

# Healthy Bees Plan

Issue 6 - January 2011

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](http://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)

## News & Highlights:

- The National Bee Unit has collaborated with Aberdeen University in finding a solution to halt the global honey bee decline by forcing the self-destruction of the deadly varroa mite. The blood-sucking varroa is the biggest killer of honey bees world-wide, having developed resistance to beekeepers' medication over the past decade.



It particularly thrives in cold winters when bee colonies are more vulnerable while huddled together tightly to keep warm. Research has shown how to 'silence' natural functions in the mites' gene – with the potential to make them self destruct.

The process uses the Nobel Prize-winning theory 'RNA interference', which controls the flow of genetic information. So far the 'silencing' has worked with a neutral varroa gene, which has no significant effect on the mite. Scientists now need to target a gene with the specific characteristics that are perfect to force the varroa to self destruct.

Dr Giles Budge said "This cutting edge treatment is environmentally friendly and poses no threat to the bees. With appropriate support from industry and a rigorous approval process, chemical-free medicines could be available in five to ten years".

- An extended meeting of the Healthy Bees Project Management Board (PMB) will be held in March. In addition to the usual PMB members the Chair, secretary and an attendee from each working group (Communications Working Group, Science and Evidence Working group and Husbandry and Education Working Group) will review Phase 1 of the Healthy Bees Plan and the effectiveness of the working groups. An update on the outcome of this meeting will be in the next quarterly newsletter.



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- The business case for phase 2 of Healthy Bees Plan funding was submitted to our Defra owner in early January. It will then be submitted to the Defra Local Approvals Panel for consideration. We will report the outcome of the proposed business case in the next quarterly newsletter.
- Some 3400 additional beekeepers had registered on BeeBase during 2010. **If you haven't already registered please do so** by visiting [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://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](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)) on your own websites or publicity material.

## Education and training:

- NDB Short Courses: Part-funded by Fera, the NDB is organising a series of Short Courses covering important topics in beekeeping and beekeeper education. These 2-day courses will be available in 3 regional areas and are intended to provide beekeeper trainers with in-depth subject matter knowledge and appropriate practical skills. Courses will be led by NDB-qualified tutors and no more than 10 students will participate, per course.

Five NDB Short Courses will be available initially, others are in preparation.

- [Adult bee disease](#) – lifecycle, impact, diagnosis, treatment
- [Microscopy for beekeepers](#) – set-up and uses in beekeeping
- [Balanced nutrition & floral sources](#) – all aspects of pollen
- [Teaching for beekeeper tutors](#) – 2 day distillation of C&G7303
- [Successful wintering](#) – all aspects of preparing for winter, to thrive in spring

Details of venues and dates are in the schedule below.



These intensive Short Courses are to be offered at £95 after March 2011 but, until then, a subsidy from Fera allows them to be provided for only £45 per course. (It is expected that the applicant's association will sponsor the student contribution.) Book now to get the early bird price!

Applications should be made to Ken Basterfield, Course Director [ken@basterfield.com](mailto:ken@basterfield.com) or phone 01404 815885

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I would like to attend the training course (s) indicated (please tick in table below)

Title ..... First Name ..... Surname .....

Beekeeping Association .....

Telephone .....

email .....(please print)

(if you do not have an email please give full address)

I have been involved in training new beekeepers for 0-5 yrs .... 5-10yrs .... 10-20 yrs .... 20+yrs.....

I am involved in training new beekeepers for My association..... Private company .....

I have a background in education or training Yes ..... No .....

.....

NDB Short Course	Venue/dates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Venue/dates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Venue/dates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Venue/dates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Adult bee disease	Honiton, 5,6 Feb		Wragby, 19,20 Feb		Sittingbourne 28/2, 1/3			
Microscopy	Honiton, 8,9 Jan		Tarvin, 29,30 Jan					
Nutrition & Pollen	Honiton, 10,11 Jan		Dartford, 22,29 Jan		Tarvin, 26,27 Feb			
Teaching beekeepers	Wragby, 15,16 Jan		Kent, 12,13 Feb		Honiton, 26,27 Feb		North-west 19,20 Mar	
Successful wintering	Honiton, 5,6 Mar		Kent, 12,13 Mar					

(Sittingbourne and Dartford are in Kent, Honiton is E Devon and Tarvin is in Cheshire)



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- The Healthy Bees Plan is still funding the accredited 'Train the Trainer' course and will continue to do so until the end of the 2010/11 financial year. If you would like to attend a course please contact [beehealthinfo@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:beehealthinfo@fera.gsi.gov.uk) in the first instance and we'll send you a form and letter explaining what you are able to claim etc. Claims should be endorsed by a member of your local association ie. Secretary or Chair or your local Bee Inspector. We would be able to finance a course provided we received the invoice by mid March 2011.

## 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](http://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.
- Bayer CropScience has bought Exosect's new product for the control of varroa mites in honey bees. The deal will allow Bayer sole trading rights to Entostat, which has been developed for pest control in the bee health sector.

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