

# NBU South-East Region Update June 2002

## **Introduction**

This issue of the CSL National Bee Unit's South East Region Newsletter aims to bring you up-to-date with the activities of the region's bee inspectors this season, and also the related bee disease research work currently being carried out at the NBU in Sand Hutton.

## **Bee Inspector Team Changes**

I should firstly draw your attention to a new member of our team, Nick Withers, who joined us as a Seasonal Bee Inspector in mid-May and has since been undergoing training with existing inspectors in the field. This season, Nick, who is based in Oxted Surrey, is going to be working mainly in East Sussex, but also sometimes crossing the border into adjoining parts of Kent and Surrey.

Nick's first job is to be visiting some of the beekeepers in this area who have not recently been visited by a bee inspector. Beekeepers in this area who would particularly like him to visit should call him on 01883 722194.

This is a good chance to remind you about the other bee inspectors in the region, who this year are:

Peter Bowbrick (Seasonal Bee Inspector, South London, North and West Surrey)  
Tel:0208 648 6358

Alan Byham (Seasonal Bee Inspector, West Sussex, South and East Surrey)  
Tel:01737 644474

Trevor Davis (Seasonal Bee Inspector, East Kent) Tel:01227 372519

Dennis Geoghegan (Seasonal Bee Inspector, South East London and West Kent) Tel: 0208 857 7142

James Morton (Regional Bee Inspector, inspections mainly in North and West London) Tel: 020 8571 6450

I should mention that, as ever, we would all like to hear from any beekeepers who have any concerns whatsoever about the health of their bees and will give whatever help and advice we can either by telephone or during an apiary visit (free of charge).

## **Apiary Visits 2002**

Our programme of apiary inspections got underway in early April and at this time it was striking how strong colonies were for this time of the year - perhaps as much as a month ahead of usual on average as a result of excellent weather in early Spring. However, this good start has not been maintained, as cold and wet weather over the past month has generally made life difficult for bees and beekeeper and bee inspectors alike.

Recently, colonies have been confined to their hives for long periods and judging by those I have recently seen the result seems to be that, firstly, very many colonies have swarmed and as virgin queens have generally been slow to mate, many have had a long period of broodlessness – making inspection for brood disease difficult. Secondly, although many colonies had surplus honey earlier in the spring, many are now running low on stores and some are now on the verge of starvation. Hopefully, with the main-flow due to start shortly, a change in the weather should resolve matters. In the meanwhile it would be advisable to check all colonies and feed any that are dangerously short of food.

## **Foulbrood Incidence 2002**

So far this season we have so far found rather fewer EFB infected colonies than would be typical for this time of the year - probably as a result of a reduced number of inspections carried out due to the poor weather.

However, as the attached table and map show, cases of European foul brood have been found in all counties in the South-East Region: London (9), West Sussex (15), East Sussex (2), Surrey (18) and Kent (11). Unfortunately, past experience leads me to me expect these totals to increase substantially by the end of the season.

So far this season a single case of American foulbrood has been found. This was near Horsham in West Sussex - a county with no recent history of the disease. American foulbrood is currently uncommon in the South East and we will be therefore making particular efforts to try and trace the source of this infection.

### ***Varroa Update***

Levels of Varroa this season seem to be very variable. Many apiaries currently have few or no mites detectable by uncapping sealed drone brood. However, we have also come across a number where colonies are already showing signs of severe infestation, even though they were apparently treated for Varroa at the end of last season.

Now that we have confirmed Varroa resistance to pyrethroids in the UK it is no longer safe to assume that this is simply a result of rapid re-infestation from other colonies locally, and so we have conducted a field resistance tests to make sure that resistance is not the cause. So far the results of all such tests in the South East have been negative.

We will be conducting more tests as the season progresses and encourage beekeepers to do so also, or to call us for help if they have reason to suspect resistance may be. Pyrethroid resistance is a problem that as beekeepers we can certainly cope with – but only if we have early warning of its arrival in our region.

