

Bees in Chimneys.

[This is a summary of points that our Vice chairman Peter Hutton wrote to someone having problems with Bees in his Chimney]

Firstly I have a page or two of information on www.kentbee.com feral honeybees & the facts, click on information, then faqs (public) then feral honeybees.

In your situation which is very common throughout Kent & Sussex, the solution is:

- Remove the bees, deny them repeated access by closing off the access, really quite simple.
- An alternative solution is to close off the flue below the bees, allow the bees to continue their life in the chimney. This latter solution might seem horrendous when you are so frightened by stinging insects. Were you to know how many colonies live in houses without the humans being worried you would be amazed. However I can well understand your misgivings and particularly the worry attached to bees getting into the rooms.

You state you had a pest man poison the bees, you also say they live in the chimney and the lower part of the chimney support was removed by former occupants of the house.

The pest man has to comply with a number of Statutes:

- namely the Control of Pesticides Act;
- the Working at Height Regulations;
- COSSH etc.
- Under the latter you should have received notice of the effects, of the pesticide upon bees in general as well as those in your chimney, upon yourself and other occupants of the property, a method statement which explains what is to be done, how it is to be done, also to remove and destroy the contaminated honey or seal it in the property so that other honey bees can not remove it to their hives so poisoning humans. All beekeepers within 3 miles of the place where he intended killing honeybees using a poison must be notified in advance of the time and area where the poison is to be administered.

Honey bees are "Food Producing Animals" just like cattle, sheep etc. they also have a sophisticated communication system in both time and space that is equal to our own. The residual poison remains active in the honey in your chimney and other bees **must** be excluded from accessing your chimney to remove that contaminated honey. There have now been at least 2 successful prosecutions of pest control companies resulting in fines in excess of £1k where beekeeper's bees have been affected by secondary poisoning. Your current problem as stated is the honey now leaking into the house, this will require the opening of the flue (bricklayer), removal of all the comb and honey which has now fallen to the lowest point of the flue, removal of any remaining comb and honey left at the top of the chimney (bricklayer and scaffolder) reinstatement of the brickwork, reinstatement of the plaster and decoration, (plasterer & decorator). All the honey & comb must be safely disposed of under The Control of Waste legislation; my advice would be to bury it in the garden as it is as natural product albeit containing a poison.

MOST Important: The prevention of future swarms gaining access to the chimney. Whilst the scaffold is in place have all the disused flues made inaccessible to insects by use of stainless steel woven mesh or expanded sheet with apertures of less than 2-5mm. You may wish to insert weather proof caps into any existing pots for ventilation, these mushroom shaped pots are however ideal for honeybee colonisation, all the 25mm apertures **must have SS mesh incorporated.**

I have removed bees from a chimney in Somerset road, a swarm from a garden close by and a colony from the roof of Skinners school in the past. Swarming can start from the middle of April and normally finishes by the end of July.

You will need to take prompt action to prevent reoccupation, if your pest man did seal the disused flue there is a possibility that bees might take up occupation in an adjacent disused flue, in that event the bees can be smoked out immediately after their arrival & no later than 2 days thereafter. I passed your house and I do not see that it should be too expensive to remedy this aspect of the work needed.

I am a retired builder as well as being a bee keeper with 50 years experience.

Yours sincerely, Peter Hutton telephone 07941 375589