

Honeybee Husbandry Survey 2013/14

Summary

This is the sixth consecutive survey of beekeeping husbandry issues in Northern Ireland. A questionnaire survey was sent out hardcopy to beekeeping associations and an online copy made available on the AFBI website. 83 beekeepers in total responded.

Overwintering colony losses averaged 9%. This represents the lowest colony loss recorded in Northern Ireland since the survey began in 2009. 77% of beekeepers surveyed reported no losses.

Table 1. Regional overwintering colony losses in Northern Ireland for 2014.

<i>County</i>	<i>Production colonies live before winter</i>	<i>Colonies lost due to death/queen problems</i>	<i>% loss</i>
Antrim	102	15	15
Armagh	13	0	0
Down	215	16	7
Fermanagh	35	1	3
Londonderry	12	3	25
Tyrone	32	2	6
Total	412*	37	9

* Total includes 1 anonymous survey

Table 2. Annual overwintering losses in Northern Ireland for the past 6 years.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Colony loss</i>
2009	23%
2010	13%
2011	16%
2012	19%
2013	43%
2014	9%



31 colonies were found to be dead after winter 2013-2014. The main reasons given were finding dead workers in cells while no food was present in the hive (9 colonies) and symptoms of starvation, while food was present in the hive (9 colonies). 63 of the wintered colonies were weak after winter 2013-2014.

232 of the wintered colonies had a new queen in 2013 and 174 of these new queens were from selected stock. 45 beekeepers observed normal queen problems in their colonies in 2013 compared to what they usually had while 18 beekeepers noticed more queen problems.

79 out of the 83 beekeepers surveyed either monitored or treated their colonies for Varroa. The most popular treatment was Oxalic acid, used by 54% of those surveyed followed by Thymol (37%).