



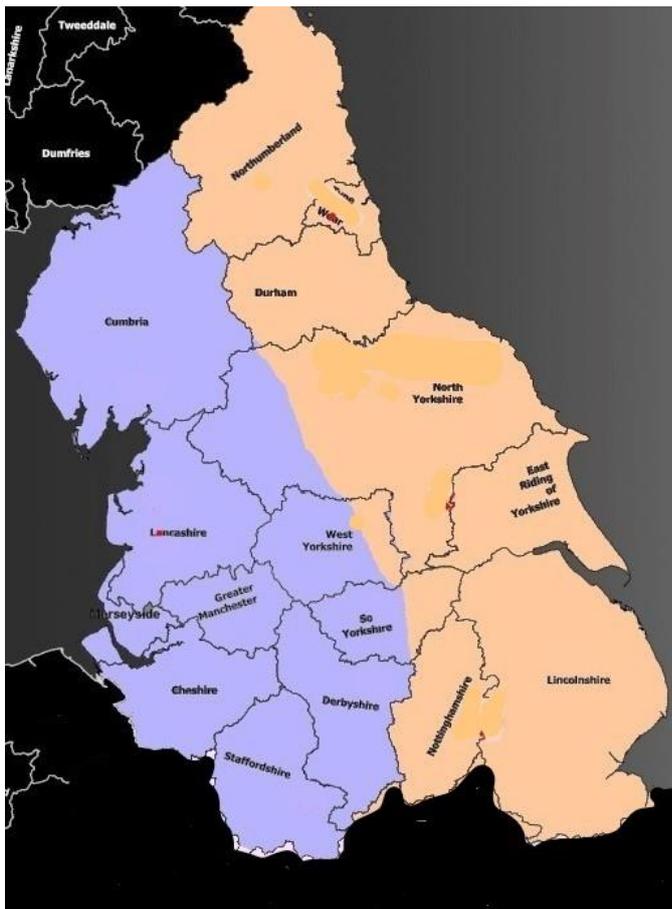
Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency

# North West Region Annual Report 2021



National  
Bee Unit

Some notable changes have taken place during the 2021 season. Ever since I commenced my role as Regional Bee Inspector (RBI) I have sought to continue to increase our cross-border reciprocal working relationship with the North East Region headed by RBI Dhonn Atkinson. In practical terms this resulted in shared training events and the Northern Team assisting in disease outbreaks in the North East Region along the border with our original ‘Northern Region’. Apart from supporting Dhonn’s team at times of high demand, this approach was also mutually beneficial as it also acted as a ‘firewall,’ tackling any disease outbreaks before they could potentially spread to our region.



At the beginning of 2021, a review of the National Bee Unit (NBU) England and Wales regional boundaries took place. This resulted in the formal moving of the boundary between the Northern and North East regions eastwards to the M1 motorway. The Northern Region was then renamed the North West Region and lost Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham. However, to keep the regions balanced the majority of West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Derbyshire were transferred from the North East to the North West. We also cover a small area of North

Yorkshire.

I have attached a map indicating the new boundary, the North West Region being represented by the (darker) blue area, the North East by the lighter area.

As a result of these changes two inspectors transferred regions, Brian Murphy to the North East team and Phil Khorassandjian to the North West.

### **The 2021 Season**

During the early part of the season the often cool and wet weather did hold back some colonies. I am always hesitant to generalise without caveat, as I am sure that some beekeepers will argue the opposite was true for their stocks or locality. However, we did receive many reports of dwindling and dead colonies in the spring. Nosema was suspected in some cases, either directly or indirectly. Evidence that varroa infestation had been present was often evident.

The summer was mostly settled and warm. Those I spoke to who had taken colonies to the heather moors at the beginning of August reported a good crop.

As a result of ongoing precautions and restrictions in connection with Covid-19 and its variants we did not undertake any Bee Health Days in 2021. However, Dhonn and I did arrange Asian hornet training for our two teams to hone tracking skills, and a training exercise led by SBI Keith Bartlem for the Harrogate Asian Hornet Team, both of which being well received. We are also currently in talks with local associations to plan Bee Health Days in May and July 2022. Further details will be published nearer the time.

With the acquisition of parts of West, North, and South Yorkshire, and Derbyshire, the North West inspectors have travelled far greater distances in 2021 to reach the more easterly and southern parts of the region. However, we have just finalised a recruitment process for a Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI) to cover West Yorkshire. Once in post this appointment should help us to reduce overall travelling time, and as a result release more time for field work.

