

COVID-19 and Beekeeping

As beekeepers, please be aware of the following guidance when looking after your honey bees. 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 the movements of bee colonies – for example, 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.
- 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.