

# THE BUZZ



## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INVERNESS-SHIRE BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

The Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina*) – dubbed “The Murder Hornet” by many news outlets is expected to arrive in the UK very soon and is threatening our honeybees.  
 See inside this edition of the Buzz for more info. (Pic Ref. Express.co.uk)

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### Update from the editor and how are the Bees at Knocknagael?

Hello, I hope you are all safe and healthy despite these very strange times at the moment. This Buzz will update you on all the current government requirements relating to bees and beekeeping in light of the current Covid-19 situation. These requirements are being regularly reviewed so keep an eye on the government website (link in this Buzz) and the Inverness-shire Beekeepers website, which will provide information on when our meetings will be restarting – hopefully, it won't be too long.

Just a quick note about the bees at Knocknagael... They've all made it through the winter and are all very healthy. We have 3 laying queens (I have seen eggs) and one queen that is brand new, having just superseded, she is marked, and I am hoping she will be out for her mating flight very soon with all this good weather.

Hope you all have an enjoyable, productive and safe beekeeping year.

Jed

## Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for beekeepers:

**Luis Molero Lopez**  
**MRCVS**  
**Lead Bee Inspector**  
**Scottish Government**  
**28<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

As beekeepers, please be aware of the following guidance when looking after your honeybees. Updates to this guidance will be provided where necessary. You should keep up to date with the latest guidance issued by the Government as it is subject to regular change.

Defra, Scottish Government and the Welsh Government ask you as beekeepers to be responsible and to ensure that you continue good beekeeping practices, effective stock management and health checks whilst observing the Government's guidance on COVID-19.

You should follow Public Health guidance on social distancing. Everyone, including beekeepers, should avoid gatherings of more than two people and this includes at your apiary. You should maintain a distance of 2 metres between yourself and others to limit the spread of COVID-19.

### **General advice for beekeepers is as follows:**

- You should continue to work and care for your animals in the normal manner, as far as possible. You should not take measures that compromise the welfare of the animals in your care.
- You should maintain good biosecurity at your apiary.
- You should not share beekeeping equipment with other beekeepers, particularly hive tools and other handheld devices and protective clothing.
- In line with the general advice on COVID-19, you should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and hot water before and after you come into contact with any animal. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to.
- There are currently no restrictions on movements of bee colonies that you are managing, such as moving bees to fulfil pollination contracts. However, you should observe the public health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when carrying out these activities, including the guidance on social distancing and essential travel.
- If you are required to visit premises other than your own, you should familiarise yourself with the public health guidance on infection prevention and control and take measures to minimise the risks from contaminated surfaces.
- If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, you should be self-isolating at home and should not be visiting other premises. Ideally, another beekeeper should take on this duty wherever possible. We are suggesting that local associations consider how they can support those confined or unable to attend their bees at this difficult time for all of us.
- If your bees are due an inspection by a government inspector, you should be aware that this may be subject to a delay depending on available resources within the inspectorate.
- If your bees are due an inspection by a government inspector, and you are in a high-risk group, or are showing symptoms of COVID-19, you must let your inspector know ahead of the inspection. Arrangements will be made that will limit the chance of COVID-19 being spread. This may include the inspection proceeding without the beekeeper being present or delaying the inspection.

- For all inspections, 2 metre social distancing will be considered the minimum and so the beekeeper will not be able to stand at the hive side with the inspector while the inspection takes place.
- Imports of bees are still permitted. There is no evidence to support restrictions to international movement or trade in bees, and the UK has no additional rules for bee imports with respect to COVID-19.
- You should report any suspicion of notifiable diseases or pests to the authorities in the usual way – please see the bee health page on gov.uk for further information.
- You should use husbandry techniques to minimise swarming. If you have to respond to collect a swarm you need to ensure that you use the guidelines on social distancing when collecting the swarm. If that is not possible, then the swarm then should not be collected. Therefore, trying to prevent swarms is the best approach.
- For any questions or further guidance please contact for the Scottish Bee Health Team on [bees\\_mailbox@gov.scot](mailto:bees_mailbox@gov.scot)

**At the time of releasing this Buzz, this information is up-to-date. However, this advice is being constantly reviewed and may change at any time. For the most recent advice for beekeepers relating to Covid-19, visit:**

