

To BBKA Members

4 October 2014

SMALL HIVE BEETLE UPDATE

The following update has been prepared by the BBKA based on communications with the UK authorities, including the National Bee Unit and the Chief Plant Health Officer in Defra, since expressing our deep concerns at the meeting of the Bee Health Advisory Forum (BHAF) on 23 September.

DEVELOPMENTS IN ITALY

The National Bee Unit is in discussion with the Italian authorities and our European partners to ensure that measures are in place to stop Small Hive Beetle (SHB) from entering the UK and harming our bee population. Following the discovery of the beetle at the port city of Gioia Tauro in south west Italy, Italian authorities established a 20km radius protection zone and a 100km surveillance zone around this initial site. Surveillance and control activities have been focused on the 20km zone and movement restrictions placed in the 100km zone preventing any export or movement of bees, bee products and equipment from the zone.

On Wednesday (01/10/14) the Italian National Reference Laboratory for Apiculture published an update on the extent of the outbreak; they report the detection of 16 infested apiaries, all within the original 20km protection zone. Infected apiaries have been destroyed and the surveillance and control measures continue.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UK

For England and Wales, the National Bee Unit has completed the tracing of all imports of packages of bees imported from Italy, around 600 colonies, and all results have been negative for SHB.

As well as the risk of SHB entering the UK with honeybees there are other potential routes by which SHB could enter the UK.

We are particularly concerned about the importation of fruit and other plant materials from this agricultural area of Italy and have urged restriction of the trade in plants, fruit and vegetables from the SHB exclusion zone in Italy, into the UK. This has been discussed by the Plant Health authorities with Bee Health policy officials and whilst they state that they do NOT have legal powers to stop the entry of plants, fruit and vegetables from Italy under plant health legislation, we have urged them to reconsider this aspect under the terms of animal health provisions. The following actions have already been taken:

1. The Fresh Produce Consortium has been alerted of the risk of SHB entry on imported plants, fruit and vegetables from Italy and have been supplied with the NBU advisory leaflet. The Consortium has agreed to inform their members and circulate the leaflet to them.
2. The Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate which inspects plants, fruit and vegetables at points of entry into the UK and HM Customs and Excise have been alerted and supplied with information on the risk and to how identify SHB.

ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS

The BBKA is at present not satisfied that these steps alone are adequate and wishes to see full and early consideration of the imposition of the importation of fruit, vegetables and plant material from the restriction zone. The BBKA has requested an urgent meeting with the authorities, currently scheduled for the week commencing 13 October, to further review the measures in place and to be taken. This will include how best the BBKA and its members can contribute to dealing with this contingency and a number of related issues such as the importation of honeybees into the UK. However, it is important to understand that the greatest risk of undetected entry of SHB into the UK is not likely to be with honeybees but in imported fruit, vegetables and other plant materials.

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The British Beekeepers Association

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It is important that beekeepers can be reassured that an effective contingency plan is in place with effective methods of early detection based on monitoring of imports, the sentinel hives already in place and that effective treatments are ready to hand. This will be the key objective in our discussions with those charged with bee health, but above all, prevention of the pest arriving on our shores..

KEEPING UP TO DATE

The BBKA will continue to update its members via the BBKA website.

Members are also recommended to use the NBU website for the latest information, specifically the News Pages and the Small Hive Beetle page within the Bee pests and diseases section:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/>

BeeBase

Beekeepers who subscribe to the RSS feed will get an automated update when the news pages change:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#148>

Small hive beetle general information:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=125>

Italian National Reference Laboratory for Apiculture

http://www.izsvenezie.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1729:aethina-tumida-situazione-epidemiologica&catid=59&Itemid=373

http://www.izsvenezie.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1722%3Apresenza-di-aethina-tumida-in-calabria&catid=138&Itemid=606

The information is also on the EU Reference Laboratory for honey bee health ANSES website

<https://eurl-milk.anses.fr/en/minisite/abeilles/detection-aethina-tumida-small-hive-beetle-southern-italy>

A copy of the first presentation of the outbreak is publicly available on the Commission website. Things have moved on since, but it outlines the measures and shows photographs of the first infested colonies.

http://ec.europa.eu/food/committees/regulatory/scfcah/animal_health/presentations_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/food/committees/regulatory/scfcah/animal_health/docs/20140919_aethina_italy.pdf

NB It is essential that this matter is dealt with objectively and responsibly and that members should be reassured that the BBKA will do its utmost to ensure that the risk of SHB entering the UK is reduced as much as is legally possible under EU trade and animal health legislation and that should SHB enter the UK, that we are ready and prepared to deal with it. Our primary objective is to prevent the arrival of SHB in the UK.

Dr David Aston

Chair, BBKA Technical and Environmental Committee