

Honey Bee Health Strategy

Bee Health Improvement Partnership (BHIP)

28 Jan 2020 – Battleby, Perth

Attendees:

NAME	INITIALS	ORGANISATION	POSITION
Luis Molero	LM	SG	Lead Bee Inspector
Mairi Carnegie	MC	SG-SASA	Assistant Zoology Manager
Karen MacKenzie	KM	SG	Bee Inspector
Angus MacAskill	AM	SG	Bee Inspector
Ailis Kerr	AK	SG	Bee Inspector
Gavin Ramsay	GR	SBA	Bee Health Convener
Alan Riach	AR	SBA	President
Phil MacAnsepie	PM	SBA	Vice President
Bron Wright	BW	SBA	Past President
Margaret Ginman	MG	BFA	General Secretary
Murray McGregor	MM	BFA	Representative
Margaret Thomas	MT	BFA	Representative
Graeme Sharpe	GS	SRUC	Apiculture Advisor

Apologies:

NAME	ORGANISATION
Fiona Highet	SG-SASA
Jackie Quigley	SG

NOTE OF MEETING

Item 1: Welcome and apologies

- Luis welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Apologies received from Fiona Highet and Jackie Quigley

Item 2: Minutes and Actions Points (15th August 2019)

- Previous minutes were approved.
- **Previous Action Points, Item 14 of previous minutes:** Jim Jeffrey (Scottish Pollinators blog) still requiring 'good news' story for blog.

Item 3: Lead Bee Inspector update

a: New Bee Inspectors:

- LM updated group on progress with recruiting of new inspectors and distributed the list of hopefuls. Twelve new bee inspectors agreed with SGRPID. It has been recognised by managers that it is important work. It will be a 3-year strategy.
- Inspectors must be able to: handle bees safely, efficiently and be able to identify disease. They do not necessarily have to be expert bee keepers.
- New inspectors will be going through four days introductory training with Graeme Sharpe and two days disease training at SASA. They will work alongside experienced inspectors for first year.
- Aim is to achieve a good spread of inspectors throughout Scotland, and bees will be their core job from April – September.
- Not all inspectors might pass the training or find the job suitable for them. This is a 3 years strategy and we will continue to review, including the possibility of recruiting seasonal bee inspectors.
- The Beesmailbox email address will continue to be the central contact.
- MM offered a couple of days experience for the new inspectors with his own teams, and an opportunity to visit any apiaries where disease is found.
- **ACTION POINT 1 – LM to write an article for SBA magazine.**

b: EFB Control Plan 2020 (formerly AHBHS) and nuc sales

- LM has met with all of the bee farmers currently signed to the plan to discuss and review.
- The Advanced Honey Bee Health Plan has been renamed back to the EFB Control Plan. LM has reworded and simplified the plan and will require all participants to resign to the plan this year. Re-emphasis on self-control, compliance and reporting of participating businesses. The control plan is in place to help affected businesses within the notional infection zone, but there are risks attached for the wider beekeeping community if not implemented correctly.
- MM & MT – Current limits on movement restrictions should be kept.
- LM will share EFB Control Plan with SBA & BFA once finalised.
- MM & MT - Anyone selling nucs should be keeping records of their sales. It will be key for disease control. There is a lack of traceability/certification in the UK.
- There was general discussion and agreement on the importance of health standards and record keeping in nuc sales. LM - We could press for compulsory registration of beekeepers in Scotland. The NBU wants compulsory registration, but DEFRA prefers to keep a light touch approach rather than increase bureaucracy. There are

concerns on our ability to enforce compulsory registration. LM is currently looking into 'Penalty Notices' for future enforcement options.