**<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-beekeepers/>**

## The Threat of the Asian Hornet to UK Pollinators, especially Honeybees.

By Jed Russell,  
9<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) in the UK are facing a new and deadly threat – the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*). Also known as the Yellow-legged hornet (*Monceau et al., 2013*), or most recently ‘The Murder Hornet’, as nicknamed by the media (*BBC, 2020*). The Asian hornet is an invasive, non-native species from Southeast Asia that is becoming an increasingly concerning problem across Europe and in the UK. Despite their intentionally intimidating nickname, this insect is only dangerous to humans in special circumstances; such as in instances in which there are multiple stings or an allergic reaction. Their nests are also usually built in treetops, which further reduces the risk of contact with humans (*de Haro et al., 2010*).

The Asian hornet does, however, pose a threat to pollinating insects, most significantly honeybees, of which it is a fierce predator. Hornets capture foraging bees as they are returning to their hive, causing increases in homing failure and paralysis of foraging, thus leading to colony collapse. The hornet may also enter weak colonies to prey on brood and pillage honey (*Laurino et al., 2019*). Asian honeybees (*Apis cerana*) have an innate defence, having co-evolved alongside the hornet, which involves engulfing them in a “bee-carpet” and cooking them to death by rapidly shimmering their abdomens. European honeybees are capable of the same anti-predator behaviour, although, the temperature they are capable of reaching is much lower and so would likely be less effective against the hornet (*Monceau et al., 2013*).

If allowed to establish in the UK, the presence of the hornet would become an additional stressor on the honeybee population (in addition to; climate change, fertilisers and pesticides, lack of food sources, etc) which will likely lead to ecological impacts, such as biodiversity loss due to decreases in wild flower pollinations and economic impacts due to decreases in crop production (*Leza et al., 2019*).

The hornet is already established in countries neighbouring the UK, including France, which was the first country in Europe to confirm cases of the insect in 2004. It is believed that the hornet entered the country accidentally through an import of ceramic pottery from China and due to its natural acclimatisation to tropical climates, similar to those in Southern France, it quickly established there and rapidly spread to other countries including; Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium and Germany (*Leza et al., 2019*). Figure 2 shows the hornets distribution across Europe.

In an attempt to prevent their establishment in the UK, the National Bee Unit (NBU) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is working, as quickly as possible, to find and destroy any active nests. Since 2016, there has been 17 confirmed sightings of the Asian hornet in the UK (*Gov.UK, 2019*). Cases between 2018-2019 are displayed in Table 1. Up-to-date information on Asian hornet sightings can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-uk-sightings-in-2018>.

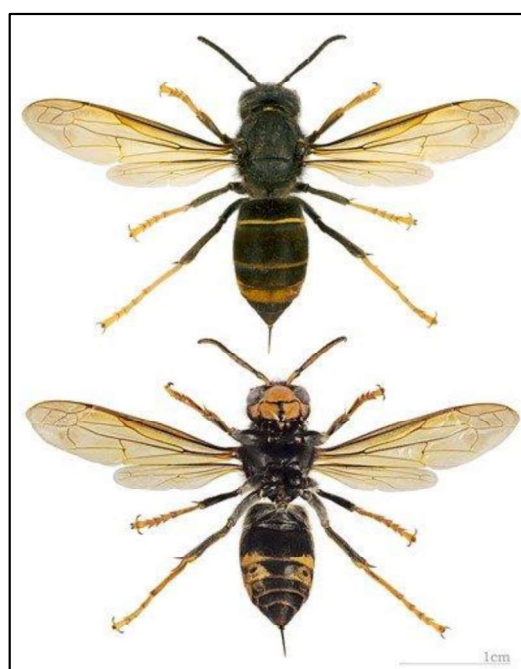


Figure 1 - An Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina*),  
(*BBKA, 2019*)

