

## Statutory procedures for controlling honey bee pests and diseases



*National Bee Unit Inspector checking the health of a honeybee colony.*

### About this leaflet

Honey bees are affected by a range of pests and diseases. This leaflet explains the procedures for the control of the statutory notifiable pests and diseases of honey bees in England and Wales. The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) National Bee Unit is responsible for bee pest and disease control in England and Wales.

## 1. Bee disease legislation

The Bees Act 1980 empowers GB Agriculture Ministers to make Statutory Orders to control diseases and pests affecting bees, and to provide powers of entry for authorised persons. The relevant Orders are The Bee Diseases and Pests Control (England) Order 2006: SI 2006 No. 342, and The Bee Diseases and Pests Control (Wales) Order 2006: Welsh Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1710 (W.172). Separate Orders are in force in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The above Orders designate American foul brood (AFB), European foul brood (EFB), the *Aethina tumida* (Small hive beetle (SHB)) and *Tropilaelaps* spp. mites as notifiable diseases and pests and define the action which may be taken in the event of outbreaks. The Orders also cover the legal requirements for importing honeybees and bumblebees from countries outside the European Union. Explanatory notes for the English and Welsh Orders are available on the National Bee Unit's Website (Legislation Pages) A copy of the Welsh Order is also available on the Office of Public Sector Information website at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2006/20061710e.htm>

## 2. Statutory control of bee diseases and pests

Bee health policy in England is the responsibility of the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs Plant Health Division. In Wales responsibility lies within the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer. The Fera National Bee Unit (NBU) delivers the bee health programme in England and Wales, using well-established standard operating procedures. The NBU is certified as compliant with the OECD principles of Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) and ISO 9001.

## 3. Notification

Any beekeeper in England or Wales who suspects the presence of either AFB, EFB, SHB or *Tropilaelaps* mites in a colony for which they are responsible is **legally required** either to contact the NBU to have the colony officially examined by a Bee Inspector, or to submit a suspect pest or disease sample to the Fera Laboratories for analysis. Beekeepers elsewhere in the UK who suspect the presence of these pests and diseases should contact the local office of the relevant government department for advice.

## 4. The statutory apiary inspection and surveillance programme

The NBU operates a risk based statutory apiary inspection and surveillance programme in England and Wales. Bee Inspectors inspect bee colonies for statutory diseases and pests free of charge. When a disease or pest is suspected, samples are tested either in the field using a rapid diagnostic kit known as a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) or they are sent to the Fera Laboratories at York for analysis. If a disease or pest is confirmed a Standstill Notice is issued, prohibiting the removal of bees and equipment from the apiary. If AFB or EFB is confirmed the Bee Inspector will carry out the necessary disease control measures (see sections 7-12 below). In the case of confirmation of the SHB or *Tropilaelaps*, Defra's Contingency Plan for Exotic Pests and Diseases of Honey Bees will be invoked and emergency searches and control measures will be commence immediately (see section 16).

## 5. Apiary inspections

Beekeepers have a responsibility to inspect their bee colonies regularly for signs of pests or serious diseases. However, as not all beekeepers have the confidence or experience to identify problems, the NBU organises routine inspections in most areas to assist with identification and provide advice. All Bee Inspectors are experienced beekeepers who have been trained to identify and control pests and diseases and provide help and advice to other beekeepers. Bee Inspectors usually carry out their inspections during the active beekeeping season, although the Bee Inspectorate will deal with suspect diseases and pests reported by beekeepers outside this period as promptly as conditions allow. Bee Inspectors have powers to enter any premises at any time to inspect colonies, especially if pests or disease are thought to be present. However, they always prefer to work alongside beekeepers with their full cooperation. All Bee Inspectors carry a warrant card, which contains their photograph and details of their authority to carry out the inspection.

## **6. The notifiable pests and diseases**

### **Foul brood**

The term 'foul brood' covers two bacterial diseases of the honey bee larvae, American foul brood (AFB) and European foul brood (EFB). The names bear no relation to the geographical distribution of the diseases: both occur in Great Britain and cause considerable economic damage to the beekeeping industry each year. These two diseases are subject to statutory control in the UK. Despite their similar names they are caused by two unrelated bacteria and need to be controlled using different approaches. Further information about these two diseases can be found in the leaflet "Foul brood disease of honey bees: recognition and control" which is available along with the other leaflets from Fera Bee Inspectors, the NBU main office at York or online from the NBU's website. [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

### **Small hive beetle (SHB) (*Aethina tumida*) and *Tropilaelaps* spp. mites**

The SHB and all species of *Tropilaelaps* spp. mites are subject to statutory control in England and Wales. Both are currently considered exotic pests to the European Union.

The SHB is native to sub-Saharan Africa. Outside this area, it has become an invasive species and a major threat to beekeeping worldwide. Adult beetles are able to locate and enter hives and once inside the female beetle can lay thousands of eggs, which quickly develop into voracious larvae. The larvae proceed to destroy the colony quite literally by consuming it, eating honey, pollen and bee larvae. The beetle has recently spread to North America and Australia where it has caused very considerable economic damage.

The Asian mites known as *Tropilaelaps*, are also potentially serious new threats to beekeeping. The mites have spread from their original host, the giant honey bee, *Apis dorsata*, to the European honey bee, *A. mellifera*. There are four species documented in the literature with only two (*Tropilaelaps clareae* and *Tropilaelaps mercedesae*), currently considered harmful for *Apis mellifera*.

All beekeepers should become aware of the details of the life cycles of both these pests and how they can be recognised and controlled. Further details about them and the types of management/surveillance beekeepers can put in place to monitor their colonies

are available in advisory leaflets which can be obtained from Fera Bee Inspectors or the NBU/Defra websites.