I have below reproduced the inspection chart from Beebase which outlines the number of inspections carried out by the North West Team per county during the 2021 season. In 2021 the North West field inspection team consisted of myself and three inspectors, one of whom works four days a week.

Region	County	Colonies Inspected	
		Total	Dead
North-West-England	Cheshire	100	3
	Cumbria	200	2
	Derbyshire	618	17
	Greater Manchester	44	6
	Lancashire	160	3
	Merseyside	142	11
	West Yorkshire	606	15

## NBU Staff Changes

At the end of the 2021 season SBI John Zamorski retired. John had joined the NBU as a Bee Inspector in 2010 mostly covering Lancashire. He was an invaluable member of the North West Team. Since 2019 John had been supporting the NBU with office-based tasks, taking a significant role in staff training, imports, and with Asian hornet triage. Not only will his experience and knowledge be missed by the North West Team, but by the whole of the NBU. We wish him a happy retirement.

Across the wider NBU further staff changes have or will take place before next season. Colin Pavey, the RBI for the Western Region, and Keith Morgan the RBI for the Eastern Region both retired in 2021. Colin has been replaced by RBI Jon Axe, and Pete Davies has moved from being RBI of the Southern Region to RBI of the Eastern Region.

As part of the review mentioned earlier in this report, Southern Region is now 'Central Region' and will be covered by RBI John Geden. In Wales RBI Frank Gellatly will retire in early 2022, Maggie Gill has been appointed to succeed him.

Finally, from January 2022 RBI Dhonn Atkinson will be covering the National Bee Inspector (NBI) role whilst Cristina Ruiz is on maternity leave. At the time of writing Dhonn's temporary replacement has not been identified.

From 1st April 2022, you can use the post code search on the contacts page of BeeBase to check for your local SBI, who can be contacted from the beginning of April until the end of September.

During the winter period of October to March please direct all enquiries to the

RBI ( [Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](http://nationalbeeunit.com) ).

## Notifiable Disease

### American Foulbrood

County	10 km Squares where AFB Found	Area Name	Number of Colonies Infected	Month AFB Found
North Yorkshire	SE04	KEIGHLEY	3	August
South Yorkshire	SK38	UN-NAMED	1	August

### European Foulbrood

County	10 km Squares EFB Found	Area Name	Number of Positive EFB Diagnoses (including re-currents)	Month EFB Found
Derbyshire	SK28	BAMFORD	1	April
Derbyshire	SK28	BAMFORD	3	July
Derbyshire	SK33	DERBY	2	April
Derbyshire	SK34	BELPER	1	April
Derbyshire	SK35	WHATSTANDWELL	1	May
Derbyshire	SK35	WHATSTANDWELL	1	June
Derbyshire	SK43	BORROWASH	7	May
Derbyshire	SK43	BORROWASH	4	June
South Yorkshire	SE50	BENTLEY	2	July
South Yorkshire	SE50	BENTLEY	1	August
South Yorkshire	SK28	UN-NAMED	2	July
South Yorkshire	SK38	UN-NAMED	2	May
South Yorkshire	SK38	UN-NAMED	2	August
South Yorkshire	SK59	CARR	1	June
West Yorkshire	SE12	BRIGHOUSE	1	April
West Yorkshire	SE23	WEST LEEDS	1	April
West Yorkshire	SE23	WEST LEEDS	13	May
West Yorkshire	SE23	WEST LEEDS	8	August

It can be seen from the above charts that the disease found in 2021 is in the new area acquired after the boundary moved east into Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

The NBU has a Red/Amber priority list meaning that our inspections are directed to areas of objectively calculated risk, so naturally our focus in 2021 has been the newly acquired territory. I am, however, very aware that disease can appear anywhere so this will be a consideration when planning the 2022 inspection strategy.

SBIs are given areas by 10k squares based on OS mapping. The border between regions is therefore not a linear border, mosaic-like squares hence there being some overlap.

I sometimes get asked how 10k squares are identified by the above references. You can work-out your own 10k square by taking a ten-digit OS map reference at your apiary and using the first and sixth number after the two letters. For example, if your OS map reference is SD1111122222, the 10k square will be SD12.

Being able to identify areas with previously recorded foulbrood is a useful tool so these lists, including for previous years, are on Beebase in the disease mapping section. However, if a grid square is not present it does not mean there is no disease within 10K as some squares are not listed but border those that have confirmed cases, and another consideration is disease may be present but not yet discovered. All these charts can do is inform where positive discoveries have been made. This can be useful if considering the movement of bees or collecting swarms, but it is best practice to assume a disease risk in every case and take appropriate precautions.

The disease mapping available to inspectors is based radial distance from incidents, but we can only use 10k squares for public use to prevent the identification of individual beekeepers.

