

**BBKA EXAMINATION BOARD**  
**ADVANCED HUSBANDRY - ADVICE TO CANDIDATES.**

**These notes should be read in conjunction with the syllabus for this assessment.**  
**Please ensure that you are sufficiently prepared for this assessment**

This assessment is usually held at the National Beekeeping Centre (NBC), Stoneleigh.

This assessment is not only testing your ability to carry out beekeeping manipulations, it also assesses your ability to demonstrate and pass on knowledge and skills to other beekeepers. At all times the way you talk, and through your actions the calm confidence you **demonstrate is important**. **You should imagine that at all times you have an audience of beginners and/or experienced beekeepers around you** – the assessor will guide you as to the supposed audience. If you are nervous this will be taken into account. It is a rigorous assessment of your practical and communication skills. The holder of this certificate should be able to demonstrate and assess unknown hives (for example at a garden meeting), able to advise beginners, more experienced beekeepers, and commercial beekeepers. In addition, they should be able to demonstrate various techniques for swarm prevention and control, queen rearing, and other practical beekeeping manipulations.

There are 5 sections to this assessment, and each section should last between 30 and 45 minutes. Be prepared for a long day. A snack will be provided during a lunch break that will be taken between sections. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available continuously. As each candidate will take varying amounts of time at each of the different sections, candidates will need to take lunch breaks at different times. Please let the assessors know whether you need a break for refreshment, and ensure that you do take a break or you will not perform at your best. A half hour lunch break is included in the timetable to ensure there is time for a break.

Please let the Exam Board Secretary know if you have any special dietary requirements.

The day will start promptly and the morning will include lectures given by the candidates, one following the other, to which a local audience will have been invited. It is important that you arrive on time so that you can have refreshment and a comfort break before the assessments start. Arriving late can be unsettling and you may not be able to give of your best. Candidates who live some distance away are advised to book a B&B locally. The Examinations Board Secretary can assist you with suggested venues.

**Lectures:**

You will be given a choice of one from two topics sent to you by the Exam Board Secretary a few weeks prior to the assessment. The lecture should last about 10 minutes with additional time (up to 5 minutes) allowed for questions from the audience.

You are free to use any method or type of visual aid to present the lecture, but points may be lost if you are unable to use the equipment chosen. **There will be a data projector and PC laptop with PowerPoint software, overhead projector (but bring OHP acetates) and flip chart (with marker pens) available at the NBC.** Handouts are useful. Stick to the topic you have chosen, additional information can be in the handout. Be prepared to answer questions from the audience and the assessors. Have additional information relevant to your topic to hand so that you are able to answer questions on the topic fully.

In general the advice is not to clutter the written (projected) visual aid – limit it to bullet points and use this as an aide memoire for what you want to tell the audience. As your audience will consist of local beekeepers as well as the assessors, using lifelike props and aids will improve the impact of your lecture. Make sure you remember to bring them!

### **Manipulation:**

This part of the assessment will take place in an apiary with bees not known to you (or the assessor) – usually at the National Beekeeping Centre, Stoneleigh. *This apiary was not designed to be a model apiary. Its use is to provide bees for observation hives for shows, for courses at Stoneleigh and various assessments of which this is one. Volunteers manage the bees and in the case of this assessment we require colonies and hives such as you would find at a garden meeting, ie colonies that are not ideally managed or equipped.* During the assessment you will be asked to perform various standard beekeeping tasks. Equipment for these tasks will be on hand, as will smokers and hive tools. You will need to select what you need to use. **The dates of the assessment are fixed and the colonies will be opened even if the weather is adverse so be prepared to do so.**

Your attention to hygiene will be observed. You will be expected to wear clean overalls and disposable gloves to protect both the local bees and your own. Ensure the gloves are adequate for the task. Gloves will not be supplied.

As one of the tasks you will be asked to find a queen, take her off the comb, mark her, clip and mark a drone. It is expected that you will be able to physically handle a queen without damaging her. You may personally not approve of clipping or marking a queen, but you should be able to do this for another beekeeper if asked to do so.

### **Queen rearing:**

You will be expected to give advice on small and large-scale queen rearing and selection of breeding material. As grafting is the most commonly used technique for large scale queen rearing operations, and you should be able to argue why – you will be expected to demonstrate how this is done. Grafting equipment will be on hand, but if you have a particular tool you are comfortable with, please bring this to the assessment.

Other methods of raising queens will be discussed as will the process of producing live virgins and getting them mated and introduced to a colony.

### **Interview:**

Any topic in the syllabus may be selected for discussion, so read the syllabus carefully. The assessors will require a good knowledge of honey processing and the laws related to the preparation and sale of bee products.

### **Adult bee disease diagnosis:**

Holders of the BBKA Microscopy Certificate are exempt from this section.

Be familiar with the microscopes you bring.. If they are on loan practise using them before the assessment so that you are familiar with how to set them up and how the different parts of a microscope work.

Please bring **sufficient freshly killed bees** and be prepared to discuss various methods of killing bees and their physical state required for dissection.

The first task will be to undertake a dissection with a low power microscope to enable the detection of the presence of the acarine mite. This simple dissection will demonstrate a basic knowledge of the use of a low power microscope.

The second task is to prepare a microscope slide for the detection of nosema and amoeba. Again this is a simple but useful task to demonstrate your familiarity with the equipment.

A further discussion will cover other bee diseases and what action should be taken if confirmed. Your ability to communicate effectively will be noted. You should be familiar with the scientific names of the various disease organisms, their effects and treatment or management.

## **Now you have read the advice, these are some of the reasons for previous candidate's failures:**

### Lecture:

- Using only a flip chart as visual aid with tiny prewritten information – bold legible script is required
- Incorrect information in the presentation
- Unable to answer questions related to the chosen topic
- Lack of practise using visual aids

### Manipulation:

- Inability to 'read' the colony
- Inability to work with bees and keep them under control in adverse weather conditions
- Unfamiliar with methods for finding an elusive queen, even more so in a bad tempered colony
- Forgetting the safety of the 'audience' and allowing them to crowd the colony and stand in front of the entrance
- Inability to hold queen and mark/clip drone

### Queen rearing:

- Unfamiliar with grafting technique – or lack of practise
- Inability to select a good comb from which to graft
- Inability to discuss other queen raising techniques

### Interview:

- Too much waffle to hide lack of knowledge
- Poor knowledge of safe temperatures to bottle honey and honey regulations

### Adult bee disease diagnosis - microscopy:

- Unfamiliar with setting up the microscope
- Unfamiliar with how a microscope works
- Poor acarine dissection – lack of practise
- Poor setting up a microscope slide for nosema/amoeba diagnosis

This assessment is achievable by most experienced beekeepers with a little more time and effort.