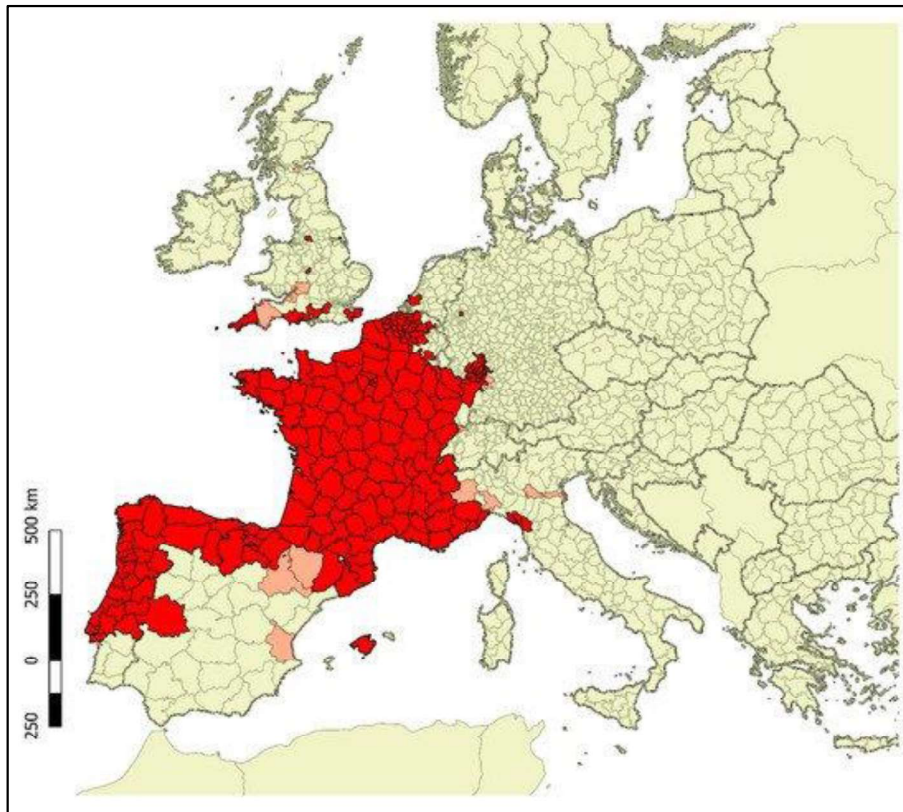


Figure 2 – Shows the spread of the Asian hornet across Europe (Laurino et al., 2019).

Location	Date	Action Taken
Christchurch, Dorset	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	Nest destroyed
Christchurch, Dorset	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2019	Nest destroyed
Ashford, Kent	9 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	Single hornet captured
Tamworth area, Staffordshire	2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2019	Nest destroyed
New Milton, Hampshire	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2019	Single hornet captured
Dungeness, Kent	15 <sup>th</sup> October 2018	Single hornet captured
Guildford, Surrey	28 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	Single dead hornet
Brockenhurst, Hampshire	26 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	Nest destroyed
New Alresford, Hampshire	24 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	Nest destroyed
Fowey, Cornwall	20 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	Nest destroyed
Hull, Yorkshire	9 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	Single dead hornet
Liskeard, Cornwall	7 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	Single dead hornet
Fowey, Cornwall	3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2018	Nest destroyed
Bury, Lancashire	13 <sup>th</sup> April 2018	Single hornet sighted with photograph

Table 1 - Confirmed Cases of Asian hornets in the UK and the Action Taken (GOV.UK, 2019)

If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet you should report it immediately. There are several ways you can do this including:

- Downloading the ‘Asian Hornet Watch’ App onto your smartphone
- Emailing [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk)
- Or by submitting an online form, which is available from: [https://www.brc.ac.uk/risc/alert.php?species=asian\\_hornet](https://www.brc.ac.uk/risc/alert.php?species=asian_hornet).

When reporting a sighting it would be useful to include as much information as possible to allow for easier identification of the insect. You should include information such as; location, date, number of hornets you have seen, and if possible, include a photo.

You can also monitor for the arrival of the hornet yourself by making your own monitoring trap, details for this and instructions can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CR6MUekAjMo> (GOV.UK, 2019).

Additionally, if you are a beekeeper, it is important that you ensure your BeeBase records are up to date with your apiary location as this will allow you to be updated if there are any confirmed cases of hornets in your area. Guidance on how to do this is available from: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadNews.cfm?id=161> (GOV.UK, 2019).