- MG - There is interesting work going on in Sweden using technology for better detection of disease in the field using app technology. She will report back after her visit in February.
- There was some discussion on recent work at SASA involving molecular testing of adult bees for the EFB pathogen and whether this could be used in nuc sales. MC & LM reiterated that this is not yet a validated method, and repercussion of positive findings has not been decided.
- **ACTION POINT 2 – SBA and BFA to recommend to their members to carry out at least two disease specific inspections this year, if they bought a nuc within the last two years, and to re-issue guidelines and standards for nuc production. SBA and BFA should promote record keeping of sales of nucs for at least 2 years.**
- **ACTION POINT 3 - LM to consider putting record keeping of nuc sales into the EFB Control Plan.**
- **ACTION POINT 4 – LM to draft new 'Good practice for selling nucs' guidelines & standards and will circulate for comment.**
- **ACTION POINT 5 - MG to consult with the BFA and see if she can share the code of good practice from the BFA members with LM.**
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c: Disease control strategy

- LM - Current figures show EFB is deeply embedded in 4 businesses, but we don't know what else is going on out there. We would expect that with the amount of education and training the BHIT has done in the past few years, if EFB was out there, we should have had reports of it, however, we have not been able to do correct surveillance for the past 2 years.
- Plans are for members of the EFB control plan to self-manage this year with inspectors doing spot checks. Inspectors will aim to focus on surveillance by attempting to visit as many commercial beekeepers as possible, contacts of EFB positive cases and 5km surveillance where disease is found.
- PM - Suggested Vita foul brood testing kit sales in Scotland may provide info on possible unreported disease?
- MM – Plans to continue working with SASA to establish whether shook swarming colonies with sub-clinical infection is effective for eliminating EFB.
- Luis spoke to bee farmers about EFB – hygiene within the business – they said compartmentalisation is almost impossible when working on commercial scale.
- MT highlighted that bacteria is also in the supers.

- GS suggested that aim should be not to eradicate but to minimise and avoid spread, as affected businesses will always be infected.
- MM raised issue of bee farmers 'off radar' operating in the EFB control zone
- LM suggested that anyone in the infected area can apply to sign up to the plan. However, application doesn't mean immediate membership. It is necessary for all applicants to successfully complete a certification day and pass an assessment. Those inexperienced might not be able to join the plan on their first year. The consequence for businesses affected by EFB and not signed to the plan will be that they are subject to restrictions and not able to self-certify EFB inspections.
- Luis will overlook the EFB Control Plan and share it. The plan will be published on the SG website and will be for public access. It is important that we are transparent on all of our decisions.
- MG is going to France this year to see if they can learn anything from them on EFB.
- LM – The label on Apivar is confusing on its use with honey supers. We have sought guidance from the VMD. Currently the bee inspectors must report it to VMD if they see it used with supers during their inspections. It is important that all bee farmers are aware that this will be the normal procedure. Samples might be taken from supers of hives where strips of Apivar are found at VMD's request.
- Amitraz might not leave residue in honey but is soluble in wax. This raises concerns as cut comb is a desirable produce which is regularly used after heather crops.
- **ACTION POINT 6 – MC to find out how many EFB kits are sold by Thornes to Scotland.**
- **ACTION POINT 7 – MM asked MG or LM to write article for BFA magazine for maximum publicity.**
- **ACTION POINT 8 – MG to invite LM to next BFA meeting.**
- **ACTION POINT 9 – MG to consider to invite Robert Field to speak to the BFA members, with emphasis on EFB control plan group, on his biosecurity and compartmentalisation methods.**
- **ACTION POINT 10 – BFA to seek clarification from VetoPharma regarding use of Apivar with honey supers. BFA to discuss this with their members and raise awareness.**

d: Surveillance

- SG & SASA planning to carry out a bee health survey this year, as there is a need to gain better knowledge of disease incidence across the country. SASA will possibly use the molecular EFB test on adult bees for this year's survey while new inspectors are training.
- LM - We want to use this method to detect sub-clinical EFB but need to gain better understanding of the results. If there is no symptomatic disease – legally we can't do anything.

e: Presentation of Activity Log

- Luis presented the SG Activity Log and all agreed it is helpful.

f: Lead Bee Inspector Annual Report

- LM circulated the annual report for 2019/20 season for review and asked for responses by end of week. Report to be published on BeeBase and SG website.
- KM expressed concern over whether we should be publishing names of individual bee inspectors as we wish beekeepers to use the Beesmailbox email address.
- MC noted that the experience of bee inspectors unnecessary for public report and should be removed.