## **7. If foul brood disease or an exotic pest is suspected**

If foul brood disease, the SHB or Tropilaelaps are suspected or confirmed, the Bee Inspector will immediately issue the beekeeper with a Statutory Notice (called a Standstill Notice). This prohibits the beekeeper from moving any bees, equipment or hive products from the apiary. Routine diagnosis of foul brood is confirmed using an LFD. An apiary inspection report (called a B2) detailing the beekeeper's contact address, the apiary size and location and the condition of the colony is sent to Fera together with a recommendation on control action. With the report, the Bee Inspector may also occasionally send a sample, often a representative suspect comb, by first class post or courier to Fera for confirmatory diagnosis. In the case of suspect exotic pests, samples will always be sent to Fera for confirmation.

The Standstill Notice remains in force until the statutory control measures have been completed and the apiary has been officially examined and found to be clear and this is a minimum of six weeks. A new notice will then be issued lifting the Standstill Notice. It is possible that the standstill period may last for many weeks, depending on the circumstances. However, the beekeeper will still be able to move all the equipment that they need to look after the colonies on to the site. In most cases a licence can also be issued by the Bee Inspector to allow honey to be harvested or colonies to be moved to a new standstill site if, for example, the owner or occupier of the land on which the colonies have been placed wants to spray pesticides. The local Bee Inspector can provide advice as required.

## **8. The laboratory examination**

On receipt of the Bee Inspector's report and sample, Fera will aim to complete an examination and produce a diagnostic report on the same day.\* A copy of the diagnostic report, which includes the recommended action necessary, will be sent by first class post to both the beekeeper and the Bee Inspector, who will also contact the beekeeper to explain the procedures.

\*Note that if a significant number of samples are submitted as part of a contingency search (for either SHB or Tropilaelaps), diagnostic reports may take a few days to be issued. Analysis of samples submitted to the laboratory as part of the various research projects the NBU runs (i.e., **NOT** a diagnostic service will not be subject to the same turn around delays). Results will be provided as and when they are obtained. Feedback to beekeepers will be through articles in the Bee press, direct phone contact and through BeeBase. Beekeepers who have samples submitted as part of the R&D projects can see their own results on-line in BeeBase.

## **9. If European foul brood (EFB) is confirmed**

Following the issue of a Standstill Notice, if EFB is confirmed the Bee Inspector will issue the beekeeper with either a **Treatment Notice** or a **Destruction Notice**, which explain the beekeeper's responsibilities. The recommended action will depend for example on the time of year, the level of infection in the affected colonies and colony strength. Beekeepers may choose one of the three options available to control EFB. The NBU aim to complete the disease control measures in infected colonies within 10 days of diagnosis. However, if there are postal delays or if large numbers of colonies are

involved this period may have to be extended. The Bee Health Inspectorate is on hand to provide practical advice on the appropriate options available to deal with EFB, minimise spread and the risks of disease recurrence.

### **Destruction Notice (Figure A)**

A Destruction Notice is issued if the percentage of diseased larvae in the sample comb, and the percentage of apparently infected brood combs in the colony, is 50% or greater. In addition, a Destruction Notice will also be issued for a colony in which treatment has previously been ineffective whatever its condition or level of infection. A recommendation by the Bee Inspector for destruction will not normally be reversed.

Suitability:

Weak Colony	✓	Heavily infected	✓	Autumn/ Winter	✓
Strong colony	✓	Lightly infected	✓	Summer	✓

### **Treatment Notice**

A Treatment Notice will be issued if the infection is light enough to respond to antibiotic treatment, or if the colony is to be treated by the shook swarm method. The Bee Inspector will contact the beekeeper to discuss the options. However, if the beekeeper wishes to destroy a colony recommended for treatment then this decision will be respected.

### **Shook swarm without antibiotic (Figure B)**

The NBU has been conducting field trials to assess the efficacy of a husbandry approach to the control of EFB, known as the 'shook swarm' method. The shook swarm method involves removing and destroying all the infected brood combs (a potential source of re-infection) from a colony and shaking the remaining adult bees onto fresh wax foundation (or sterilised comb) in new or sterilised brood boxes. This is a promising method of EFB control, and well worth considering. If a beekeeper adopts the shook swarm method, the standstill arrangements are similar for those requiring destruction.

If shook swarm is the selected method of treatment, the beekeeper will need to prepare sufficient clean brood chambers filled with frames of foundation (or sterilised clean drawn comb), clean floors, crown boards and queen excluders prior to the treatment being carried out by the Bee Inspector. When the treatment is carried out, the Bee Inspector will place a queen excluder between the brood box and the floor to prevent the queen from absconding. After treatment, unless there is a strong nectar flow, it will be necessary to feed the bees with 'heavy' sugar syrup i.e. 600 ml of water to 1 kg of white granulated sugar (1 pint water to 2 lbs. sugar). It may be beneficial to delay feeding for two days as in this way any bacteria and contaminated nectar carried by the bees is used in comb building. About a week after treatment when brood is present, the queen excluder should be removed. Unless there is a continuing nectar flow it will be necessary to maintain the feeding until all combs are drawn out. It may be possible to remove and extract ripe honey subject to a licence being issued by the Bee Inspector.

