

# **BBKA Examinations Board**

## **The Beekeeping General Husbandry Assessment Guidelines**

### **How to apply to take the Assessment:**

- Make sure you have an up-to-date copy of the syllabus. This can be downloaded from the BBKA web site or is available from the Examinations Board Secretary. The syllabus sets out the full requirements and the regulations for entry.
- The completed form with the appropriate fee should be submitted to your local Examination Secretary in good time.
- This application for taking the Assessment, with the appropriate fee, must be received by the Secretary of the BBKA Examinations Board by 28<sup>th</sup> February in the year that the Assessment is to be taken.
- If for some reason your bees are not up to the required standard then a deferral for a season is an option, provided you have let the Examinations Board Secretary know in advance.

### **The Assessment**

- Will be made by two Assessors who have been appointed by the Examinations Board. Sometimes a trainee Assessor or Board member may be present as an observer but their presence will have no influence on the outcome.
- Is oral and practical in nature and will be in three sections (*not necessarily in this order*).
  - (a) Practical manipulations with your bees.
  - (b) Inspection of your equipment, honey products, processing equipment and samples etc.
  - (c) A short question and answer session during which any topic in the General Husbandry Assessment Syllabus may be discussed.
- Is designed to show that your management of your colonies is aimed at producing a strong healthy force of foraging bees for the expected honey flows and that the resultant crop is processed for consumption in a hygienic manner with due regard to legal requirements concerning production, extraction, bottling and labelling.
- Requires compliance with notifiable diseases or pests current in the U.K. Legislation, and also with honey regulations, food regulations and labelling regulations as they apply to bee products.

The Assessors may visit up to two locations to inspect colonies of bees; this may be necessary if the queen rearing is done on a separate site, but all honey producing colonies for the Assessment should be on one site. In addition they will visit locations for storage of equipment, honey and wax processing.

In a situation where you share equipment with another beekeeper, you will be expected to demonstrate suitable arrangements to ensure good hygiene practices are maintained for all those using the premises and equipment.

## **Your assessors will expect to find:**

- (a) A high standard of organisation and efficiency within your apiary.
- (b) Clear evidence of attention to “apiary hygiene”.
- (c) Your clothing and equipment clean, in good serviceable condition and properly stored.
- (d) Clear evidence of hygienic practices for extracting, straining, bottling and storing your honey and products.

## **During the Assessment:**

- The Assessors will use your record cards to select the colonies to be used in the assessment. These may take any practical form. A hive record card explained in a BBKA leaflet offers one suggested format but other systems are acceptable. It is always advisable to note down manipulations at the apiary to aid memory if transposing the information to a record system not held at the apiary.
- **You will be required to perform four tasks with the bees hence you need to ensure you have all the equipment ready as given in the syllabus. Your assessors will observe how you perform these tasks with due consideration for the bees used for the tasks.**

### **You will be required to:**

- (a) Manipulate colonies of honeybees, keeping the bees under control so as to:
  - Point out all stages of development of the brood.
  - Point out salient features of the brood pattern(i.e. “read” the combs)
  - Show familiarity with the age structure of the worker bees.
  - Draw conclusions about the stage of development reached by the colony and its likely progress.
  - Discuss past management and future options.
- (b) Demonstrate a reliable method of swarm control and suitable for use in early summer once queen cells have been found in a colony.

*Note: destruction of queen cells is not considered reliable as a sole method of swarm control.*
- (c) Demonstrate the inspection of a colony for brood diseases and to describe the actions to be taken in the event of serious concerns. This will entail shaking bees off the comb to obtain a good view of the brood.
- (d) Explain your approach to the detection and control of adult bee diseases and disorders.

## For the Assessment

You will need to provide for inspection:

- (a) Three full queen-right colonies of bees, suitable as honey production colonies. Honey production colonies means colonies with at least one super for storage of nectar, being worked by the bees.
- (b) One queen-right nucleus on full size frames.
- (c) Sufficient spare equipment to manage the colonies in your care.
- (d) All the tools and equipment you use for work with the bees in your apiary.
- (e) The equipment required to monitor varroa.
- (f) The equipment necessary to demonstrate a Bailey frame change.
- (g) The equipment needed to demonstrate the closure of a hive of bees for transport.
- (h) The equipment needed to demonstrate the uniting of two colonies
- (i) Your equipment used in the processing and bottling of honey.
- (j) Your equipment used for liquefying and producing creamed/soft-set honey. You will be expected to describe how to produce soft-set honey even if this is not normally practised.
- (k) Your equipment used for packaging comb honey. You will be expected to describe how to produce and package comb honey even if this is not normally practised.
- (l) Your equipment for the recovery of beeswax from cappings, old comb and scraps.
- (m) The room where the extracting and bottling takes place; this should be in a clean state as if this is taking place. Extracting and bottling may be in progress at the time of the assessment. The assessors will also require to see any locations where honey is stored.
- (n) Samples of your honey as for sale in liquid form (3 jars) and crystallised/soft set form (3 jars).
- (o) Samples of your beeswax for sale.
- (p) Your apiary records for the current and previous year. These should include your register of medicines and treatments.
- (q) A plan of the apiary layout.
- (r) Evidence of an on-going queen raising programme.

Note: You may be asked to clip and mark a queen. Where there are strong objections to marking and/or clipping queens, a drone may be substituted. If you object to clipping wings on religious or moral grounds you will be expected to simulate the task by catching the queen or drone and placing the scissors in the correct position, the action may be halted at that stage. The queen/drone should still be marked as there can be no objections to this procedure as it does not harm either the queen or the drone.

## **When the Assessment is over:**

- Your assessors are not permitted to give any indication of how you have fared. This will eventually be disclosed to you in writing by the Exam Board Secretary.
- Each assessor will make a report to the Examinations Board whose Moderator is responsible for the final decision on your assessment. You will receive a written report from the moderator.
- Successful Candidates will receive their Certificate sometime later. Local associations are encouraged to present this on some suitable occasion such as an Annual General Meeting.

## **So, you have read the paperwork!**

### **These are some of the reasons some candidates fail:**

#### **In general:**

- Not read the syllabus
- Not read the conditions of entry-do not have at least **three queen right honey production colonies.**
- Poor apiary hygiene-comb.
- Not sufficient equipment to perform the tasks listed in the syllabus.

#### **Manipulation: The four tasks:**

- Failure to keep the colony under control-not enough smoke, too much smoke.
- Poor knowledge of a reliable swarm control method.
- Poor ability to clear a comb for brood disease inspection.
- Poor knowledge of the signs of the foulbroods.
- Poor knowledge of disease legislation.
- Poor knowledge of how to perform a Bailey frame change.
- Inability to make up a viable nucleus.

#### **Oral questioning:**

- Poor knowledge of the breadth and depth of the syllabus