

Oxleas Wood APIARY

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APHA STATUTORY INSPECTION

You may have noticed the busier than normal activities in the Apiary during Wednesday, 20 September – this involved all of the hives being opened so that an *Animal and Plant Health* (APHA) Inspector could thoroughly examine each colony of honeybees.

Being an executive agency of the *Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs* (DEFRA), APHA undertakes Apiary inspections and coordinates the information and data collected to supplement its sponsored research with DEFRA, identifying and controlling endemic and exotic diseases and pests that threaten our insect pollinators. The APHA inspections are undertaken as a matter of routine on a three yearly turn-around.

During the Oxleas Wood Apiary checkup the APHA Inspector was on the lookout for specific diseases and pests, as well as the general health of the honeybee colonies – the diseases included *American* and *European Foul Brood* which can take root in the breeding brood box section of the hive, as well as overseas exotic pests that have yet to arrive in the UK, including the small hive beetle and the pesky tropilaelaps mite.



APHA INSPECTOR AT OXLEAS



ASIAN HORNET

During the inspection the Apiary was visited by a European Hornet (*V. crabro*) which is not to be confused with the 3cm long bee-eating Asian Hornets (*V. velutina*) that are now included in an eradication programme following its recent discovery in Gloucester. Our own native species, *V. crabro* is non-aggressive and thrives locally, being a valued addition to the rich insect diversity of Oxleas Woods.

The Apiary has a number of hornet lures and traps installed to record any presence of *V. velutina*, particularly the mated Queens that are active at this time of year.

At the end of the inspection the APHA inspector announced that the Apiary was free of any reportable diseases and pests and, generally, in rude health.

WHAT'S NEXT

Now, as winter draws in, the nectar and pollen flows retract, the honeybee Queens will slow and halt the rate of brood laying, and the bees will prepare to overwinter – some of the smaller colony hives in the Apiary will be wrapped in a winter coat of thermal insulation to see them through to March-April of the new honeybee season of 2018, at which time with a great flurry of aerial activity the honeybees of the Apiary recommence their busy and tireless work in earnest.



John Large