

SCOTTISH HONEY BEE HEALTH STRATEGY STEERING GROUP 9TH MEETING

Date: 15th November 2018

Time: 11:00 am

Location: Battleby Conference Centre, Redgorton, Perth PH1 3EW

Attendees:

NAME	ORGANISATION	POSITION
Nick Ambrose	Scottish Government	Branch Head, Animal Health & Welfare (Chair)
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government	Lead Bee Inspector
Jackie Quigley	Scottish Government	Secretariat
Douglas Petrie (until lunch time)	Scottish Government	Head of Area Offices & Head of Agricultural Profession
Fiona Hight	Science & Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA)	Entomology Laboratory Manager
Graeme Sharpe	SRUC	Apiculture Specialist
Alan Riach	Scottish Beekeepers Association	President
Phil McAnespie	Scottish Beekeepers Association	Vice President
Bron Wright	Scottish Beekeepers Association	Past President
Gavin Ramsay	Scottish Beekeepers Association	Bee Health Convener
Helen Nelson	Scottish Beekeepers Association	Assistant Secretary (deputising for John Wilkinson General Secretary)
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers Association	General Secretary
Murray McGregor	Bee Farmers Association	Past chairman
Margaret Thomas	Bee Farmers Association	Member
Mike Brown	National Bee Unit (NBU), APHA	Head of National Bee Unit
Julian Parker	National Bee Unit (NBU), APHA	National Bee Inspector
John Smith	Scottish Government	Bee Inspector (Observer)
Angus MacAskill	Scottish Government	Bee Inspector (Observer)
Luke Woodford	St Andrews University	Observer
APOLOGIES		
Michelle Berry	Scottish Beekeepers Association	
John Wilkinson	Scottish Beekeepers Association	General Secretary
Belinda Philipson	DEFRA	Defra Plant and Bee Health Evidence & Analysis

Nigel Semmence	National Bee Unit	Contingency Planning and Science Officer
Jon Pickup	Science & Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA)	Head of Virology and Zoology

NOTE OF MEETING:

Item 1: Welcome and apologies

1.1 Nick extended a warm welcome to everyone, in particular to those attending for the first time. Apologies as above

Item 2: Previous meeting minutes (8th meeting 22nd November 2017)

2.1 The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

Item 3: BHIT report

3.1 A power point presentation and update on the 2018 season activities was provided by Steve.

3.2 Disease figures for EFB & AFB in 2018 were confirmed at 59 and 0 respectively. In contrast, in 2017, there were 90 EFB and 5 AFB cases. There is at least one new strain type of EFB in Scotland (Type 3). Scotland already has strain types 1 & 18. Some beekeepers have been voluntarily culling their bees to help eradicate the problem. There has been no reports of AFB this year but that doesn't necessarily mean that it has been eradicated. A lot more Beekeepers have been asking for help this may be due to the Bee Health Days which they attend.

3.3 The Bee Farmers refresher day is due in 2019. A date will be set for this shortly.

3.4 There is still interest in Queen rearing. There are several Bee breeding groups. This is trying to reduce the number of Queen Imports. However imports are still important due to our bad weather and crisis conditions requiring imports to replace the losses.

3.5 Elinor Mitchell (SG Director ARE) and Sheila Voas (CVO Scotland) both came out on inspections this year. Elinor is keen to get bees at Saughton House. If possible this will be done by spring 2019.

3.6 Small hive beetle – Italy still seems to be having problems in the south of the country. Scottish imports are usually from the North of the country. It is not yet clear what will be happening next year with EU exit.

3.7 Steve and Fiona attended an Asian hornet (AH) workshop hosted by State of Jersey which was very valuable and illuminating in terms of the resource required to deal with AH and the cooperation with and between beekeepers.

Item 4 – Scottish Beekeepers Association report

4.1 Board of trustee and Advisors. In addition to 17 Trustees and 2 Advisors, one covering IT and one insurance, the SBA has a Development Officer, who is self-employed, supplying services on a sub-contract, part time basis.

