



Honey Bees and Pesticides

Persons using pesticides, whether they are the general public, gardeners, professionals such as farmers, land managers, spray contractors and pest controllers are required to use them correctly. In all cases it is a legal requirement to use as directed on the product label.

Always Read the Label – Use Pesticides Safely

For many years beekeepers and the agricultural users of pesticides have operated Spray Liaison Schemes which are intended to alert beekeepers to the potential exposure of their bees to applications of pesticides (in particular those containing insecticides) in their vicinity and enable them to take appropriate action.

These schemes have been operated through the British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA), Area and local beekeeping associations and many have appointed Spray Liaison Officers and these have held records of where their members' hives were located. Effective communication is a big contributor to alerting the user of pesticides to their potential risks to honey bees.

Beekeepers can be further reassured about the safety of their bees if they have made the landowner aware of where their bees are situated and have provided contact details so they can be alerted in good time before a spray application is made.

This document is intended to encourage beekeepers to make known the presence of their hives and to make the users of pesticides aware of their responsibilities and inform beekeepers of any potential threat to their bees to make the general public and pest controllers aware of their responsibilities in the safe use of products.

- There is a Code of Practice for using plant protection products (January 2006). This can be found on: www.pesticides.gov.uk/farmers_growers_home.asp#Codes_of_Practice
- The Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS) has produced a leaflet dated 2003, titled '*Incidents Involving Pesticides and Animals*', PB8003.
- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has produced a leaflet '*Feral honey bees - Points to consider when asked to treat a honey bee nest*', INDG 276 5/99.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR USING PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS (JAN 2006)

This code of practice covers plant protection products used in agriculture, amenity, horticulture and forestry.

The code of practice covers all aspects of the safe use of pesticides including safeguarding the environment and human health. It requires the assessment of possible environmental effects and identification of precautions which should be taken to protect wildlife and the environment.

It describes the practices and procedures that users of plant protection products should follow in order to minimise any adverse impacts on non-target organisms such as honey bees.

Beekeepers are recommended to obtain a copy so that they can understand the obligations of the users of pesticides towards honey bees and when the beekeeper is arranging for permission to place hives on a landowners' property, be able to remind the landowner of their obligation towards honey bees.

Pesticides might be used on flowering crops including top and soft fruit, oilseed rape, beans, cereals, maize and pea crops, where there are neighbouring flowering crops, and/or where there are flowering weeds and wild flowers.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PESTICIDE USER TO THE ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING HONEY BEES)

Any user of a pesticide (including farmers/spray contractors/gardeners/horticulturalists/forestry and amenity area worker) is responsible for ensuring that when planning to use a pesticide they should assess the possible environmental effects to identify which precautions they should take to protect wildlife and the environment (including honey bees).

This involves you making an environmental risk assessment as described in the Code of Practice.

CHECK THE PRODUCT PROPERTIES SPECIFICALLY FOR POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON HONEY BEES

Products that may affect bees will be labelled with one of the following phrases:

- Harmful to bees
- Dangerous to bees
- Extremely dangerous to bees
- High risk to bees

This could affect your risk assessment and choice of product. If the product does not specifically refer to honey bees you should still read and carefully follow the instructions for its use.

REQUIREMENT TO INFORM

Users of pesticides are required to inform

- Beekeepers identified in your risk assessment.
- If you are not aware of any beekeepers but want to make doubly sure; contact the local beekeeping association and ask if they have a Spray Liaison Officer who could provide you with the information you require to contact the beekeepers with colonies at risk. The BBKA may be able to help you by providing the contact details of the local beekeeping association.
- Do this
 - o 48 hours ^(note 1) before you plan to use a pesticide at times of the year when bees are at risk
 - o Or whenever you intend to use a pesticide that specifically harms bees
 - o Tell the beekeeper(s) if you change your plans

Note 1: 48 hours is the period referred to in the Code of Practice. The beekeeper will require time to implement precautionary measures or arrangements to safeguard.

