

# National Bee Unit

## 2020 South West Annual Report

### The 2020 Season



Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency

What a year! Coronavirus restrictions have impacted on every sphere of life. During the initial stages of lockdown in April, as key workers we were responding to priority callouts from beekeepers and spent the rest of our time contacting people by phone or email to update records, which reassured the beekeeping community that we were still available if required but were not adding to any risks. A number of people commented that tending their bees provided a reassuring sense of normality in this strange new world. During May we were able to do more inspection visits and with the support and understanding of our beekeepers, we found that social distancing did not create significant difficulties in getting our work done. By June it was more like business as usual.

At the beginning of the season there was some restructuring of the National Bee Unit (NBU) regions. As part of this restructuring Avon and North Somerset were made part of the Western Region. Because of this, Megan Seymour the Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI) for this area, joined the Western Region team. Unfortunately, BeeBase has not been altered yet to reflect these changes so the figures shown in this report include Avon and North Somerset.

Because of Coronavirus, the Bee Health Days that we usually deliver across the South West (SW) had to be cancelled. We all have had to become more used to using Information Technology (IT) for keeping in touch and IT platforms such as 'Teams' and 'Zoom' have become part of the new normal.

Unfortunately, more Foulbrood has been found in the region compared with last season. There has been a marked increase in European Foulbrood (EFB) particularly in Avon and an increase in cases of American Foulbrood (AFB) in Avon and Cornwall.

*Classic AFB ropiness test*  
*Photo by Frank Gellatly*



*Contorted larvae with EFB*  
*Photo by Ben Bowen*



## The team in SW England

From April 1st 2021 you will be able to use the post code search on the contacts page of BeeBase to check for your local SBI. They can be contacted on the e-mails and phone numbers below from the beginning of April until the end of September 2021.

Regional Bee Inspector (RBI)	Inspection Area	Contact Details
Simon Jones	Somerset Tel 01823 442228	07775119459 <a href="mailto:simon.jones@apha.gov.uk">simon.jones@apha.gov.uk</a>
Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI)	Area	Contact Details
Eric James	Cornwall	07979119369 <a href="mailto:eric.james@apha.gov.uk">eric.james@apha.gov.uk</a>
Hazel Vallis	Cornwall & Devon	07775119457 <a href="mailto:hazel.vallis@apha.gov.uk">hazel.vallis@apha.gov.uk</a>
Leila Goss	Devon	07775119453 <a href="mailto:leila.goss@apha.gov.uk">leila.goss@apha.gov.uk</a>
David Packham	Devon	07775119463 <a href="mailto:david.packham@apha.gov.uk">david.packham@apha.gov.uk</a>
Eleanor Burgess	Somerset	07775119465 <a href="mailto:eleanor.burgess@apha.gov.uk">eleanor.burgess@apha.gov.uk</a>

During the winter period of October to March please direct all enquiries to the Regional Bee Inspector (RBI).

### Beekeeper numbers

There are currently 5630 beekeepers in SW England registered on the NBU online database 'BeeBase'. Between them they have 24843 colonies in 7587 apiaries.

The graphs and figures in this report are available on the public pages of BeeBase, the NBU website ([www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)) in 'Bee Pests, Diseases and Maps'. The site also offers several pages of tips, advice and downloadable leaflets on disease control and bee husbandry.

### BeeBase Registration and Association Membership Lists

I would like to remind everyone how essential it is that all apiaries are registered on BeeBase so that we can identify any at risk of notifiable disease or an incursion of an exotic pest into the UK and target control measures effectively. Self-registration is free via the link at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com), or you can register by contacting the NBU office on **0300 303 0094** or your RBI.



All beekeepers registered on BeeBase with a current email address will receive an automatic email alert if disease is found within 3km of the registered apiary. If you are self-registered, please ensure that you keep your apiary records up to date or contact

me if you are unsure. Self-registration is recommended as it also gives beekeepers secure password protected access to personal details and inspection records. 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 Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website provides guidance on best practice). These lists are very useful to us as they allow us to identify new beekeepers and to update contact details for existing beekeepers. **Secretaries** – if you currently have this in place, please send me your current membership list so I can ensure our records are as accurate and complete as possible. This is something that will be incredibly important if we are unfortunate enough to find Small Hive Beetle (SHB) in the UK or more Asian Hornets in our region in the coming season.