All these efforts will aid the successful identification and extermination of the Asian hornet and prevent it establishing in the UK. For more information on the Asian hornet, please visit: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/pages/faqs/category/asian-hornet-faqs>.

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## Boom in honey production gives beekeepers a buzz!!

**Charles Bremner,  
Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May  
The Times**

French beekeepers are enjoying the biggest boom in honey production for years, thanks to spring sunshine and the two-month lockdown.

The warmth and calm countryside have combined with a fall in pollution to enable bees to breed and collect pollen after a disastrous honey season last year that was hit by rain and cold. Farmers appear to be using less pesticide in the lockdown, sparing the insects whose numbers have been dramatically cut as a result of chemicals in recent years.

“My bees have never produced so much honey,” Pierre Stéphan, a beekeeper in the Vosges national park, Alsace, said. “In three days, I’ve collected exceptional nectar. About four kilos a day. I haven’t seen that in 20 years in the business.”

Thierry Grieneisen, head of the Alsace association of professional beekeepers, said: “There is less road traffic, fewer big lorries, less air traffic and a lot of factories closed. Pollution is down so there is a better air quality for the bees.”



*Figure 1 - Honeybees in France are thriving!*

There are 3,000 beekeepers in France, and they are all reporting a similar rise in yield around the country.

Henri Clément, spokesman for the National Union of French Apiculture, said the warm weather and drop in pesticide use had made the big difference. “Most flowers can’t bloom normally because they are sick with pesticides so they don’t provide the bees with enough to gather.”

The disappearance of bees in France is part of the overall destruction of the insect population in Europe in the past two decades. Honey production last year, the worst on record, was 9,000 tonnes, or a quarter of the annual harvest in the Nineties. The heat wave in southern France last summer melted the wax in hives, trapping many bees.

Beekeepers also attribute the thriving hives this year to the impact of a European ban on neonicotinoid pesticide, the most lethal to bees, introduced in 2018.

Article Ref. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/c898dac2-9138-11ea-a1ff-1dde97c98818?shareToken=534997931acf0132c2e3272c6d5db8ac>



## Notice Board.

AT THE MOMENT OUR PRICES FOR JARS, AMBROSIA AND FONDANT ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Item	Price
Ambrosia (12kg, non-refundable container)	£15.00
Fondant (2.5kg pack)	£4.00
Fondant (full box – 5x 2.5kg packs)	£20.00
Jars (72 x 1lb jars with lids)	£30.00
Jars (96 x ½lb jars with lids)	£35.00
Spare lids (for both sizes of jars)	£2.00 per dozen

Please contact Jed Russell ([jed.k.russell@googlemail.com](mailto:jed.k.russell@googlemail.com)) if you would like to purchase any of these items or would like to borrow equipment from the association.

Please visit our website <https://inverness-shirebeekeepers.org/> for more exciting information and resources such as:

- The beekeepers blog
- Help with swarms
- Details of upcoming events and meetings
- Helpful beekeeping hints and tips
- Backdated issues of the Buzz

Don't forget to visit the exclusive **MEMBERS SECTION** for extra goodies like:

- Member's forum
- Beekeepers library catalogue
- Committee meeting minutes
- Details of equipment you can borrow
- Write a blog post

## EASY FUNDRAISING SUPPORT

The Inverness-Shire Beekeepers Association needs your help!!!

**If you would like to help the association financially,**

**PLEASE VISIT: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause/step-1/?char=208763>**

YOUR SUPPORT WILL GO TOWARDS:

- **NEW TRAINING EQUIPMENT – USED TO TRAIN THE NEXT GENERATION OF BEEKEEPERS**
- **APIARY IMPROVMENTS AND REPAIRS – ENSURES ALL OUR FACILITIES ARE SAFE AND PLEASURABLE PLACES**
- **CLUB ADVERTISEMENT – SPREADING THE BEEKEEPING WORD**

## YOU CAN PUT AN ADVERT IN THE BUZZ!!!

**Anyone wishing to advertise the sale of bees or beekeeping equipment can advertise in the Buzz.**

The Buzz is distributed to every member of the Inverness Beekeeping Association.

**If you are interested in filling this space with your advert contact Jed Russell via:**

**[jed.k.russell@googlemail.com](mailto:jed.k.russell@googlemail.com)**