

Containing Disease

Diseases such as nosema, the foul broods and others have major impacts on colony health, strength and ability to collect nectar and pollinate plants. Disease at low levels often goes unnoticed with the result that it is spread amongst colonies by the beekeeper.

How can I contain disease?

You need to develop management and apiary practices that reduce the chance of spread. There is a list of suggestions below. The first three are the actions that represent the greatest risk. The more of these suggestions that you include in your management strategy the better chance you have of containing an outbreak of disease.

Rules for avoiding and containing disease.

1. Do not exchange frames of brood or honey between colonies unless you are sure they are disease free. If possible
 - a) Keep supers and frames specific to colonies. Frames can easily be marked using a felt tip pen.
 - b) If you need to exchange combs of brood between colonies, pair the hives to restrict exchange.
 - c) Super combs (providing they contain no organic material i.e. pupal cases) can be fumigated using acetic acid. See *FAQ sheet 9 'Fumigating Comb'*.
2. Control robbing. NEVER leave supers open or frames out for bees, or other animals, to clean out. If you wish to dry combs return them to their own colony.

P.T.O.

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3. NEVER feed bees honey from another source.
4. Keep your apiary clean and tidy. Never throw propolis or comb onto the ground. Put it into a container and recover or burn the product.
5. Know the signs of foul brood and other diseases. Specifically examine your colonies for signs at least twice a season. Once in the spring and again in the Summer or Autumn. You are most likely to identify EFB during a honey flow. If you are unsure, seek expert advice.
6. If any colony does not appear to be thriving and the reason is not already known, examine the brood and adult bees for signs of disease.
7. When a colony dies out seal it up, to prevent the remaining stores being robbed out, pending examination of the brood combs to find out why it has died.
8. Make sure bees are disease free before purchasing them. If you are not sure, seek expert help.
9. Sterilise used equipment. Normally done by scorching. See *FAQ sheet 3 'Second-hand Equipment'*.
10. Never buy or use second hand combs.
11. Be suspicious of stray swarms. They can be hived at an isolation apiary, preferably on foundation rather than drawn comb, then subsequently checked for signs of disease. When satisfied that they are disease free they can be moved into a healthy apiary.
12. Arrange hives to reduce drifting and robbing.
13. Regularly and systematically replace old brood combs by melting them down and replacing with new drawn comb or frames of foundation. See *FAQ sheet 5 'Replacing comb'*.
14. Clean your hive tool and smoker with a washing soda solution. Keep your bee suit and gloves clean. See *FAQ sheet 6 Apiary Hygiene and Quarantine'*.