Suitability:

Weak Colony	✗	Heavily infected	✓	Autumn/ Winter	✗
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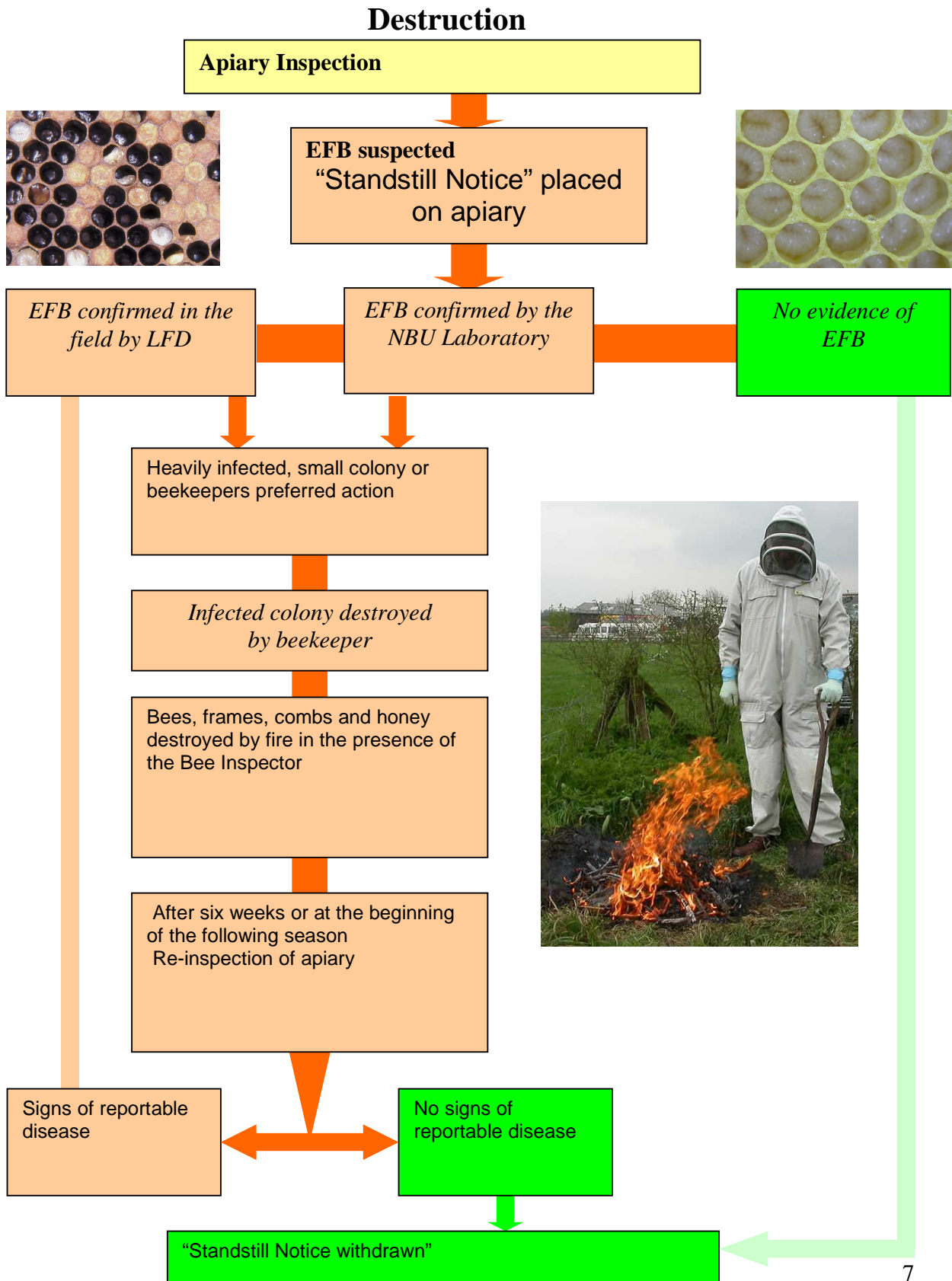
Strong colony ✓