## **Inspections**

This year the SW Bee Inspectors visited a total of 752 apiaries and inspected 3562 colonies. This was a lower number of colonies inspected compared with 2019. This was largely due to the impact of the Corona virus and that we have not yet replaced Martin Hann who left at the end of last season and was the SBI for West Devon. We also carried out 7 import inspections of consignments of queens and packages from other EU countries.

## **Importing or Exporting Honey Bees after 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

### **The UK has left the EU, new rules apply from January 2021**

The transition period comes to an end this year on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. To find out how this affects Imports and Exports of honey bees as of the 1<sup>st</sup> January and what you can do to prepare please refer to guidance on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and the [Border Operating Model](#), which provide information on the new processes.

For movements both ways between Northern Ireland and GB guidance may be found in the [Northern Ireland Protocol](#).

If you are planning to import or export bees it is your responsibility to follow these new rules and protect GB biosecurity.

Guidance on changes for businesses and citizens may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/transition> where you may use the Brexit checker to obtain a personalised list of actions.

If you import Bees:

- [Check what you need to do to import from the EU from 1 January 2021](#)

You risk not being able to bring or receive goods from EU countries from 1 January 2021 if you are not prepared for the end of Transition

- [Check what you need to do to import animals, animal products, high risk food and feed into Great Britain from 1 January 2021](#)

There will be new processes that importers must follow. These processes to import from an EU country will be introduced in 3 stages:

- [1 January 2021](#)

- [1 April 2021](#) (included for completeness but only relevant to animal products and high-risk food and feed)
- [1 July 2021](#)
- You will need to register for the UK's new Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System ([IPAFFS](#))

You will no longer be able to import using the TRACES system from 1 January 2021.

More information:

[Importing animals, animal products and high-risk food and feed not of animal origin from 1 January 2021](#)

EU law prohibits or restricts the import of specific goods from third countries that are deemed to present an unacceptable level of animal, plant or public health risk. These prohibitions and restrictions will be transposed into UK law at the end of the Transition Period.

As GB and the EU are expected to be treating each other as third countries from a bee health point of view, these restrictions and prohibitions will currently prevent or restrict mutual trade in bees.

As a result, importers will only be able to import queens from the EU. Any associated packaging (including queen cages and attendant workers) will have to be sent to a designated laboratory for examination and for honey bees this is Fera Science. Importing packages or colonies will no longer be possible after the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 imported queens will have to pass through a Border Control Point (BCP). Currently, only BCPs at Heathrow and Manchester airports will accept imports of invertebrates, which includes bees. The National Bee Unit will continue to carry out physical checks on consignments of queens according to risk.

If you export Bees:

- [Check what you need to do to export to the EU from 1 January 2021](#)

You risk not being able to send or take goods to EU countries from 1 January 2021 if you are not prepared for the end of Transition.

The position regarding exports is similar to imports. The EU would also consider the UK to be a Third Country. This will mean that the EU would only accept exports of queens from the UK – providing we are listed as a third country approved to export to the EU. The export of packages and colonies will no longer be possible.

Further Advice:

