

**National release**

**PRESS INFORMATION**

**Issued on behalf of:** British Beekeepers Association / Adopt a Beehive

**26 November 2014**

**BRITAIN'S HONEY BEES PRODUCE BEST CROP FOR FIVE YEARS**

**Survey of beekeepers reveals 2014 honey yield.**

**'Better weather and better beekeeping have upped honey production' says British Beekeepers Association (BBKA), but warns against complacency**

Britain's beekeepers have reported an average yield of 32lbs of honey per colony this year according to the findings of the British Beekeepers Association's annual Honey Survey, released today (26 November, 2014).

The survey revealed a substantial 28 per cent increase on the 25lbs per colony reported in 2013 and is a far cry from the 8lbs per colony nadir of 2012.

Conducted by BBKA amongst 2,000 beekeepers across the country, the annual Honey Survey explores the current year's honey yield and the factors affecting honey bee colonies and honey production.

Commenting on the increased yield for this year, BBKA Director of Public Affairs, Tim Lovett, said:

"While this increase is great news for beekeepers and honey bees, the historic average is 40lbs plus per hive so there is still some way to go if we are to return to our most productive."

To help counter the devastating impact of pests and diseases on honey bee colonies in recent years, the BBKA has funded research exploring honey bee welfare; but great emphasis has also been given to equipping all beekeepers with the husbandry skills needed to maintain healthy and productive honey bee colonies, and the 2014 Honey Survey clearly reflects this effort.

Of beekeepers who reported an increased honey yield, around two fifths, 41 per cent, cited 'better beekeeping' as a contributory factor. Further, 58 per cent of all beekeepers reported that they had attended some form of training event with their local beekeeping association over the past year.

Considerable funding to support beekeeper training comes from the BBKA's Burts Bees sponsored 'Adopt a Beehive' scheme. This enables members of the public to become 'armchair beekeepers' and follow the progress across the year of a local apiary at a distance in the comfort of their homes. To date over 8,000 people have

joined the scheme suggesting a determined willingness to support honey bees even by those who can't actually keep bees themselves.

Other factors cited in the survey as contributory factors to the improved honey yields included the hot weather, mentioned by 60 per cent of beekeepers; the early Spring, 58 per cent; and swarming, 19 per cent.

And when asked to comment on any 'unusual behaviour' from their bees this year, 35 per cent cited 'early swarming' and 15 per cent 'late swarming' (July or later).

Swarm management is central to good beekeeping and the ongoing welfare of honey bees. It can also impact greatly on honey yields, as Tim Lovett explains:

"Swarming is a natural phenomenon whereby honey bee colonies reproduce by dividing to create new colonies. Early swarming leaves a weakened parent colony; while late swarming can sometimes leave new colonies with insufficient time to stock up for winter.

"A well-trained beekeeper will be able to spot the early signs of swarming and act swiftly to reduce potential losses, and build up the colonies after swarming," he said.

Of the beekeepers that took part in this year's survey, a third, 33 per cent, manage one or two hives, while 28 per cent managed three or four. Over a quarter, 27 per cent, manage five to ten hives.

The average beekeeper has been beekeeping for around nine years but this year the number of new beekeepers has appeared to fall off slightly – just 22 per cent having been beekeepers for 1-2 years, compared to 26 per cent last year and 41 and 44 per cent in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

"Beekeeping has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in recent years and it is crucial that we do not lose the momentum. Honey bees are essential pollinators and vital contributors to food production," said Tim Lovett.

"The better weather has helped a great deal but it is also the improving husbandry skills of beekeepers, as they gain experience, that has made a big difference. These very precious creatures still need all the help we can give."

Anyone interested in becoming a beekeeper can source information from the BBKA website, [bbka.org.uk](http://bbka.org.uk), or visit [adoptabeehive.co.uk](http://adoptabeehive.co.uk) to become an 'armchair beekeeper'.

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**Notes to journalists**

**Survey methodology**

The survey was based on email responses from a total of 1,823 beekeepers in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Respondents were asked to state how many pounds of honey they had taken from their hives by 30 September 2014 including any still on frames but out of the hive waiting to be extracted.

#### Survey results by region 2010 – 2013

Region	2014 lbs per hive	2013 lbs per hive	2012 lbs per hive	2011 lbs per hive	2010 lbs per hive
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.2</b>	24.7	8.1	29.4	31.2
<b>East</b>	<b>36.6</b>	28.7	10.3	34.7	34.1
<b>London</b>	<b>29.3</b>	18.7	5.6	25.8	24.8
<b>Midlands</b>	<b>33.3</b>	26.4	9.0	30.6	33.2
<b>North East</b>	<b>28.5</b>	23.6	8.6	26.5	25.9
<b>North West</b>	<b>31.8</b>	20.1	6.9	24.9	20.7
<b>South East</b>	<b>35.9</b>	27.1	7.3	29.3	34.2
<b>South West</b>	<b>29.5</b>	22.3	7.1	29.5	30.8
<b>Wales</b>	<b>26.1</b>	21.8	9.8	31.6	25.2
<b>N Ireland<sup>2</sup></b>					
<b>Scotland<sup>2</sup></b>					

<sup>1</sup>The geographic regions correspond with the Adopt a Beehive regions.

<sup>2</sup> Small sample size – data not included

#### About the BBKA:

The BBKA is a registered charity no 212025 [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk). It has around 24,000 members who are amateur beekeepers.

#### About Adopt a Beehive:

Adopt a Beehive [www.adoptabeehive.co.uk](http://www.adoptabeehive.co.uk) is the only scheme in the UK that raises funds for applied research and education projects to help save the honey bee. To date over 8000 people have joined the scheme.

#### For further information

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