4.2 Development. Michelle Berry's main role is to develop a structured media campaign to promote honeybees and beekeeping in Scotland, with particular emphasis on schools liaison and to explore funding sources available to support these aims. Michelle has had great success in enthusing school children, teachers and members of the public about honeybees and beekeeping. She has also made many visits to local beekeeping associations where she has explained the function and objectives of the SBA. Several schools now have apiaries and are participating in the SBA education system,

4.3 ICT. The Information and Communications Technology team continue to add relevant content to the SBA website. It is a valuable information resource for beekeepers and lay members of the public can be used easily and quickly to order shop items, apply for membership and apply for SBA exams and workshops. All education syllabuses and module past papers are available in the members pages.

4.4 SBA Membership. Membership is at 1,777 (up from 1697 last year), including the 43 Affiliated Local Beekeeping Associations (ABA's). It is believed that there are about 2500 beekeepers in Scotland. Beekeepers can be members of an ABA without being a member of the SBA. The SBA offers a discount rate for first time members (£20), most first time members come from ABA Beginner Classes.

4.4.1 SBA Subscription fee. The individual and ABA membership fee stays the same this year at £35.

4.4.2 Affiliated Beekeeping Associations' (ABAs). There are 43 ABAs. Virtually all Local Associations are now affiliated to the SBA and also some beekeeping groups who are part of wider Community Groups, such as Tarland

4.4.3 Members' Meetings. An AGM, and Members and Delegates Forum have been held during the year.

4.5 Honey Bee Health. After a short promising spell in late winter we were beset by the Beast from the East which gave the bees quite a challenge. However by early May the sun appeared and stayed pretty active all summer. Whilst making the bees "vigorous" there was a pretty constant flow until latter part of July with members reporting bumper crops. However the heather was a failure for most members.

4.6 Notifiable Diseases: Generally the foulbroods seem under control and we thank the Bee Farmers and the Scottish Bee Inspectors for continuing to monitor and control outbreaks. Members continue to express concern when large numbers of colonies appear in their areas for the Canola (OSR) flows, but as far as is known, spill-over of disease from bee farming into the hobby sector seems to be minimal.

4.7 Chronic Bee Paralysis virus – This seemed less prevalent than in 2017 in the hobby sector.

4.8 Asian Hornet & Small Hive Beetle Monitoring is continuing for these pests.

4.9 Restocking Options in Scotland: Work is still progressing from the queen rearing project sponsored by the SG and carried out by Gavin Ramsay. Several ABA's are now rearing queens and producing Nucleus colonies for beginners and efforts are being made to expand those activities.

4.10 SBA Education.

A full education program has again run throughout 2018 and next year's programme is being planned.

Examinations:

4.10.1 Practical exams: Uptake remains encouraging. The following have been awarded. 7 Junior Beekeeping Certificates (cf 2 last year), 70 Basic Beekeeping Certificates (BB) (59 last year). In addition there were 3 Intermediate practical, 2 Apiarian (Advanced practicals), 5 Microscopy and 2 Expert Bee masters. 7 Members applied for and received the SBA Beekeeper Trainer Certificate. The increase in Intermediate and Apiarian Practical candidates is particularly gratifying as they are the people who will become mentors and teachers in the future. This is greatly aided by the Moray Beekeepers Association "Healthy Bees" two-day workshops. 7 of which were run throughout Scotland last year. These courses are heavily subsidized by the Scottish Rural Development Programme, Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund and supported by the SBA. The programme is funded for 3 years and tutored by Tony Harris NDB & Ann Chilcott, both SBA Expert Bee masters.

4.10.2 Modular exams: 60 candidates gained module certificates in Nov 2017/Mar 2018 and 4 candidates reached the level of Intermediate Module Certificate (4 modules) and 12 Advanced Module Certificate (all 7 modules passed).

4.10.3 Exam fees. All fees stay the same for next year: Junior Beekeeper £5, BB £20, Modules £23 and the more senior exams £35

4.11 International Meeting of Young Beekeepers 2018. The IMYB was held in Nérac, near Bordeaux, France in July 2018. The SBA sent three young beekeepers who excelled in representing Scotland. Thanks to all who supported the project. Next year the meeting is in Slovakia (Banska Bystrica) - 3rd to 9th July 2019) and Bron Wright is confident of again getting a full team of 3 young people recruited. 2018 was Scotland's year of Young People and the Royal Highland Society of Scotland agreed to donate £1800 per annum for 3 years to support the preparation and travel costs associated with the IMYB. All support is very much appreciated.

