



Scottish Beekeepers' Association

SBA Advice on the Heather Season in 2009

The picture emerging is of widespread infection, some of it severe, in several commercial beekeeping outfits across Perthshire and Angus. The impression is that this could indicate that some infections are several years old. This implies that any beekeeper's colonies in the infected area (currently known to cover Pitlochry to Forfar) could be affected. It means that the sites the infected operations have visited in the last few years could have contributed to the spread of infection over a much wider area, although initial investigations of contact colonies outside Tayside have been clear apparently. It also means that this year, apparently like previous years, there is a risk that many heather apiary sites used by beekeepers will be in the vicinity of other infected colonies. Although the first commercial beekeeper to have EFB confirmed in his operation has moved only cleared colonies under licence to very isolated sites, it is likely that other operations have already moved infected colonies to the hills.

For those beekeepers who have not yet moved bees to heather sites, we advise:

- that colonies are not moved either into or out from Perthshire and Angus.
- that shared apiary sites are risky at any site in E and C Scotland, and are best avoided.

- that within Perthshire and Angus, individual beekeepers should make their own decisions on moving colonies depending on their own perception of the risks involved.

An additional factor to consider is that infected colonies may be identified while bees are at the heather, and that other beekeepers within a 5 km radius may then be affected by a Standstill Notice. This would complicate the removal of these bees from heather sites which could then take place only under licence or after lifting the Standstill Notice.

We wish to reiterate that colonies known or suspected to be infected with foulbrood anywhere must be notified to the authorities.

The SBA is issuing this informal advice as a service to beekeepers. Beekeepers must realise that in the present situation they must make their own decisions in relation to the risks to their colonies and act responsibly towards other members of the beekeeping community.

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