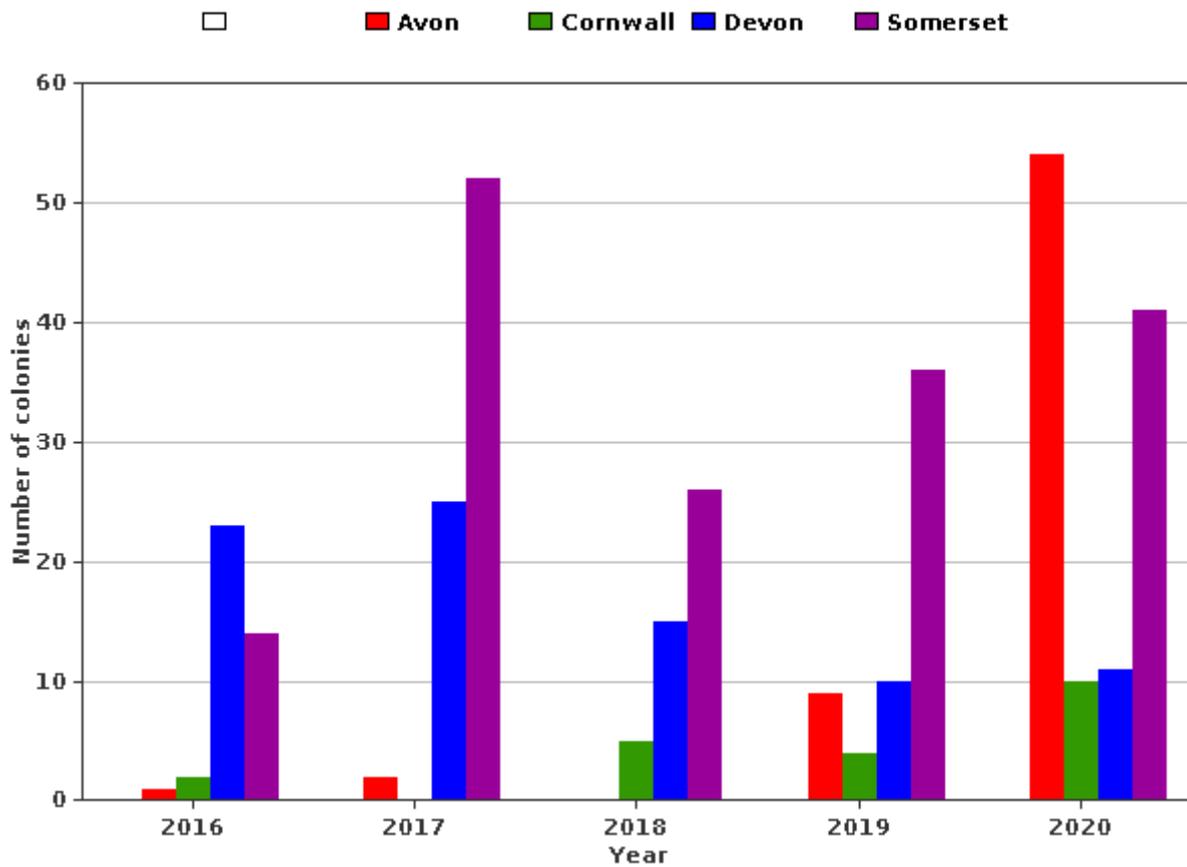
Please review the Gov.uk pages linked above for more detailed and the most up to date guidance. [BeeBase pages](#) containing Import and Export guidance will be updated on a regular basis for easy reference.

