provide a day's training. As a starting point I would suggest one BHA per 100 beekeepers. The training will be at a local venue and will be run on a week day sometime between May and August. Obviously I will try and organise these training events carefully to reduce the workload on myself and the SBI's.

If you are interested in being a BHA or think your association should provide them then please talk this over with your local secretary or chair person and they should contact their county secretary who will arrange the training with me. This will be a key discussion item at the next forum.

Next Season

2014 will obviously be a busy year for the Bee Inspectors with the implementation of the bee health review. Once again may I take this opportunity to thank all Southern region SBI's for their hard work this season.

Thank you and best wishes to all beekeepers for 2014.

Nigel Semmence

RBI, Southern region



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