Lightly infected ✓

Summer ✓

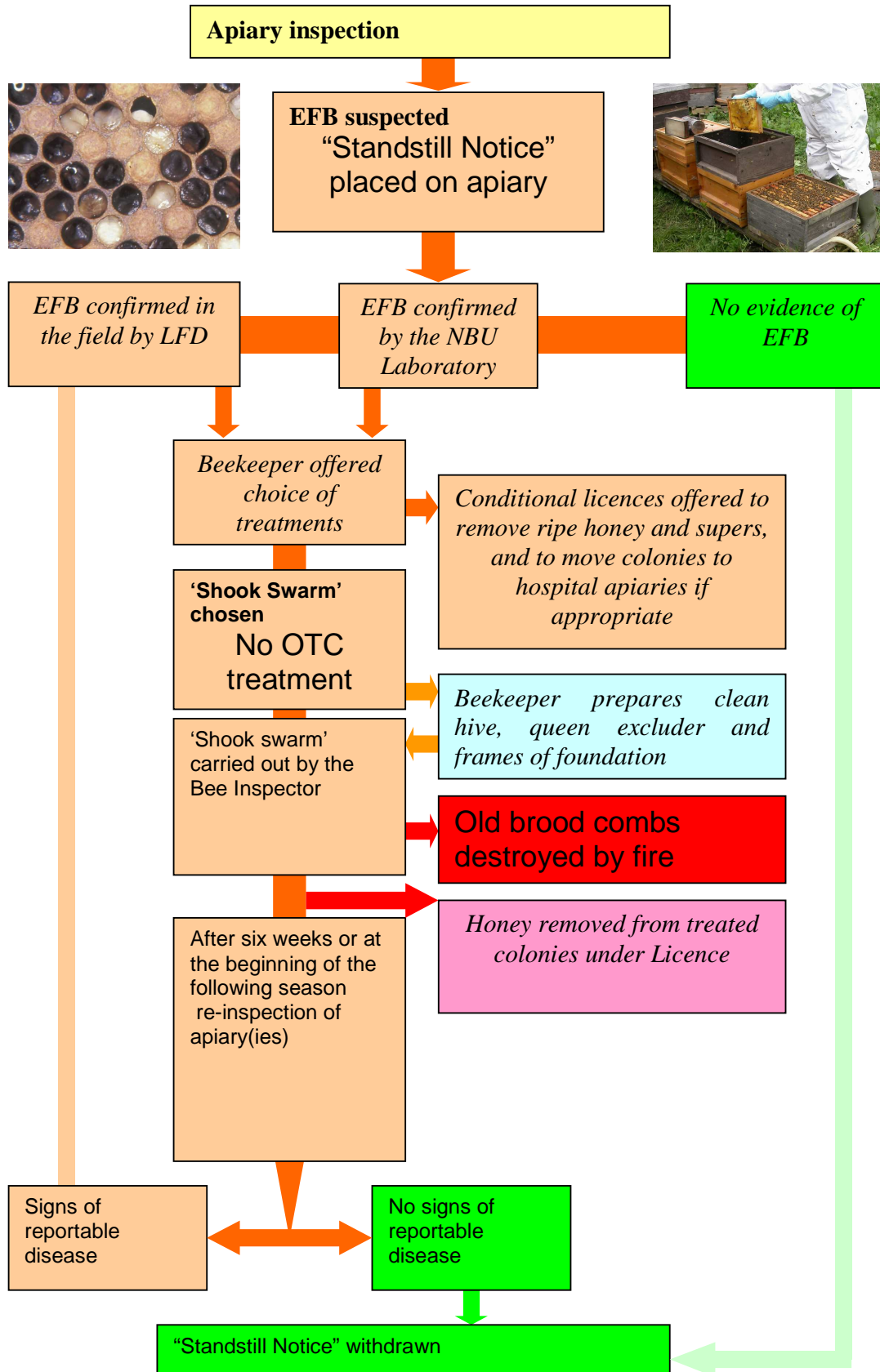
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**Figure A: Flow Chart of European Foul Brood Control Schedule**



**Figure B: Flow Chart of European Foul Brood Control Schedule**

**Shook Swarm Treatment**





### **Conventional antibiotic treatment (Figure C)**

An antibiotic, normally oxytetracycline (OTC) can be administered to the EFB infected colony by the Bee Inspector. During this time the honey must stay on the hive. This drug is prescribed and dispensed by Defra's Veterinary Laboratory Agency (VLA) and delivered directly to the Bee Inspector. Its use is restricted to authorised officers only and is applied by Bee Inspectors or other authorised persons. Normally a single one-gram dose of OTC suspended in a small volume of sugar syrup is sprinkled on to the area immediately around the brood nest, usually in an empty brood comb. Nucleus colonies, or developing colonies early in the season, covering five British Standard (BS) deep combs or less, will normally be given a half dose. The Bee Inspector will advise the beekeeper on any work needed to follow up the treatment. For example, in most cases, colonies will need to be fed with 5-10 litres of thick sugar syrup immediately after treatment to ensure the antibiotic is distributed slowly and widely throughout the colony unless the bees are on a significant nectar flow.

An extended 'withdrawal period' (period before honey can be consumed) of a minimum of 6 months will apply for honey produced on OTC treated colonies to allow for breakdown of the antibiotic.