Item 4: Bee Health Days

- Bee Health Days – all agreed it is a good format.
- One day confirmed at CABA (date and location to be confirmed, but either 16th or 30th May). LM suggested could be opened up to SOSBKA if spaces available as they have expressed an interest in further training.
- LM suggested the second date could be an afternoon at SASA on foul brood only. MC pointed out that having only one workshop would limit numbers to 10.
- **ACTION POINT 11 - LM, MC, GS and Fiona Highet to discuss options for second day.**

Item 5: SASA Update

- No plans to change current services for 2020: varroa testing, dead bee analysis in cases of unexplained colony loss and foul brood testing.
- Braula collected in 2019 from debris samples used for study by the Natural History Museum.
- Happy to receive frames for testing from new bee inspectors for extra training and reassurance.
- Plans to carry out random health survey together with SG inspectorate in 2020.
- Continue with winter beekeeper talks (MC and Fiona Highet)
- First lab session with Kelso/Annan high schools well received. Second in summer.
- Asian hornet talk delivered to British Pest Control Association by Fiona Highet. Almost 100 attendees at Scottish meeting and well received. Should provide additional reassurance of pest freedom.

Research

- Hoping to progress diagnostic work on sub-clinical EFB test (adult bees). The student who was going to be starting a placement is on long term sick, but they may source summer students or existing staff to complete the study. May need follow-up testing from same hives as sampled previously to test repeatability.
- Currently working on development of strain typing method at SASA due to cost of test by FERA - initial work is looking positive.
- All agreed that further work on sub-clinical EFB testing would be beneficial to industry.

Item 6: SBA Update

- Started annual programmes of exams, course and workshops.
- One change this year – people can sit modules without doing practical beekeeping course first.
- AGM in March – Phil MacAnespie expected to take over as President.
- Matthew Richardson will be taking over as Science and Bee Health Officer.
- **ACTION POINT 12 – Jackie Quigley/LM to invite Matthew Richards to next BHIP**
- **ACTION POINT 13 – SBA to contact Jim Jeffrey with a piece on emerging solitary bees for spring blog**

Item 7: BFA Update

- MG passed to MM to update as phone signal was poor, but MM was ill at time of last meeting so had no update to give.
- MG will keep an eye on the Agriculture Bill.
- **ACTION POINT 14 – MG to provide an update for the BFA and LM to circulate**

Item 8: NDB Update

- Change in management – Adam Leitch is now Chairman

- The week's Advance Course dates are published – 12-14 students max, Margaret Murden will oversee. Two tutors per day – intensive training.
- There will be no NDB exam this year (the exam is biennial).

Item 9: IMYB Update

- Registration is in for the International meeting in Slovenia at a cost of 750 Euros.
- Invitations have gone out. There are plenty of children learning about beekeeping in school groups, but it can be hard to reach them as many are not linked to SBA and the courses are mainly theory-based, meaning they have little practical experience. We need to look out/ask in associations for children to come forward for this.
- This is the last year of funding from the Highland Show (£1800 received).
- MM, Steve Sunderland and GS have all helped with funding in the past.
- **ACTION POINT 15 - LM to ask Nick about mechanism for funding.**
- **ACTION POINT 16 - BW to put the request for funding in writing to LM**

Item 10: Bee Health Strategy

- Due to finish in June 2020 but will be renewed.
- There was a brief discussion on the Scottish Honey Bee Health Strategy (SHBHS) /Pollinator Strategy and its continuation. AR & GR felt Pollinator Strategy did not have great links to honey bees, but that it's important to retain separate identity for SHBHS. Lynn Bates is involved in the Pollinator Strategy.
- LM commented on need to include threat of invasive non-natives such as Asian Hornet in future SHBHS.
- Report on 2010 - 2020 Bee Health strategy required and LM mentioned need for all to be involved in its production.
- LM stated that he plans to postpone main write-up until September as no time now and will give an opportunity to view the English and Irish reports. After some discussion, and with mixed views on the need for Scottish originality, all agreed on timescale.
- LM - Aim to publish the report by Dec 2020 and publish the new Bee Health Strategy in June 2021.
- **ACTION POINT 17 - GS suggested each stakeholder group writes a section on their inputs to the Strategy over last 10 years and sends to LM.**
- **ACTION POINT 18 – LM to circulate Key Point Indicators and proposed format to BHIP by March.**

