



COVID-19 and Beekeeping

To all beekeepers,

Please be aware of the following updated guidance when looking after your honey bees.

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 guidance](#) on COVID-19.

You must follow Public Health guidance on social distancing, gatherings and any other required measures in place in your area to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.

England: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Wales: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

General advice for beekeepers is as follows:

- If you are required to self-isolate, either because:
 - you have symptoms of coronavirus, however mild
 - you have tested positive for coronavirus – this means you have coronavirus
 - you live with someone who has symptoms or tested positive
 - someone in your support bubble has symptoms or tested positive
 - you're told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app
 - you have been abroad and told to quarantine on your return

you must follow the current Public Health Guidance on self and household isolation.

England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/>

Wales: <https://gov.wales/self-isolation-stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus>.

For foreign travel and returning home guidance please see:

England: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus#if-youre-abroad-and-you-want-to-return-to-the-uk>

Scotland: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Wales: <https://gov.wales/foreign-travel-and-returning-home>

If you are responsible for looking after bees, you should make alternative arrangements for their essential care if you, your family or your staff become ill or are unable to look after their welfare. If this is not possible, we would advise that you only attend to the basic needs and welfare of your bees where you can ensure you do not have contact with other people and you are able to follow all government advice on actions to minimise the risk of spread of COVID-19.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, you should book a test.

We are suggesting that local associations consider how they can support those shielding, in isolation or otherwise unable to attend their bees at this difficult time for all of us.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>

- If you are not required to self-isolate:
 - 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 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 your bees are due an inspection by a government inspector, and you are in a high-risk group, or are in any of the categories requiring self-isolation, 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, ensure that you adhere to the guidelines on social distancing when collecting the swarm. If that is not possible, then the swarm should not be collected. Trying to prevent swarms is the best approach.

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