One interesting joint initiative by the North West and North East Regions has been to take swabs from beekeepers' vehicles whilst dealing with foulbrood outbreaks. This was undertaken in specific cases where European Foulbrood (EFB) was found across apiaries.

In the three outbreaks where swabs were taken live EFB bacteria was found on a steering wheel and other dashboard controls, on a beekeeper's toolbox and in the area where colonies and equipment were carried for transportation. We cannot do this routinely but are able to use these findings to highlight the importance of biosecurity, the cleaning of equipment between colonies, and

barrier management. Whilst in these cases EFB was the issue of concern, it shows how easily diseases in general can be spread by beekeepers. Guidance documents are available on Beebase with regards to apiary hygiene which I would encourage you to be aware of.

It is also worth mentioning that we treat 'call-outs' by beekeepers for suspected foulbrood as priority 'Red' inspections. If you suspect the presence of foulbrood, it is a legal obligation to inform the bee inspectorate. It is a free service so you will not be charged, even if we visit and deal with a confirmed incident. It is good practice to have a smartphone/camera with you at inspections so you can take pictures of anything suspicious. These can then be emailed to your SBI or me for an opinion before attendance.

### **BeeBase Registration and Association Membership Lists**

I would like to emphasise 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 [Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](http://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 one of us 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 so if they satisfy the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website provides guidance on best practice).

These lists are extremely useful to us as they allow us to identify new beekeepers and to update contact details for existing beekeepers. We use our database every day to prioritise our notifiable disease inspections. An up-to-date list is something that will be hugely important if we are unfortunate enough to find Small Hive Beetle (SHB) in the North of England.

## Surveillance of Small Hive Beetle (SHB) in Italy in 2021

Information from the National Reference Laboratory for Apiculture in Italy below, updated in September 2021, shows surveillance for Small Hive Beetle in Sicily with no positives found again this year. Meanwhile in the Calabria region on the mainland, two positive apiaries and five positive sentinel nuclei have been found, their website documents a total of thirty-seven adult beetles found this year.



## Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*)

On Wednesday 6th October, a beekeeper in the Ascot area of Berkshire filmed live insects near a hive. He captured a sample and reported the sighting using the using the free 'Asian Hornet Watch' app.

The insects were confirmed as Asian hornets. After mounting a track and trace operation in the area, the nest was found in a poplar tree and was destroyed on Monday 11th October. It measured approximately 35cm in diameter, the largest nest found to date in England.

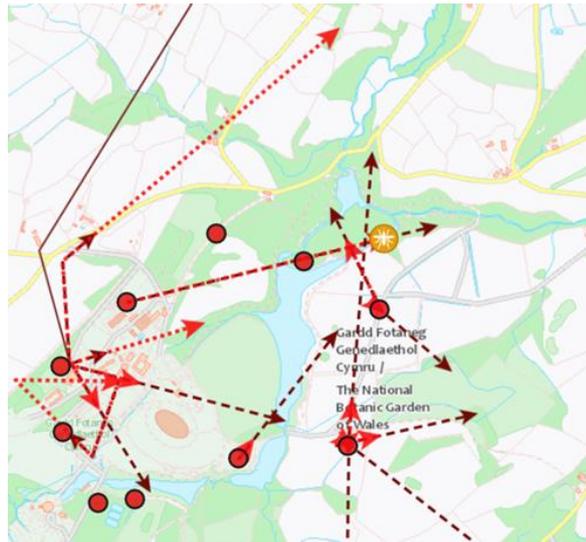
Monitoring continued in the area supported by local Asian Hornet Teams (AHTs). This involved residual trapping and surveillance and was carried out daily for three weeks following the destruction of the nest. When nothing was seen or caught for seven days the traps were removed and the local AHTs and beekeepers were asked to remain vigilant.

This success was followed three weeks later by another report of Asian Hornets feeding on nectar on garden plants in the Buckland area of Portsmouth. The report via the Asian Hornet Watch App on the morning of Friday 29th October was accompanied by clear photographs. NBU inspectors followed up the sighting quickly, being on site by 2pm that afternoon. An Asian hornet nest was then located in a Norway Maple tree on Saturday 30th October shortly after midday and it was destroyed early Sunday evening 31st October. The nest was subsequently sent to FERA Science Ltd for analysis and monitoring continued in the area supported by local beekeepers.

An NBU tracking App has been developed for the inspectorate which has been used successfully during the 2021 outbreaks. The App can track hornet flight lines and record positions of bait stations and traps. It has been proved to be an asset when dealing with incidents.



