

NBU Wales inspections during Covid-19 restrictions

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Message from Frank Gellatly about NBU inspections in Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic

All members of Beekeeping Associations should have received the government guidance on “Covid-19 and Beekeeping” which makes it clear that you should continue to care for your bees in the normal manner and that it is perfectly acceptable to visit out apiaries as necessary. When doing so you should maintain a safe distance from anybody else outside your household. The biosecurity measures we should all be practicing to minimise the risk of spreading bee disease (eg: disposable gloves; not sharing equipment such as hive tools and smokers; sterilising equipment between apiaries; etc.) should be even more rigorously applied as they will also reduce the risk of Coronavirus infection.

The National Bee Unit’s bee inspection service is continuing during the Covid-19 restrictions but on a priority level, concentrating on things like: areas at highest risk of foulbrood infection, sales or movement of bees, call-outs from beekeepers with suspect problems and maintaining alert for exotic pests. Routine inspections in areas of low risk will not be conducted during the government restrictions on non-essential travel. So far in 2020 cases of each EFB and AFB have been detected in SE Wales, in areas with little recent disease the inspectors are able to devote more time to lower-level risks such as inspecting the colonies of new beekeepers in their first year or so with bees. This is not only to introduce the NBU service but also to check where the bees have come from and thoroughly inspect any stocks brought in from elsewhere.

While the inspectors are unable to undertake routine inspections, beekeepers are asked to be extra vigilant for disease in their own colonies. At least twice a year you should do an inspection specifically looking for brood disease. To do this you’ll need to examine each frame containing brood. From each brood frame in turn, carefully shake the bees off the frame into the brood box and examine the brood, looking first at the larvae in the open cells and then at the cappings of the sealed cells containing developing pupae. Guidance on what to look for can be found in most beekeeping books and very comprehensive guidance on bee health can be found on Beebase (www.nationalbeeunit.com). If you see anything of concern then take photos and seek advice from a mentor or experienced beekeeper. You are welcome to contact your Seasonal Bee Inspector, using the postcode search facility on Beebase below. If you suspect your colonies might have foulbrood you must contact the Inspector.

We will remain available and on-call to beekeepers and will be making telephone contact with beekeepers, particularly those who’ve not been visited for some time, to keep our records up to date and to encourage you all to maintain vigilance for bee

diseases. So please be vigilant. Thank you.

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<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/Contacts/contacts.cfm>