## Disease and Pests

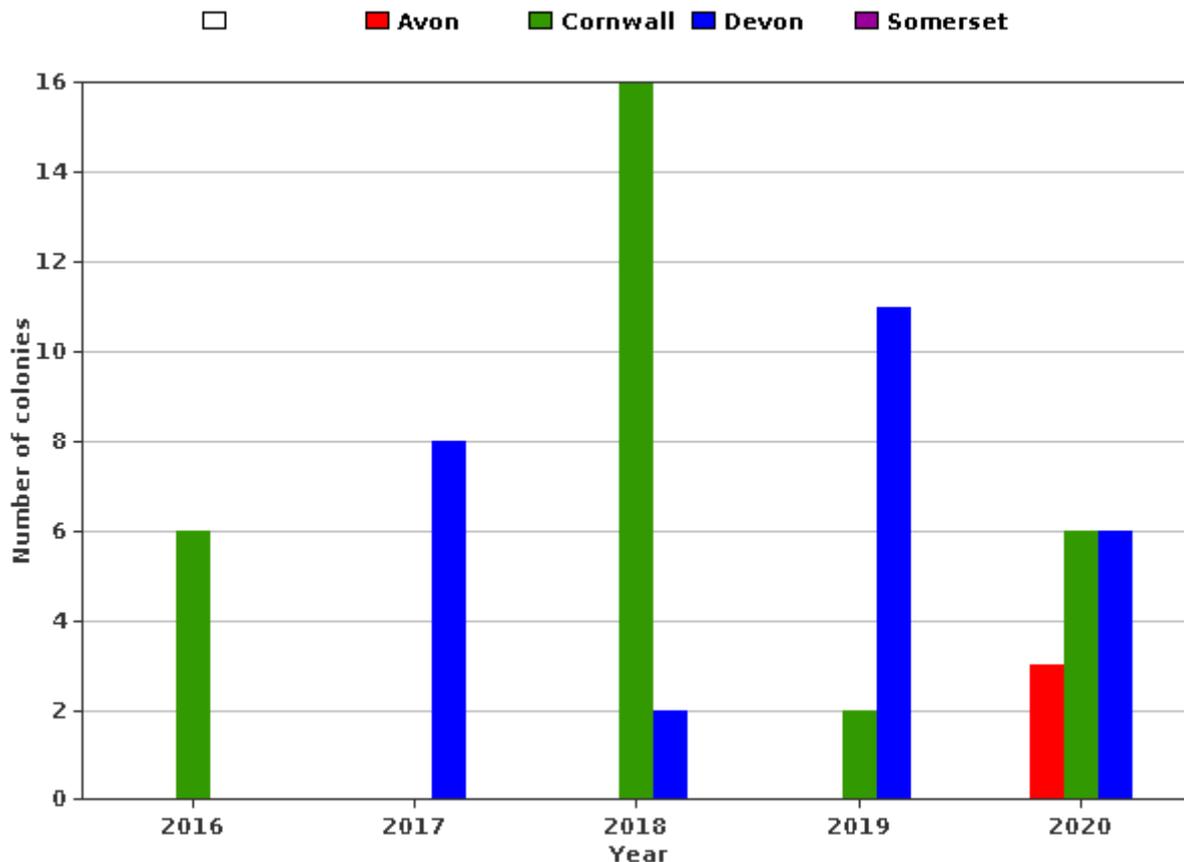
### Notifiable diseases: European Foulbrood (EFB) and American Foulbrood (AFB)

This season, foulbrood was diagnosed in 58 apiaries affecting 129 colonies, in comparison to 2019 where it was found in 34 apiaries, affecting 72 colonies.

### Regional trends of EFB – by county in South West England



## Regional trends of AFB – by county in South West England



Further details and mapping can be found on the disease incidence pages of BeeBase at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) . It is recommended that these are checked regularly to see if there is any foulbrood disease close by.

### Varroa

In order to maintain strong vigorous colonies, the NBU advice is to monitor and control Varroa appropriately. Control can be achieved by using biotechnical methods and authorised products as directed. Varroa treatments should be targeted before colonies start to produce their 'winter' bees but monitoring of Varroa levels throughout the season will help determine whether an earlier treatment is required.

Varroa acts as a vector for viruses which will reduce the longevity of the bees and so impact on the foraging capability of colonies during the summer. Hives treated too late in the season may result in winter bees being affected by viruses or they may be weakened by the Varroa mites feeding on them. This may lead to colony mortality in the winter or early spring.

This year Varroa treatments available in the UK remain unchanged. The list of those registered and approved for use by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is available on their web site <http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/Default.aspx> together with

the 'Summary of Product Characteristics' giving full details of use. For the full list, select 'Bees' on the drop-down list of species in the product search link.

To avoid Varroa mites becoming resistant to specific chemicals it is good policy to rotate your treatments on a regular basis.

There's a legal requirement that the use of any treatments is recorded, and these records must be kept for a minimum of 5 years. Full details can be found on this link -

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=110>

The BeeBase website has pdf links to numerous free fact sheets including the 'Managing Varroa' advisory leaflet.