### ***Apiary Tours and Demonstrations***

During the season so far, we have had close involvement with many beekeeping associations, for example with 'apiary tours' (in which with the help of the local association we devote a day or more to inspecting as many of their members colonies as possible) and talks and apiary demonstrations (on colony inspection, disease recognition, pyrethroid resistance testing etc.) However, it is not too late for beekeeping associations not so far involved to organise something with us - we are very flexible and can generally arrange activities at short notice. Please contact your local SBI or me for further details.

### ***Training days at the NBU***

This summer the National Bee Unit is holding a number of free bee health training days for beekeepers at its state-of-the-art facilities at the Central Science Laboratory, York. These one day courses consisting of lectures, laboratory work and apiary demonstrations are aimed at improving awareness and recognition of bee diseases.

They are particularly aimed at those in a position to pass on the information to others (such as beekeeping association disease

liaison coordinators), however, all beekeepers are welcome. There are currently places available on 18th July and 19th July. Beekeepers interested in attending should contact me for further details.

### ***Foulbrood Research at the NBU***

The NBU is currently working on a number of projects that aim to improve our understanding, recognition and control of foul brood diseases.

The first of these is a continuation of Dr Ruth Waite's (formerly Ruth Spinks) two-year trial of 'shook swarms' as an alternative to conventional antibiotic treatment. Early results are very promising, with a greatly reduced rate of reoccurrence of the disease in treated colonies. In addition, Ruth is conducting a second year's small-small trial of the use of PLP, a bacterial treatment intended for the prevention and treatment of EFB. Beekeepers interested in either trial should contact their bee inspector for further information.

As a new strand to our work on EFB, our PhD student Lee Neale is working on bacterial infection in larval bees. This will involve his artificially rearing worker bees from egg to adult in a dish in a laboratory incubator! Lee can then study infection in individual larvae in a precisely controlled environment. It is hoped that this will shed light on the development and spread of EFB in infected colonies.

Meanwhile another team in CSL is working on novel field diagnostic test kits for AFB and EFB. These kits, which are based on monoclonal antibody technology, look and function very much like pregnancy-test kits. In use, a sample of suspect diseased material is placed in the kit, and a line appears in a window to indicate a positive result. Testing of the AFB kits is taking place this season, with the EFB kit to shortly follow.

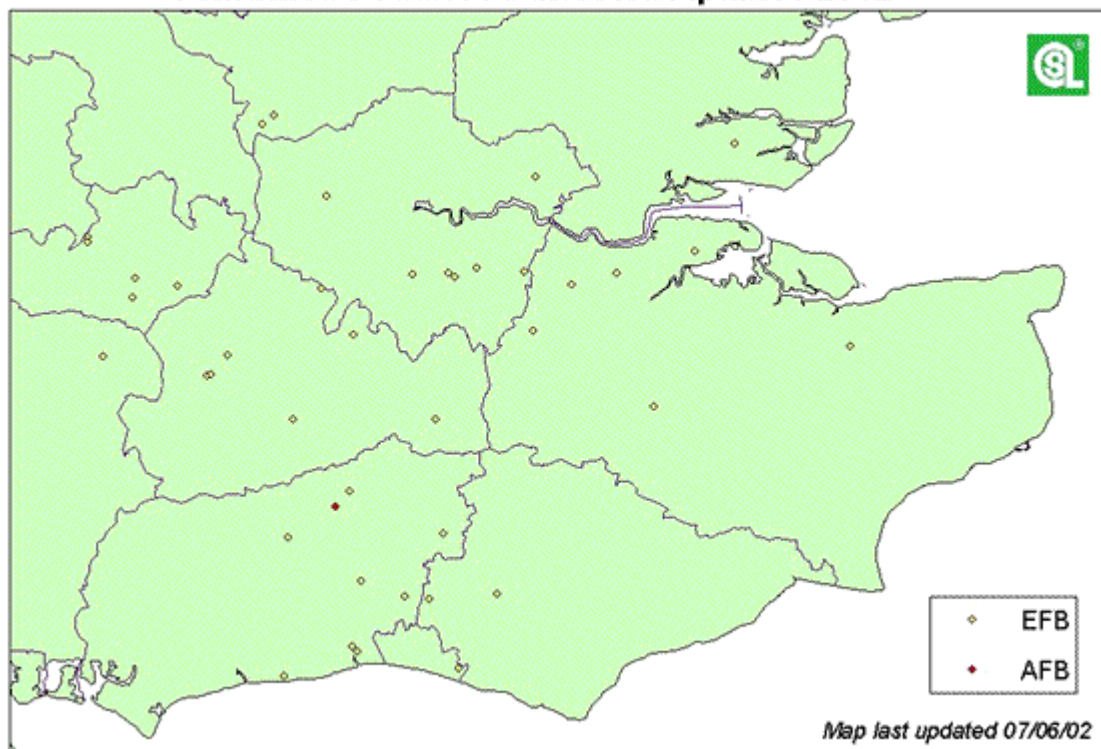
Subsequently it is envisaged that they will be used by bee inspectors and also available for beekeepers to use themselves.