*Asian hornet nest found  
October 30<sup>th</sup> in Portsmouth*



*Track and trace mapping app*

If you have a smartphone, please make sure you download the free Asian Hornet Watch iPhone or Android App and familiarise yourself with what the hornets and similar insects look like. It is a bit late for this season but in the future keep a look out on late summer flowering plants such as ivy where the hornets (and other insects) forage on the flowers. Report suspected 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) or contact the NBU.

## **Varroa**

Varroa continues to be a challenge, it is responsible for many colony losses each year, however its incidence varies across the country and depends very much on its management. Out in the field inspectors have found that the general level of knowledge amongst beginners about how to manage varroa was poor, not helped by the lack of BKA training due to the pandemic. We felt that many knew of treatments, but not much detail about them, which is something we hope to cover in our bee health events next year.

It is strongly advised that beekeepers regularly monitor mite levels as part of the management of their colonies and act if they reach damaging levels. Control can be achieved by using biotechnical methods and/or authorised products as directed by the manufacturer.

The manufacturers of the authorised treatments spend a great deal of time formulating how they should be used to ensure the maximum efficacy. Please ensure that when using treatments that the manufacturer's instructions are strictly followed to achieve the greatest benefit from the product. It is also worth noting that some treatments, such as those that are thymol or formic acid based are affected by temperature. Strips such as those containing Amitraz need to be placed correctly in the brood chamber in line with instructions, for maximum effect. There is a new authorised varroa product - Formicpro 68.2g Beehive Strips for Honeybees which is listed on the Veterinary Medicines Directorate website [Product Information Database - Search \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://www.defra.gov.uk/product-information-database)

Most beekeepers will complete two treatments at specific times in the year. The first after taking the honey off and checking for stores, often a thymol-based treatment starting in August, which promotes healthy winter bees. Secondly a winter treatment with an oxalic acid-based product in December, when there is little or no brood, keeping mite numbers low as new brood is normally starts being produced in the spring. Both of these active ingredients don't induce resistance in mites through regular use, unlike some harder chemicals.

The rule of thumb is to have colonies going into winter with low mite numbers and likewise going into the spring. Treatments performed too late in the season, e.g., late September, will often be less effective, resulting in winter bees being weakened by the varroa mites feeding on them. As inspectors we often see colony mortality in the winter or early spring as a result of poor varroa management.

There is a legal requirement that the use of any medicines is recorded, and these records must be kept for a minimum of five years.

Full details can be found on Beebase along with free fact sheets including the 'Managing Varroa' booklet. [Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](https://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

## **Imports and Exports**

The UK is now considered a Third Country by the EU and similarly all EU member states are now considered a Third Country by the UK, so Third Country rules apply for both imports and exports.

### **IMPORT of Honey Bees**

Honey bees imported from a third country must be accompanied by an appropriate export health certificate (EHC) from the Third country. This must be issued by the Third Country's Competent Authority or their Official Certifier. Currently only the import of Queens (in cages with attendant workers) is permitted under Third Country rules, except from New Zealand where the import of packages of bees is also permitted.

Importers wishing to import bees from a listed third country must comply with the import requirements. Importers must notify all imports in advance via the IPAFFS system (Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System). Imports from countries other than EU member states must enter via a Border Control Point (BCP). Until March 2022 imports from EU member states will be checked at destination by a Bee Inspector on a risk basis.

The Northern Ireland Protocol sets the principle of unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses to Great Britain. NI beekeepers may continue to export packages and colonies to the UK. There will be no border checks on consignments despatched from Northern Ireland.

### **EXPORT of Honey Bees**

Honey bees exported to a third country must be accompanied by an appropriate health certificate. This is issued by the NBU once the bees to be exported have been inspected and confirmed free from serious notifiable pests and diseases. Currently only the export of Queens (in cages with attendant workers) is permitted under Third Country rules to EU and Northern Ireland.

As Northern Ireland is treated as though it still resides within the EU, movements of bees to Northern Ireland must now be accompanied by a health certificate and the full Third Country export procedure must be followed.

In the same way, only queens may be exported to Northern Ireland. The export of colonies and packages to Northern Ireland are no longer permitted.

To keep up to date with the latest guidance on importing and exporting live honey bees please visit the following link

[Beebase - Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](https://nationalbeeunit.com)

Finally

I would like to thank the North West Region SBIs, Julia Hoggard, Caroline Coughlin and Phil Khorassandjian for their hard work and commitment throughout the season. I would also like to thank everyone who has welcomed us into their apiaries, and those who supported the sentinel apiary schemes during 2021.

I wish you all a happy and productive 2022 season.

Mark McLoughlin

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