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>



*The worst effects of Varroa - parasitic mite syndrome (PMS) and deformed wing virus - photos from BeeBase*

## Exotic Pest Surveillance

In South West England we carried out 72 inspections specific to exotic pests in 2020, targeting a combination of identified risk points and random sites. It is natural, after recent high-profile incidents, for the beekeeping community to focus on the threat from Asian Hornet, but we must not drop our guard in relation to the other pests. SHB can be transported into the United Kingdom unintentionally through international trade via bee imports, food products and even in soil when they are in the pupation stage. Although bee imports are prevented from areas where SHB are known to be present, other trade and movement continues.

We have 15 Voluntary Sentinel Apiaries (VSA) and 4 Enhanced Sentinel Apiaries (ESA) in the SW. VSA's are situated within areas considered 'at risk'. A volunteer beekeeper at that location agrees to monitor their colonies specifically for exotic pests. As well as a visual inspection, floor debris from the designated hives are sampled twice a year and tested for any trace of SHB and Tropilaelaps mites. All postage costs, equipment and paperwork is supplied free of charge to the beekeeper who then collects and sends samples for analysis at the NBU laboratory in York.

The SW ESA's are located around the high-risk points of Avonmouth and Plymouth docks. They are visited by their appointed SBI in April, June and September. The colonies are inspected for disease and exotic pests. Floor scraping samples are taken

and sent for analysis. SHB traps are also provided for placement in colonies at both VSA's and ESA's.

I would like to thank those beekeepers who currently carry out this work and support the NBU in their exotic pest surveillance.

### **Yellow-legged Asian Hornet**

This year has seen a reduction in confirmed Asian Hornet sightings in the UK with just one Asian Hornet nest found and destroyed by NBU inspectors in an apple tree in Gosport, Hampshire on Friday 11th September. This followed reports from two householders in the area, one of which was a beekeeper who had identified Asian Hornets feeding on his grapes. The nest was small, approximately 20cm in diameter, local beekeepers were made aware through the Asian Hornet Teams (AHTs) and monitoring has continued in the area.



*Asian Hornet feeding on grapes  
Photo by Gordon Brooks*



*Gosport nest in apple tree  
Photo by Pete Davies*

The NBU has close ties with the Jersey Government's Asian Hornet Co-ordinator and team of volunteers, given their location between us and France. NBU inspectors have had field visits there in previous years so that we could learn from their experience. There haven't been as many Asian Hornet nests reported on Jersey this year either, with the tally of those destroyed on the island being 38 by October 15th, which contrasts with 83 found by the end of 2019. The reduction will be partly due to the ongoing eradication of nests and founding queens in previous years. The other most likely reasons given are the damp and variable temperatures between January and March this year making the over wintering queens more susceptible to fungal attack, and the reduction in traffic from France, due to Coronavirus restrictions, reducing the number of founding queens hitching a ride over from the French mainland in the spring.

We are encouraging everyone to:

