

DENGIE & MALDON BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION - POLICY AND PROTOCOL

Bees in Chimneys.

Every year a number of bee colonies either swarm from or to chimneys.

The best and most effective way of dealing with this problem is to ensure that your chimney is sealed, both inside the house, as well as at the pot so as to deny access, or repeated access to a colony.

However, in many cases, homeowners are unaware of the problem, move into a house with a history of such problems, or become victim to this problem. In some cases, home owners have the same problem every year a situation that should not be accepted.

There are three courses of action you can take with regard to bees in your chimney

1. Leave them alone - they will go about their daily activity avoiding you
2. Attempt to removed them
 1. smoking them out
 2. physically taking them out
3. Extermination by a licenced Pest Controller

All have associated difficulties.

1. Leave them alone

Although this may seem the ideal situation, and in many cases, is a good solution, swarming, a natural phenomenon, will still occur each spring. This will result in a prime swarm, and maybe subsequent castes, landing in the garden or a neighbours garden. This then requires a beekeeper to attend to remove the swarm. There is also the possibility of a build up of honey comb in the stack which, if the stack is in use, can result in the stack catching fire. Wax is flammable.

If you adopt this option close off the flue below the bees, allow the bees to continue their life in the chimney.

2. Attempt to remove them by
 - A) smoking them out

This is possible provided it is done within 2 days of a colony taking up residence in a new chimney stack. It is not always successful. Bees do generally only take up residence in old disused stacks. Some do get it wrong though.

- B) physically moving them out

This is a time consuming and costly solution with the need for specialist equipment, building skills/knowledge as well as working at height, something many beekeepers do not, and are not willing to do.

Costs include: scaffold, cherry pickers as well as building skills. C£500

This should be done early in the season ideally April, when the honey is at its lowest as are bee numbers.

in both cases, following the removal of the colony, the chimney stack must be sealed in order to prevent re-occupation by another colony.

Suitable suppliers of chimney cowls can be found on the internet.

(.....)

3. ask a licence Pest Controller to exterminate the colony

In this situation, the Pest Controller has to comply with a number of Statutes including:

- Control of Pesticides Act;
- Working at Height Regulations;
- COSSH.

Under the latter, COSSH, you should receive notice of the effects of the pesticide upon

1. bees in general as well as those in your chimney
2. on yourself and other occupants of the property,

You should also be supplied with

- A method statement explaining the
 - removal,
 - destruction of the bees
 - as well as any contaminated honey is to be dealt .
 - If the bees, and honey, are to remain within the stack, this must also be sealed to prevent robbing by other bees and contaminating honey(*see note below)

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All beekeepers within 3 miles of location should be notified.

*Note

Honey bees are “Food Producing Animals” just like cattle, sheep etc. they also have a sophisticated communication system in both time and space that is equal to our own. The residual poison remains active in the honey, in your chimney and other bees must be excluded from accessing your chimney to remove that contaminated honey.

All the honey and comb must be safely disposed of under The Control of Waste legislation;

MOST Important: The prevention of future swarms gaining access to the chimney.

All disused flues must be made inaccessible to insects by use of stainless steel woven mesh or expanded sheet with apertures of less than 2-5mm.

This may or may not include weather proof caps for ventilation purposes.

Reference: Peter Hutton, Kent Beekeepers

Protocol

On receiving a phone call from a member of the public regarding a colony of bees in a chimney stack the following information is required:

1. how long has the swarm/colony been there
2. how old is the property
3. is there any history of bees in chimneys locally
4. are bees gaining access to the living parts of the house
5. Has the stack flue been blocked to prevent bees gaining access
6. is the property owned or rented

Advice should be given along the lines outlined above.

In all cases, information should be recorded on the Swarm Record held on Dropbox** regarding

- name and address of property
- date of call
- date of any follow up visit
- detail of beekeeper(s) attending
- details of actions taken -
 - to leave
 - remove
 - refer to licenced pest controller

**Note - if Dropbox cannot be accessed for any reason, the information should be emailed to the secretary for updating

We currently recommend

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1. Dan, Killer Instinct - beekeeper as well as Licenced Pest Controller
2.
3.

2018 M.A.D. About Bees