4.12 Courses and workshops

Workshops were held in Skep making and Honey – Preparing the bees and processing, The Wax workshop unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the snow storm. Two Train the Trainers (TtT) courses are planned for 2019 and it is hoped that the SG can support these TtT courses. Two very successful Bee Health Days were run by the Scottish Government Bee Health Improvement Partnership (BHIP). SQA Level 5 Beekeeping Courses: The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), in association with Inverness Beekeepers Association, has developed a Scottish Qualification Authority approved course in Beekeeping. This is a National Progression Awards (NPA) course covering 3 areas – The basics of beekeeping theory, the identification and use of associated equipment and understanding, subduing and manipulation of colonies of bees. It will be awarded at Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Level 5 (about old O level/standard grade - ABR's estimation) The course is designed to be run in conjunction with local beekeeping associations in order to cover the hands-on part of beekeeping. It has been based on the SBA Basic Beekeeping Syllabus (BB) and should, in conjunction with local beekeeping association practical coaching, take students to the point where they could sit their BB exam. Several schools are investigating running these courses.

4.13 SBA Autumn Convention: A very successful combined Convention weekend was held in Glasgow as Glasgow and District Beekeeping Association was celebrating its centenary. The convention was held in the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Hall. Talks were given by Margaret Lear (Plants and Pollinators), Margaret Murden NDB (Keeping Bees Healthy). Clive de Bruyn (Queen rearing & recovering from mistakes) and Christophe Woïrgard from Les Amis des Abeilles du Val-d'Oise, a French association twinned with Glasgow - Christophe gave an interesting talk on coping with the Asian hornet including the use of some very advanced technical devices.

4.13.1 Lecture Tour, 3 – 10 Oct: Marin Anastasov NDB (Gloucestershire) gave six insightful and enjoyable talks at seven venues around Scotland. Subjects covered were Mindset of the Honeybee, Nutritional requirements of the Honeybee, Preparing for the spring build-up, Management for mini mating nucs, Father of the Drone and Replacing comb and wax recovery.

4.13.2 Participation in Citizen Science Programmes

SBA members will attend two Easter Bush Science Outreach Centre (EBSOC) 2 day workshops in 1st/2nd Dec 2018 & in 2019. The first workshop is on using Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) techniques to detect the trypanosome *Lotmaria passim* and to see if control of this disease correlates with the amount of propolis used in the colony.

Promotion of Beekeeping:

4.14 Engagement between the SBA and the public is recognized as vital and much time is spent by Trustees and our Development Officer on attending agricultural shows, food festivals, community and schools' groups, The Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET) have now included beekeeping in their open farm days

programme and the SBA and ABA's have been supporting these days, where schoolchildren are shown where their food originates from. The beekeeping tent at these events is always very popular. The 7 video clips for children which can be accessed on the SBA website at Learn/Beebasics are still proving popular.

4.14.1 SBA Moir Library – Several favourable international responses have been received regarding the digitized back copies of the Scottish Beekeeper (back to the first copy, published in 1924) and also regarding the material on the SBA web-site.

4.15 SBA Supported Research:

4.15.1 Varroa research: a study 'to create an off host culture system for the parasitic mite Varroa destructor', continues at the University of Aberdeen, part funded by the SBA.

4.15.2 2016 COLOSS CSI pollen project: The project continues with the volunteer beekeepers now working on pollen analysis.

Meetings:

4.16 The SBA has been represented at meetings including, CONBA-UK, SG Bee Health & Education, National Diploma of Beekeeping (NDB), UK National Honey Show, Royal Highland Show, Scottish National Honey Show (Dundee Food and Flower Festival) & Women in Agriculture.

Item 5 Bee Farmers Association report (supplied from Margaret Ginman)

"Firstly, I would like to thank you all round this table for the positive and constructive working relationship with the BFA. It shows much can be achieved by working together and listening to each other.

Much of the work of the BFA this year has been taken up with concerns about agriculture policy post Brexit. We have spent a lot of time studying proposals and feeding in to consultations at all levels of government.

We have also worked with all countries of the UK regarding their national pollinator strategies. After all bees know no boundaries. The BFA is actually the only UK-wide honey bee organisation.

The BFA addressed the problem of the ageing profile of bee farmers with the introduction of our Rowse / BFA apprenticeship scheme. Our original target was to attract 30 youngsters into the profession. We hope to get to that 30 next year - no mean achievement for a small organisation of just 456 members. Our first six graduated this year and we have four more who have completed the course and are awaiting their results. Our first apprentice in Scotland started this year though Scotland has played a part in giving others who have attended the scheme the benefit of their knowledge.