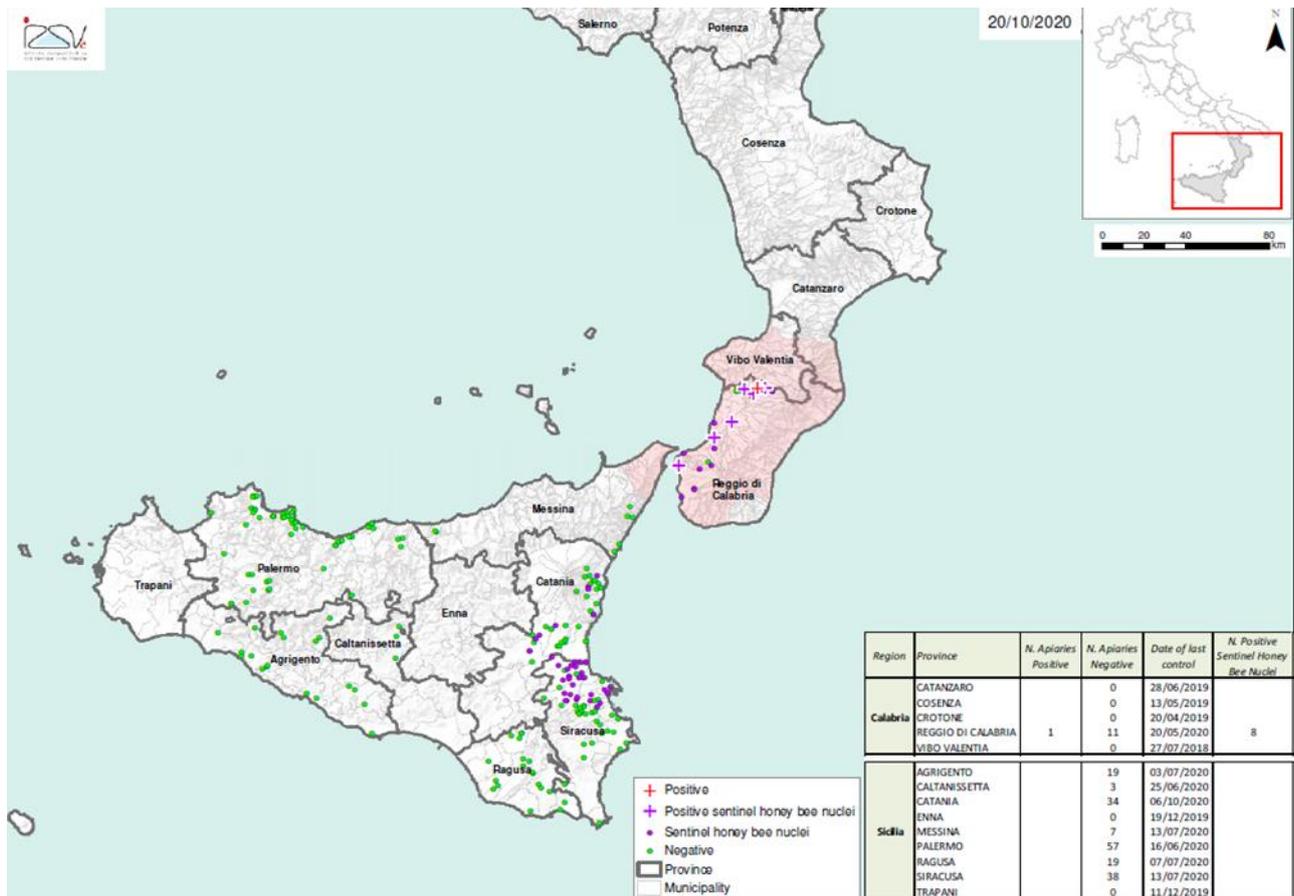
- download the free Asian Hornet Watch iPhone or Android app
- familiarise yourself with what the hornets and similar insects look like
- keep a look out on late summer flowering plants such as ivy where the hornets (and other insects) forage on the flowers.
- report suspect sightings using the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app, or by filling out an online report form, or by emailing [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk) .

### Surveillance of Small Hive Beetle (SHB) in Italy in 2020



*Small Hive Beetle (Aethina tumida) adult and larval stages – photos from BeeBase*

Information from the National Reference Laboratory for Apiculture in Italy below, updated in October 2020, shows extensive surveillance for Small Hive Beetle in Sicily with no positives found. Meanwhile in the Calabria region on the mainland one positive apiary and eight positive Sentinel Nuclei have been found containing both larvae and adult beetles.



## Finally

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Inspectors in the SW Region for their help and support over the year. Thanks are due also to you, the beekeepers, for co-operating with our Inspectors when they are requesting access to your colonies. Please be vigilant, check for brood disease and look out for Asian Hornets, if you don't look for it, you won't find it. It's a good excuse to spend a bit more time in the apiary just watching!

I wish all beekeepers out there a very enjoyable 2021 and hope that some sort of normality returns to our lives.

## Simon Jones

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