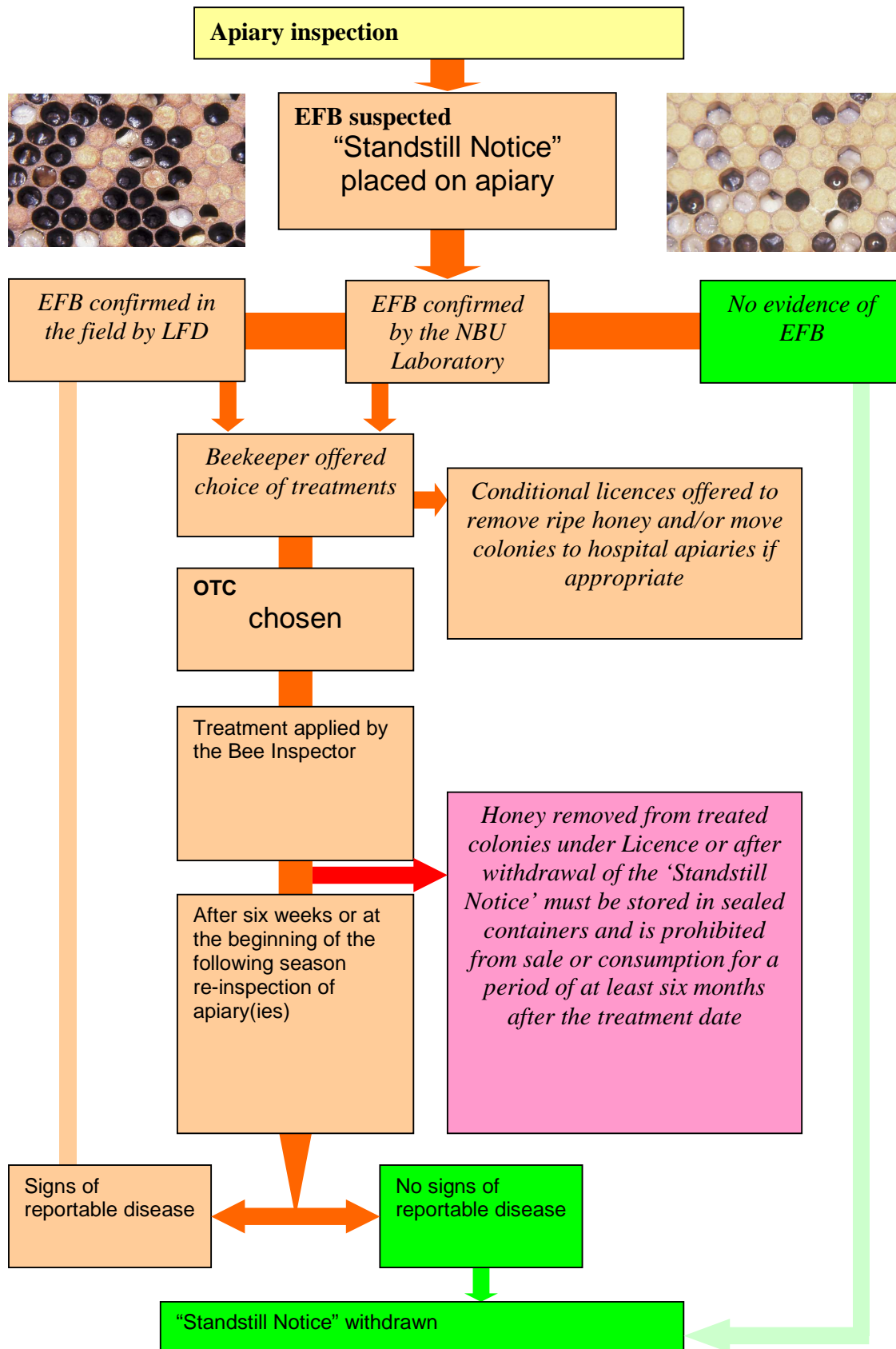
#### **Points to note**

- Licences may be made available to harvest honey on colonies in infected apiaries prior to OTC treatment.
- Instructions in writing about separate extraction and storage of honey will be issued to all affected beekeepers. The instructions will state that the honey must not be used before a specified date.
- The beekeeper is responsible for arrangements to ensure that any honey removed from treated colonies is labelled, kept separate and stored for at least the expiration of the withdrawal period before use. Bee Inspectors will make spot checks and penalties could ensue if licensing conditions are not followed.
- It is important that antibiotics are not permitted to enter the food chain; therefore all the circumstances surrounding its selection as a preferred treatment option must be considered.

Suitability:

Weak Colony	✘	Heavily infected	✘	Autumn/ Winter	✘
Strong colony	✓	Lightly infected	✓	Summer	✓

**Figure C: Flow Chart of European Foul Brood Control Schedule OTC Treatment**



## **10. Treating contact colonies**

Treatment of every colony in an EFB infected apiary as a precaution is not usually necessary except for those colonies showing obvious signs of disease. Antibiotics are prescriptive medicines and should be used only when absolutely essential. However, treatment of contact colonies may be desirable in exceptional cases where, for example, there are large numbers of colonies in the apiary and the infection is deep seated and persistent, or where the risks of re-infection are very high. Contact colony treatment should be used in conjunction with plans to replace comb at a later stage and be combined with shook swarm and good husbandry practices. The Bee Inspector will advise the beekeeper as and when contact treatment is necessary, after consultation with colleagues in the Fera Labs at York. Contact treatments are only carried out in the period up to 31 May in the season in which disease is confirmed in the apiary. This is because the practical benefit of contact colony treatment is only apparent during the early part of the beekeeping season.

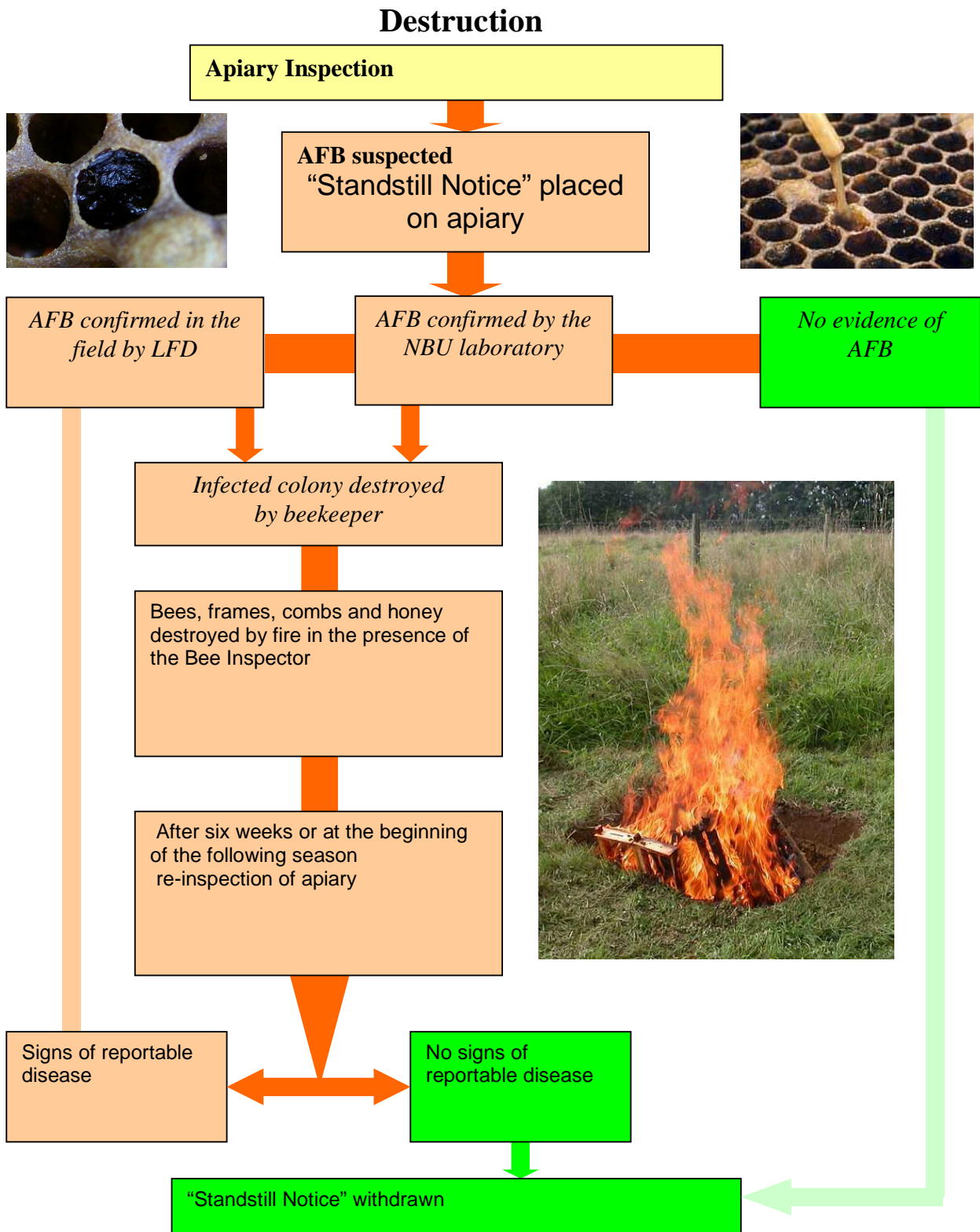
## **11. Checking the success of destruction/treatment**