Item 11: Date and Venue for remaining 2020 meetings

- **ACTION POINT 19 - Jackie Quigley to send out dates to group**

Item 12: AOB

- Isle of Islay Pollinator Initiative Group have contacted SASA and LM with the intention of making the island a legally protected varroa free zone, with no imports allowed.
- LM - This would require a strict set of rules and rigorous testing to comply with EU law. Every beekeeper on the island must agree to it. It is estimated there are 14 beekeepers on Islay.
- LM plans to visit Islay in 2020 with GS and MC to speak to the beekeepers there and carry out apiary inspections.
- AR mentioned that a similar attempt on a Danish Island failed as it did not have 100% support from all beekeepers.
- Letter from Slovenia – LM shared a letter to Nicola Sturgeon asking for Scotland to send a representative to the ‘World of Bees and Honey’ event on 21 May 2020 at the Slovenian embassy in London.
- MM suggested Steve Sunderland as a participant.
- BW suggested Martin Leahy, winner of the ‘best young beekeeper in the world’ at last year’s IMYB.
- **ACTION POINT 20 - MG agreed to co-ordinate this and get back to the organiser of the event.**

Previous Action Points

Jim Jeffrey (Scottish Pollinators blog) still requiring 'good news' story for blog.

ACTION POINTS FROM MEETING – 28TH JANUARY 2020

1	LM to write an article for SBA magazine	Ongoing	Luis (LBI) to write an article for the SBA Monthly Magazine
2	SBA and BFA to recommend to their members to carry out at least two disease specific inspections this year, if they bought a nuc within the last two years, and to re-issue guidelines and standards for nuc production. SBA and BFA should promote record keeping of sales of nucs for at least 2 years.	Ongoing	
3	LM to consider putting record keeping of nuc sales into the EFB Control Plan.	Ongoing	
4	LM to draft new 'Good practice for selling nucs' guidelines & standards and will circulate for comment	Ongoing	
5	MG to consult with the BFA and see if she can share the code of good practice from the BFA members with LM	Ongoing	
6	MC to find out how many EFB kits are sold by Thornes to Scotland.	Ongoing	
7	MM asked MG or LM to write article for BFA magazine for maximum publicity.	Ongoing	
8	MG to invite LM to next BFA meeting	Ongoing	
9	MG to consider to invite Robert Field to speak to the BFA members, with emphasis on EFB control plan group, on his biosecurity and compartmentalisation methods.	Ongoing	

10	BFA to seek clarification from VetoPharma regarding use of Apivar with honey supers. BFA to discuss this with their members and raise awareness.	Ongoing	
11	LM, MC, GS and Fiona Highet to discuss options for second day.	Ongoing	
12	Jackie Quigley/LM to invite Matthew Richards to next BHIP	Ongoing	
13	SBA to contact Jim Jeffrey with a piece on emerging solitary bees for spring blog	Ongoing	
14	MG to provide an update for the BFA and LM to circulate	Ongoing	
15	LM to ask Nick about mechanism for funding	Ongoing	
16	BW to put the request for funding in writing to LM	Ongoing	
17	GS suggested each stakeholder group writes a section on their inputs to the Strategy over last 10 years and sends to LM.	Ongoing	
18	LM to circulate Key Point Indicators and proposed format to BHIP by March.	Ongoing	
19	Jackie Quigley to send out dates to group	Ongoing	
20	MG agreed to co-ordinate this and get back to the organiser of the event.	Ongoing	