Our youngsters are awarded the Wax Chandlers Diploma for Excellence in Bee Farming.

The BFA is extending the use of its apprentice units to roll out adult training across the UK.

Also looking forward the BFA is happy to be working with you to bring world-famous queen breeder Keld Brandstrup over from Denmark to speak alongside our chairman Ged Marshall in Perth in March. Keld worked with Brother Adam for two years and managed to obtain breeding stock from Buckfast Abbey. The BFA took a group of 20 bee farmers over to visit Keld in the spring.

*Winter losses - the heaviest in recent years for some - undoubtedly had an impact on honey harvests this year. However, the picture of the honey harvest across the UK is one of the most varied for year - some reporting bumper crops and others disastrous low crops. Interesting I attended the EU Honey Working Party on Tuesday and this huge variation is mirrored across Europe. I have typed up a brief comment from each country on this issue and am happy to distribute it. I will give you some examples though. **(Will be sent separately)***

Scottish Harvest – Bees have had conditional issues due to spring appearing earlier this year. Some places in Scotland had a poor spring harvest due to the weather. The ground was really dry in the east of the country which didn't do well for the crops. Summer was very hot and the heather started early as well. If people had their bees up at the heather in July they seemed to do well, however if they were there in August the heather was gone. It has been an average year for honey yield. Also the cluster size going into winter seems to be very high."

Item 6 – SRUC Report (supplied by Graeme Sharpe)

“Outputs of the Advisory activity AA119 Bee Health. Delivers education, training, advice and knowledge transfer to Beekeepers in Scotland. The total budget to deliver this is £82,000 and my role is to manage the advisory activity. I am located in Auchencruive, Ayr which has an education apiary, honey house and training rooms. The key outputs of the Advisory activity are evening talks/workshops which include:

- Swarm Control and Prevention*
- Hive and Apiary Hygiene*
- Observing the Colony*
- Spring and Summer Management*
- Varroa Management*
- Queen Rearing Principles and Methods*
- Disease Recognition and*
- My Method of Beekeeping*

The talks are done all over the country. I have had done talks in Skye in the Northwest to Dumfries in the Southwest and all the bits in between.

Bee Health Days in Tarland and Dumfries this year. Great team work with Scottish Government, SASA, SBA and local Beekeepers.

I also ran 3 swarm control prevention days (May, June & July) this year. This includes:

- *Preparation of swarming*
- *Factors effecting swarming*
- *Queen cell recognition*
- *Swarm prevention methods*
- *Swarm control methods*
- *Making up a nuc*
- *Good husbandry practice*

I went to the Isle of Arran with Luke (St Andrews University student doing placement at SASA) to check the Bees there.

Also helped with the Bee Farmers & BHIT training day. This is to help Bee Inspectors and Bee Farmers recognise the signs of disease within the colony. They learn about Biosecurity, the biology of the disease, treatment options including the destruction of colonies, shook swarm and economics. They also view live samples and have an assessment at the end.

Farm Advisory Service (FAS) Programme will be held in Perth on the 7th March 2019. These training days are for Bee Farmers wishing to launch or re-launch their business or bee keepers looking to make the move into professional bee farming. They will cover the practical issues affecting bee farming on a larger scale, as well as information on setting up a business, marketing and branding products, keeping accurate accounts, running a business and writing a business plan.”

Item 7 – NBU/APHA/BHAF Report

NBU has been undergoing a reorganisation for the future ways of working.

The review of the 10 year programme probably won't happen until next year.

The annual hive count is currently live.

50 part time inspectors for the coming year but currently have vacancies for 1 Regional Bee Inspector (RBI) and 7 Seasonal Bee inspectors (SBI).

There is a small R&D team for the Asian Hornet. This is the 3rd year of live outbreaks of the Asian Hornet. Most of the confirmed sightings have initially been from Beekeepers or local people to the area.

To date there have been 13 confirmed sightings in England and six nests have been destroyed. Nine of these sightings have occurred in 2018: an individual hornet in Lancashire (April) and Hull, three in Cornwall, two in Hampshire, one in Surrey (all September) and the latest in Kent (October).

There is also the Asian Hornet App which is encouraging people to record species to contribute to the database.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 14th November 2019

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