The Standstill Notice remains on the apiary for a minimum of six weeks to allow time for any infection not obvious at the first inspection to develop and become visible. As soon as possible after this period, all the colonies in the apiary will be re-inspected. If the infection is found late in the year, this follow up inspection will be at the beginning of the next season. The Bee Inspector will withdraw the Standstill Notice when he is satisfied that all remaining colonies on the site are clear of obvious signs of foul brood.

## **12. If American foul brood (AFB) is confirmed (Figure D)**

Following the issue of a Standstill Notice, if AFB is confirmed, the Bee Inspector will issue the beekeeper with a Destruction Notice. Colony destruction has proved to be the most effective way of controlling AFB. Antibiotic treatments for AFB are not permitted as the bacterium responsible for the disease forms highly resistant spores that will survive in the colony to re-infect it long after any antibiotic has ceased to be active. Therefore OTC simply masks the signs of AFB that would otherwise have become apparent if the colony was left untreated. When AFB is confirmed, the beekeeper will therefore have to destroy the infected colony by burning all its bees, frames, combs, honey and quilts, usually in a pit dug in or near the apiary. The Bee Inspector will supervise this work. The hive bodies must be sterilised using a blowlamp and may then be reused. The standstill will remain in force for a minimum of six weeks after the destruction of the colony(ies). The Bee Inspector will then re-inspect the apiary and withdraw the standstill notice if no further signs of disease are obvious.

**Figure D: Flow Chart of American Foul Brood Control Schedule**



### **13. Follow up inspections**

Bee Inspectors will usually carry out a follow-up inspection of the apiaries for the season after a confirmed case of AFB. This is simply to check that there has been no recurrence of the disease.

### **14. If AFB and EFB are found in the same apiary**

This is rare, but if AFB is found at the same time in an apiary as EFB, antibiotics cannot be used in that apiary (as this may mask the signs of other AFB infected colonies), even if the AFB is found in a different colony. All infected colonies are destroyed.

### **15. If no foul brood is found**

If foul brood is not confirmed, the Bee Inspector will issue a "Withdrawal of Standstill Notice" to the beekeeper who is then able to move bees and equipment as required.

### **16. If the Small hive beetle or *Tropilaelaps* spp. mites are suspected**

In these circumstances, the England and Wales contingency plan for exotic pests and diseases of honey bees will be invoked. Copies of the plan are available on the NBU, Defra and WAG websites. A summary is set out below.

The potential exists for major pest and disease threats of the European honey bee to reach the UK through imports of live bees or commodities. The purpose of the plan is to set out the response to an outbreak of an exotic pest or disease of honey bees in England or Wales. Although the plan is primarily a generic one, it focuses in particular on current threats in the form of the notifiable pests - the SHB and *Tropilaelaps* mites. In the event of a suspect case of an exotic pest or disease, the NBU will immediately contact Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government and on confirmation of the finding other key national and local stakeholders will be contacted.

Defra will notify the European Commission and the Office International des Épizooties (OIE), the world organisation for animal health, within 24 hours of the confirmation of the primary outbreak.

The NBU will set up a National Disease Control Centre at Fera Laboratory, York to:

- Co-ordinate the emergency response.
- Arrange for delimiting surveys to be undertaken to assess the extent of the outbreak.
- Procure and deploy the necessary resources.
- Liaise with the beekeeping associations and other interested parties both locally and nationally.
- Assess the wider impact, for example colony losses on pollination services provided for agriculture, horticulture and the environment.
- Provide up to date information to stakeholders and the media.

A local disease control centre is also likely to be established.

Defra or the WAG will declare a Statutory Infected Area (SIA) covering an appropriate geographical area, under the powers provided by national bee health legislation in England and Wales for the SHB or *Tropilaelaps*, or under emergency legislation introduced for any other novel exotic organisms found. For an incursion of the SHB, the SIA will extend to an area of a minimum of 16km radius around the suspect infected apiary(ies) or premises where the beetle has been found. The SIA will be widened as necessary. Movement restrictions within the whole or part of the SIA will be in force from the time of detection of the outbreak and will be reviewed as an assessment is made on the extent of spread. The timescale for this is expected to be one to three weeks.