Further details of these and other projects are available on the National Bee Unit's website: [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

Or for more details contact me, James Morton, on 0208 571 6450 or email [j.morton@csl.gov.uk](mailto:j.morton@csl.gov.uk)

**Confirmed European foulbrood (EFB) and American Foulbrood (AFB) cases**  
**01/01/02 - 07/06/02**

**Confirmed Foulbrood Infected Apiaries 2002**



### East Sussex

OS 10 km Sq.	Area Name	AFB apiaries	AFB colonies	EFB apiaries	EFB colonies
TQ30	Brighton	0	0	1	1
TQ31	Burgess Hill	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

### Greater London

OS 10 km Sq.	Area Name	AFB apiaries	AFB colonies	EFB apiaries	EFB colonies
TQ18	Harrow & Ealing	0	0	1	3
TQ36	Croydon	0	0	1	4
TQ37	S.E. London	0	0	1	1
TQ47	Woolwich & Eltham	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>

### Kent

OS 10 km Sq.	Area Name	AFB apiaries	AFB colonies	EFB apiaries	EFB colonies
TQ36	Croydon	0	0	1	2
TQ47	Woolwich & Eltham	0	0	1	1
TQ56	Swanley & Kingsdown	0	0	2	4
TQ66	Meopham	0	0	1	1
TQ74	Staplehurst & Marden	0	0	1	1

TQ77	N. Rochester & Hoo	0	0	1	1
TR05	Selling & Chilham	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>

## Surrey

OS 10 km Sq.	Area Name	AFB apiaries	AFB colonies	EFB apiaries	EFB colonies
SU95	W. Guildford/ Woking	0	0	3	6
TQ14	Dorking	0	0	1	1
TQ16	Kingston & Esher	0	0	1	7
TQ25	Reigate & Banstead	0	0	1	3
TQ34	Smallfield	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>

09 June 2002

Page 1 of 2

## West Sussex

OS 10 km Sq.	Area Name	AFB apiaries	AFB colonies	EFB apiaries	EFB colonies
TQ00	Littlehampton	0	0	1	2
TQ02	Billingshurst	0	0	1	1
TQ13	Horsham	1	1	0	0
TQ20	Shoreham & Hove	0	0	2	2
TQ21	Henfield	0	0	2	3
TQ23	Crawley	0	0	1	3
TQ32	Haywards Heath	0	0	1	2
TQ41	N.E. Lewes	0	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>55</b>

**Note:** The Area Name refers to the main town(s) or village(s) in the relevant 10 km Ordnance Survey square. However, this will not always correspond with the town or village where foulbrood has occurred. Please see an O.S. map or atlas for further details of the O.S. grid.

For further information about bee disease in the South East Region please contact:  
James Morton, CSL Regional Bee Inspector Tel. 020 8571 6450 E-mail [j.morton@csl.gov.uk](mailto:j.morton@csl.gov.uk)

CSL National Bee Unit, Sand Hutton, York YO41 1LZ  
[www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

09 June 2002

Page 2 of 2