

To: All Area Association Secretaries & AHAT Co-Ordinators

From: Anne Rowberry, Trustee and Vice-Chair

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A WAKEUP CALL – ARE YOU READY?

I have just read an article on DVAV (Dorsal-Ventral Abdominal Vibrations) and I think we as Beekeepers need to take on the message – ‘**work is on the horizon**’. Not the Spring Inspections or frantic frame making or even booking tickets for the Spring Convention, but we need to be busy. Now is the time to take an extra stroll around woodlands before they come into leaf to check no uninvited guests have been building nests. There won't be any Asian Hornets in the nests but it may indicate that there could be overwintering queens about to emerge in the area.

Hopefully your area Association has established an Asian Hornet team with each branch or club in the Association having their own team.

It is really important that each member of the team is aware of the main identification points of the Hornet and has an information card to refer to if needed (these can be obtained from the NBU or downloaded from their website). Every beekeeper team member needs to be sure about the identifying features of the Asian Hornet (the Yellow Legged Hornet) . We need beekeepers confident about; what it looks like, able to refer sightings to NNS and where possible video, photograph or preserve the specimen.

Have you all sent details to the BBKA to add to the Asian Hornet Map? The public will be asking for your help, just as they do when they have a ‘swarm’. How many times have we been called to Bumble Bees, mating Solitary bees or even wasps!

It is time to get all those hornet traps ready they are sold by Beekeeping Equipment Suppliers but can easily be made with plastic drink bottles and all the instructions are on the National Bee Unit site, take a look on Beebase.

It is the Spring and the only hornets around are likely to be overwintered queens or those joining us from France. When we put traps out remember to **monitor** them- there are several ways to eliminate killing some of the bycatch. these include a piece of sponge or tissue in the base of the traps that have no dry areas, small holes to aid escape etc. the method depends on the type of trap used.

There seem to be two main baits sold possibly with similar ingredients. Some Counties are already ordering the wasp attractant known as ‘Suterra’. If you use it please ensure you use disposable gloves, wash your hands when you finish and take care. It does contain traces of Sulphite and a very few people may have an allergic reaction especially if it gets on the face. There has only been one suspected incident in the UK so far, possibly caused through dispensing the liquid into a lot of small containers Although it may not have been caused by Suterra it is probably better to take precautions. It is very effective in attracting hornets. Some beekeepers used it on the edge of the apiary to keep hornets away from their bees , it was definitely the preferred food.

Controlling the Asian Hornet is not just a beekeeping problem. We need to be raising awareness, Public gardens, schools, parks, allotments in fact all the public need to be aware. Overwintered queens will build low nests in sheltered places such as garages, sheds rooves, sides of buildings etc. They will look similar to small wasp nests when they start but bigger and they will grow.

Please don't remove these nests (the workers may have started to build a Secondary nest and they need to lead the trackers to that nest) just contact the NNSS and the inspectors will follow it up.

What can the beekeeper do to help to protect their bees except to be vigilant and look for hornets?

The hornets often attack by flying under the hive from the back – a skirt from the base of the hive to the floor on three sides may help; let the grass grow especially in front as trackers in Jersey observed that the hornets were often patrolling a few inches above the ground in front of the hive. There is also a wire grid that can fit onto the front of the hive, it allows the bees to fly through but the hornets are apparently reticent to follow.

Research to isolate pheromones is making strides especially in France and there is some hope that the Asian Hornet numbers in the future may be controlled. We are continually learning more.

I will keep you all informed as we move into the active bee season.

Anne Rowberry