Measures for protecting bees

(taken from the Code of Practice)

DO	DO NOT
Check for bees visiting plants and remember that honeydew produced by aphids is attractive to bees.	Spray unless you have to.
Follow the environmental protection instructions on the label and the guidance in this code.	Use pesticides labelled 'harmful', 'dangerous', 'extremely dangerous' or 'high risk' to bees if crops or weeds are in open flower or part bloom, unless this is allowed by the product label. Mix products in the spray tank unless allowed with instructions for use of the products.
Spray in the evening when bees have stopped flying, as this allows several hours for the pesticide to dry before bees become active again. Remember that bumblebees might be around to look for food later into the evening than honey bees.	Let pesticide drift into bee hives or into hedgerows or fields where bees, including bumblebees, may be looking for food.
Choose a cool cloudy day, or the early morning (if you have to spray during the day).	

WHAT PRACTICAL MEASURES CAN THE BEEKEEPER TAKE ONCE INFORMED ABOUT AN INTENTION TO SPRAY?

Shutting the bees inside the hive at any time runs the risk of the bees dying by overheating through lack of ventilation and also the combs melting and drowning the bees in wax and honey. If possible try and provide some shading of the hives in full sun. Covering the entrance with loose grass may be sufficient to keep the bees in the hive and at the same time allowing them to draw fresh air into the hive. Remember to remove the grass when the danger has passed.

If your hives are in or very close to the edge of the crop provide tall markers to show the sprayer where hives are located as they can easily be dwarfed by tall crops such as oilseed rape.

WHAT SHOULD THE BEEKEEPER DO IN THE EVENT OF POSSIBLE HONEY BEE COLONY DAMAGE CAUSED BY SPRAYING?

If one or more colonies in your apiary suddenly have a large number of dead or dying bees outside the hive ^(note 2) then:

- o Collect two samples, each of at least 200 bees (each roughly equivalent to a 1lb honey jar full) per affected colony, initially into a container labelling the container with the colony number/identifying mark.
- o Take photographs/digital images (remember to have the date and time record facility on the camera switched on) of the site
 - o including landscape features which will enable any subsequent investigators of the incident to locate the site;
 - o the crop or plants you suspect was being sprayed and
 - o Of the affected colonies

- o Transfer the bees into a container suitable for freezing them and place them in the freezer. Label the container with the colony number/identifying mark, apiary location and date. Keep the samples in the freezer.
- o If possible find the name of the product which has been used as this will aid in its analysis and identification.
- o Contact your local bee inspector (if contact details are known) or contact the National Bee Unit (NBU) 01904 462510 or email nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk
- o Or contact the Wildlife Incident Investigation Service (WIIS) on 0800 321 600. The WIIS officer will report the incident to the NBU and they are likely to ask the bee inspector to make the site visit.
- o Do not send the sample bees **until** requested and follow the instructions given for packaging and sending the samples.
- o Ask for advice from the bee inspector or the officer from WIIS about what to do with the affected colonies before taking any action.

Note 2: Colonies suffering from Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV) may also have large numbers of dead or dying bees in the front of the hive. The beekeeper should check to see if the bees show the characteristic 'K' wing sign and the presence of shiny, hairless bloated worker bees which are characteristic of CBPV.

Further information on WIIS can be found on:

<http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/environment.asp?id=58>

There is a separate form L019A supplied with this leaflet to help those who are spraying pesticides to inform the beekeeper.

General Notes:

This leaflet is one of a series intended to help beekeepers and non-beekeepers. If you believe the contents of this leaflet are relevant to you, please seek further advice from an experienced beekeeper or your tutor.

Information is updated regularly – please check with the BBKA web site at: www.bbka.org.uk – for the latest information.

Note: The same information is published in our printed leaflet L019 available from the BBKA.

Disclaimer:

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The British Beekeepers Association

Honey Bees and Pesticides

Please contact the following Beekeeper before spraying:

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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CONTACT PHONE NUMBERS

DAYTIME

EVENING

Email

CROP/AREA TO BE SPRAYED

PRODUCT NAME

HSE NUMBER FOR THE PRODUCT

LOCATION OF HIVES POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

SPRAYING WILL BE DONE BY

TIME AND DATE OF SPRAYING

PLEASE KEEP THIS FORM IN A SAFE PLACE

Thank you for informing the beekeeper!