

## Safe sourcing of bees and equipment in 2011

Beekeepers and potential beekeepers seeking stocks are encouraged to source their bees locally whenever possible. Most local associations sensibly discourage their members from importing from afar for reasons of pest and disease risk and also the effects of introducing exotic bee types to new areas. Several associations are putting measures into place to assist the local supply of bees and this is very welcome.

As a result of the discovery in 2009 of widespread European and American foulbrood, we encourage all beekeepers in Scotland to exercise caution when purchasing and moving both stocks and second-hand equipment in Scotland. AFB can occur anywhere and can also linger for many decades on used equipment, whereas EFB has a more local distribution but can also persist for years on equipment. Although destroying used frames and scorching the insides of boxes reduces the risk it does not eliminate it completely. Some sources of second-hand equipment are a particularly high risk whereas others may be known to have come from beekeepers with healthy bees. When in doubt seek local advice, but the best approach is not to purchase second-hand equipment unless its health status is well known.

Anyone sourcing stocks of bees should ask the vendor when the bees were last inspected by the inspectorate, and what inspections the beekeeper has performed for disease. We also encourage all beekeepers to register on BeeBase to make your bees known to the inspectorate. Additional concerns apply to bees in the main EFB infected area in Tayside and Angus, even though the outbreak is now at least partly coming under control. We strongly urge SBA members *not to purchase bees from Tayside and Angus in 2011 for movement outside Tayside and Angus*. Under the EFB Strategy for 2011 bee farmers in the EFB-infected area (which includes parts of S Aberdeenshire and the Lothians) have agreed voluntarily to go beyond the legal requirement and not to sell stocks to destinations outside that area. We now ask potential purchasers of stocks and also smaller scale beekeepers so far unaffected by EFB within Tayside and Angus, the worst affected area, with bees to sell in 2011 also to commit to help preserve the EFB-free status of much of Scotland by exercising similar restraint.

Within Tayside and Angus, the area of highest risk of EFB, once traditional vendors of nuclei have been inspected in 2011 and found clear of foulbrood to the satisfaction of the inspectorate, we consider that the risk of spreading EFB to new areas within Tayside and Angus is low given that these areas have already been exposed to the disease. However EFB is a particular concern as the disease appears to have spread dramatically within the commercial beekeeping community in Tayside before its discovery in 2009. The disease can fluctuate over a season and it is difficult to be sure that a symptom-free colony will remain free of the disease.

You can see an overview of where Inspectors found both AFB and EFB in 2009 and 2010 by using the following link to Beebase:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/maps/map.cfm> Select different criteria on the right hand side of the page.

Bear in mind that most of the 2009 records were late in the season and in 2010 many inspections were done on the spring sites. The beekeepers affected migrate colonies from lowland wintering and rape sites to upland heather sites, so to obtain a full picture of the worst affected areas look at both years.

In summary: i) given the risk of spreading foulbrood, please exercise great caution in purchasing second-hand equipment, ii) please cooperate to reduce the risk of creating additional centres of EFB infection by not purchasing stocks from Tayside and Angus for other areas in Scotland.

Gavin Ramsay

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