

Healthy Bees Plan

Issue 3 - April 2010

Quarterly Newsletter for all those interested in honey bee health

Quarterly newsletter on progress with implementing the Healthy Bees Plan (www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/growing/bees/news/plan.pdf) which the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) is implementing on behalf of Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

Highlights:

- 4 pilot roadshows were held in Wales, South West, North West and Eastern regions. Over 270 beekeepers attended. Their feedback confirmed that these events were well received and successful. Consisting of various talks and workshops, the main focus was on management and control of Varroa. The events received good coverage from local media and press. For example, the South West event attracted a slot on BBC TV's Spotlight programme, and the Eastern region event was covered by BBC Radio Peterborough and BBC Radio Cambridge. Watch this space for updates on further roadshows.
- 74 beekeepers from 35 associations across England and Wales are being funded by the Healthy Bees Plan to take up an accredited 'Train the Trainer' course. The Healthy Bees Project Management Board, which includes amateur and professional beekeepers, fully supports this initiative as it will improve teaching skills of beekeepers who train other beekeepers. This is an important first step towards improving beekeeping skills which is a key objective of the Healthy Bees Plan.
- The new revamped and refreshed BeeBase website has now gone live. If you haven't visited it already please do so by going to www.nationalbeeunit.com where you will find helpful information such as; advisory leaflets and training manuals, advice for new beekeepers, an image gallery, information on bee research, disease and incidence reports and much more.
- Some 700 additional beekeepers have registered on BeeBase during 2010. **If you haven't already registered please do so** by visiting www.nationalbeeunit.com or by phoning the NBU on 01904 462510. By letting us know that you keep bees and the location of your hives, you will be helping in our ongoing battle against disease and our efforts to sustain honey bee populations.

Working with others to raise awareness about BeeBase and the importance of registration:

- If anyone reading this Newsletter would like to help encourage beekeepers to register on BeeBase, particularly given the benefits to beekeepers and for control of honey bee diseases, the Healthy Bees Project Manager would be delighted to hear from you, contact details below. This may simply involve including the BeeBase address (www.nationalbeeunit.com) on your own websites or publicity material.

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Medicines for bees:

- The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) continues to implement its action plan to increase the availability of authorised medicines for honey bees and also to ensure their correct use, which is paramount for food safety. Residues in honey, due to improper use of medicines, could undermine its image as a healthy natural product. Further details are given in the VMD Action Plan - www.vmd.gov.uk/VetSQP/Bee/actionplan.pdf - which is regularly updated. Optimal use of available medicines by beekeepers is also important to sustain their effectiveness in treating pests and diseases.

Upcoming Key Activities:

- The detailed work of **implementing the Healthy Bees Plan** continues. The Project Management Board met again in March and reviewed the emerging workplans from each of the three specialist working groups who are supporting the Board on the detailed work of implementing the Plan. These are the Science and Evidence Advisory Group, the Husbandry and Education Group and the Communications Working Group. A Healthy Bees communications strategy has been developed. The action plan on finding unregistered beekeepers is ongoing with a further phase of contacting partner organisations and large landowners to seek cooperation in raising BeeBase profile and the importance of registration. Check the BeeBase news pages for further information about detailed implementation activities.
- Defra has commissioned a **study of beekeeping practices** and the information sources and guidance available to both new and experienced beekeepers particularly on husbandry and on pests and diseases. Beekeepers' opinions and experiences are a very important part of the study. More on the results of this study will be available in the next newsletter (July).
- The **risk assessments commissioned by Defra on small hive beetle and on nosema** were completed at the end of March and are being used to review disease control policy, including updating the contingency plan for small hive beetle which we're aiming to publish in the summer. Further details will be available in the July newsletter.

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