Movement restrictions applied in the SIA will prohibit the removal of bee colonies, queen bees, hives, combs, hive debris, bee products, bee pests, ancillary beekeeping equipment or any other material liable to spread a notifiable pest or disease into or out of the infected area, or from the premises or vehicle on which they are situated except under the authority of a licence issued by the NBU.

If the NBU finds that the outbreak is isolated and considers that eradication is practicable, all colonies in the affected apiary(ies) and the surrounding area that are infected or are found to be exposed to infection will be destroyed. In the case of a SHB infestation, soil that surrounds infected hives that have been exposed to infestation (10-20m from hives) will also be treated but only if an authorised treatment is available and licensed. In all other circumstances, i.e. with the beetle established, then based on present technical knowledge there would be no benefit from attempting eradication and instead a policy of containment will be implemented through colony movement restrictions and treatment.

If the outbreak is widespread, the appropriate pest control methods and the use of veterinary medicines will be needed. Their use would be subject to authorisation by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) or Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD). In the absence of any authorised products, approval will be sought from VMD to apply emergency treatments under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations.

Fera will support the beekeeping sector by concentrating its efforts on pest or disease management and containment by:

- Providing advice and training for beekeepers to combat the pest or disease and reduce its negative impact on productivity.
- Conducting a rolling programme of research for effective control and detection methods, as appropriate, and developing pest or disease management plans.

## **17. Beekeeper responsibilities**

- Follow the advice of the Bee Inspector.
- Learn how to recognise foul brood diseases and the exotic pests and become familiar with their biology. Bee Inspectors or local beekeepers' associations can provide advice.
- Regularly examine colonies for foul brood, at least each autumn and spring.
- Report any suspect foul brood to the local Bee Inspector immediately or to the NBU. Beekeepers should report the problem even if they are unsure. Neighbouring beekeepers should be advised to check their own bees.

- Place bees on new comb or foundation after EFB infection as this can help considerably in reducing the risk of re-infection.
- Keep colonies well maintained and hives in good order. Do not leave honey, supers or brace comb lying around in areas accessible to bees; this could induce robbing and lead to further spread of disease.
- Keep any varroa infestation and other pests of diseases under control. Varroa mites in particular can severely reduce a colony's ability to cope with other infections. Infestation will also weaken colonies considerably if left unchecked. If this happens an enforced destruction will be the most likely recommendation if EFB is present. Bee Inspectors can provide leaflets on managing varroa.
- Beekeepers are advised to ensure that they have adequate insurance to cover losses due to foul brood. Ask local beekeepers' associations or Bee Inspectors for advice.

## **18. The Regulators' Compliance code**

The NBU have implemented the statutory code of practice for Regulators called the *Regulators' Compliance Code*.

[http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/documents/compliance\\_code/compliance\\_code\\_071217.pdf](http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/documents/compliance_code/compliance_code_071217.pdf)

The compliance code sets out a blueprint for fair, practical and consistent enforcement across the country and is based on the following principles for effective inspection and enforcement:

- Regulators, and the regulatory system as a whole, should use comprehensive risk assessment to concentrate resources on the areas that need them most;
- Regulators should be accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of their activities, while remaining independent in the decisions they take;
- No inspection should take place without a reason;
- Businesses should not have to give unnecessary information, nor give the same piece of information twice;
- The few businesses that persistently contravene regulations should be identified quickly and face proportionate and meaningful sanctions;
- Regulators should provide authoritative, accessible advice easily and cheaply;
- Regulators should recognise that a key element of their activity will be to allow, or even encourage, economic progress and only to intervene when there is a clear case for protection. It is the intention that these principles should apply at the point where regulators make their policies, rules, codes, and guidance; and
- Regulators must not inspect businesses where hazards are, or the risk of adverse outcomes are, low, except as part of the random element of their inspection programme.

## **19. Risk based inspections**

The NBU statutory inspection programme is risk based and inspections are normally carried out from April to September, but if made at other times the same procedures apply. Dead colonies or unoccupied hives may also be inspected at any time of the year, regardless of whether there are live colonies in the same apiary. The more live colonies there are within flying range the more important it becomes to ensure that infected material is quickly eliminated. The inspection priorities/risks centre on the following priorities:

1. Foul brood infected apiaries.
2. Call out by beekeeper and inspections of colonies from which voluntary samples have been submitted.
3. Destructions/Treatments. Follow-up inspections in the season (April - September) after Standstill Notices have been withdrawn i.e., where foul brood was confirmed in the previous year.
4. Follow up inspections, e.g. apiaries that have remained under Standstill over the winter.
5. Apiaries within 5km. of confirmed Foul Brood/Exotic Pests. Colonies where disease is suspected, or those close to apiaries where foul brood disease has been confirmed, i.e. a 3-mile 5km radius in rural areas, or a 1 mile area or less where colony density is higher. Colonies purchased or moved from infected apiaries, i.e. contact colonies.
6. Apiaries having a history of foul brood disease.
7. Colonies in areas where foul brood disease is thought to be prevalent.
8. Import and export examinations of bees under veterinary checks directives.
9. Honey sampling for statutory residue analysis on behalf of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.
10. Assistance with suspect pesticide damage to honey bee colonies.
11. Education and extension programmes
12. Exotic Pest Surveys.
13. Random 10k. Squares.

## Notes

1. Includes receiving apiaries in cases where colonies have been sold prior to or after the confirmation of disease, and are prioritised according to the time span.
2. Can be by voluntary sample - the result may be awaited before inspection depending on circumstances, location and/or knowledge of the beekeeper.
5. (1) If the beekeeper where foul brood/exotic pests have been confirmed has apiaries outside the 5 km. zone these are included at the same risk level.
5. (2) Exotics would become the number one priority on initial confirmation.
9. Honey samples are targeted according to residue analysis required in the Annual Honey Sampling Plan. An apiary inspection would normally be completed at the same time.
11. Although education is shown as a comparatively low priority in the target/prioritised list it is important and must be carried out to suit beekeeper associations. However, these events have a lower priority than statutory disease control. The organisers of the event should be involved in deciding subject matter and methods of delivery.
12. Exotic pest checks will be carried out within other risk headings as appropriate.
13. Random 10 km. Squares are those in which the visits at 1,2,3,4,5, 6 and 8 are not required and beekeepers within that square have not been inspected for some time. Priority should cascade to the squares with no visits for 5 years or more, or showing the oldest dates of inspection being targeted before more recently visited squares. NBU Geographical Information Systems (GIS) will assist with establishing which of these apiaries to select out for inspection each season.

## 20. Confidentiality

Bee Inspectors will check known apiaries owned by other beekeepers in the immediate area of a recent outbreak of pests and diseases in case the problem has spread any further. However, the Bee Inspector will keep details of the outbreak case strictly confidential unless specifically advised otherwise by the beekeeper. Information about the geographical location of disease incidents are published either as maps with affected 10km squares indicated on them or as reports with OS 10km square references. Occasionally, upon request, details of parishes infected with foul brood are released but only where this information does not identify an individual beekeeper.

## 21. Key performance indicators



Performance standards for bee health enforcement activities run by the NBU have been agreed between Defra, WAG, the NBU and the beekeeping industry. The agreed performance standards are set out below:

- Laboratory analysis turn around times for foul brood samples - 95% within one working day of receipt.
- Response time from request for inspection where disease suspected (noting that beekeeper availability is out of NBU control) - 24 hours. To include either response by telephone, email or by sending a voluntary sample box or sampling tube to the beekeeper.
- Initial response time for responding to formal complaints to NBU Headquarters at Sand Hutton made either by telephone, email or by letter - 24 hours. This will cover any complaints about the NBU action deemed unreasonable. NBU response may be by telephone, letter or any other method.
- Response time between receipt of foul brood diagnosis to treatment of infected colonies (taking into account delays by weather, beekeeper availability, request and supply of antibiotics) - 95% within 10 working days.
- Response time between receipt of foul brood diagnosis report to assisting beekeeper in destruction of infected colonies (noting delays by weather and beekeeper availability) - 95% within 10 working days.
- Laboratory analysis turn around times for suspect exotic pest samples – 95% within one working day
- Laboratory analysis turn around times for bee import samples – 95% within 4 working days

Each year, the NBU's performance will be assessed against the agreed standards and the beekeeping industry will be advised of the outcome through direct reporting to the Bee Health Advisory Panel or programme management board.

## **22. Service standards**

The NBU aims to be as helpful and responsive as possible. However, if a beekeeper feels that the service they have received has fallen short of the standards the NBU aims to achieve (with reference to the Key Performance Indicators shown above), or is unhappy about the way they have been treated, the NBU would like to be informed. If the complaint relates to action underway the grievance should be taken up in the first instance with the local Regional Bee Inspector and ultimately with the NBU headquarters if the complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily. The complaint will be thoroughly investigated and a full response will be sent within 15 working days. If this is not possible, then the NBU will write to the beekeeper explaining the reason for the delay and a date by when a reply should be sent. Beekeepers may ask their Member of Parliament to take up their complaint with the Secretary of State of Defra or WAG. In addition, beekeepers can also write to any Member of Parliament, and ask for their complaint to be passed to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Parliamentary Ombudsman) who is entirely independent of Government. This does not affect any rights beekeepers may have to pursue any matter through other channels.

On the other hand, if beekeepers are satisfied with the services the NBU have provided, or wish to praise some exceptional performance, the NBU would like to be informed. Any suggestions about how the NBU can build upon the services they have provided are also welcomed.

### **23. BeeBase on line**

NBU's beekeeper database is called "BeeBase". It contains apicultural information relating to the statutory bee health programme in England and Wales, and provides easy access to a centralised information warehouse and management system on all regulatory and advisory aspects of apiculture. This includes information relating to the bee health programme: research data, general reports, news items and advisory articles, scientific publications and interactive maps of disease incidence/spread for use by the apiculture industry. In addition, for the first time it allows beekeepers to access their own apiary, diagnostic history and details over the web via a secure access link.

[www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

### **24. National Bee Unit contacts for further help and advice**

The NBU provides a comprehensive support service, operating in England and Wales, comprising a regional network of Bee Inspectors and staff at York. The Inspectorate is an integral part of the National Bee Unit and the Head of the Inspectorate is the National Bee Inspector (NBI). Regional Bee Inspectors (RBIs) report to the NBI and manage teams of Seasonal Bee Inspectors (SBIs) throughout England and Wales. As well as the statutory inspection and apiary surveillance programme, which includes the control of foul brood and surveillance for exotic pests, Bee Inspectors provide advice and assistance to beekeepers on a range of bee health issues and run training courses for beekeepers on disease recognition and control, usually in conjunction with local beekeeping associations. For further information see contacts information on the NBU website. In many areas, beekeeping associations operate local disease control schemes, and provide practical help and advice to members on bee disease recognition and control. Contact local beekeeping association for details.

#### **Food and Environment Research Agency**

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The key contacts page of the website provides details of local Bee Inspectors and contacts of Fera scientific staff at York.