



The British Beekeepers' Association

Examinations Board Syllabus for Module 1: Honey Bee Management

Applicable for Examinations: March and November 2025

The Candidate shall be able to give a detailed account of:

- 1.1 the types of hives and frames commonly used by beekeepers in the United Kingdom, including comparative knowledge of the following hives, National, WBC, Smith, National Deep, Commercial, Langstroth, Dadant, Flow, Warré and horizontal hive including Top Bar (details of exact frame sizes will not be required).
- 1.2 the principles which govern the design of hives and frames, including the concept of bee space, and the main features of their construction.
- 1.3 the methods of beekeeping for the various types of hives and frames commonly used by beekeepers in the United Kingdom.
- 1.4 the use of wax foundation.
- 1.5 the methods of fitting frames with wired and unwired wax foundation.
- 1.6 the ways of getting wax foundation fully drawn.
- 1.7 the methods of spacing frames in hives including the contributions made by W.B. Carr, J.R. Hoffman and R.O.B. Manley; the usual measurements used and the advantages and disadvantages of varying the spacing.
- 1.8 the use and types of queen excluders used in the United Kingdom.
- 1.9 how to begin beekeeping, including the acquisition of honey bees, sources and types of personal and other equipment, the approximate costs of equipment and honey bees and any precautions necessary.
- 1.10 the criteria used in the selection of apiaries.
- 1.11 the factors to be considered in the siting of colonies in home and in out-apiaries.
- 1.12 the drifting of honey bees, the issues caused, and techniques used to minimise the problem.
- 1.13 good apiary hygiene, including the need for regular comb replacement in the hive and how this can be effectively carried out for a strong/healthy colony.
- 1.14 the year's work in the apiary, including inspections and how they are recorded, the relationship with the annual colony cycle and the timing of local bee forage.
- 1.15 the management of a colony throughout the year, Spring, Summer and preparation for Winter, including the underlying principles of the required activities.
- 1.16 the principles involved in feeding honey bees, including types of feeders, amounts of food, types of food and timing of feeding.

- 1.17 the prevention, detection, and control of swarming.
- 1.18 methods of swarm control used in small-scale beekeeping enterprises including those methods developed by J.W. Pagden, L.E. Snelgrove and G.W. Demaree.
- 1.19 the methods of marking and clipping queens.
- 1.20 the methods of making nuclei and the uses to which nuclei can be put.
- 1.21 how swarms and nuclei can be turned into productive colonies.
- 1.22 the methods of taking and hiving a swarm of honey bees.
- 1.23 the methods used to unite colonies of honey bees, the underlying principles of these methods and any precautions that should be taken.
- 1.24 the methods of introducing a new queen to a colony.
- 1.25 robbing by honey bees and wasps and the associated dangers, including the prevention and reduction of robbing.
- 1.26 moving colonies, the difficulties, dangers involved and the precautions that should be taken.
- 1.27 the different methods of 'clearing' honey bees from supers and the equipment employed.
- 1.28 the effect of honey bee stings and the recommended first aid treatment for minor reactions.
- 1.29 the signs of a bad-tempered colony.
- 1.30 how to deal with an aggressive colony and the actions which can be taken to avoid bad-tempered honey bees causing a nuisance to members of the public.
- 1.31 the management of colonies with laying workers or a drone laying queen and the conditions leading to the development of these conditions.
- 1.32 the signs of queenlessness and a method of confirming the condition.

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Charity No: 1185343



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Examinations Board Syllabus for Module 2: Honey Bee Products and Forage

Applicable for Examinations: March and November 2025

The Candidate shall be able to give a detailed account of:

- 2.1 the current UK Honey Regulations.
- 2.2 the methods used to uncap honeycombs, and of separating the cappings from honey.
- 2.3 the types of honey extractor available and their use in the extraction of honey including ling heather honey from combs; including the history of the design of the equipment used.
- 2.4 the management of honey bee colonies for honey production from oil seed rape, ling heather and other specialist crops.
- 2.5 the straining and settling of honey after extraction.
- 2.6 the storage of honey.
- 2.7 the preparation and bottling of liquid honey, including ling heather honey.
- 2.8 the preparation and bottling of naturally granulated, soft set and seeded honey.
- 2.9 the process of honey granulation including factors that affect its speed, crystal size, and the texture of the final product and the process described by E. Dyce.
- 2.10 the preparation of section, cut comb and chunk honey for sale.
- 2.11 the constituents expressed in percentage terms of a typical sample of United Kingdom honey and an outline of the normal range of variation of its main constituents.
- 2.12 methods of determining the moisture content of honey.
- 2.13 the spoilage of honey particularly by fermentation (including the effect of water content, storage temperature and the presence of yeast).
- 2.14 the physical properties of honey including relative density (specific gravity), refractive index, viscosity, hygroscopicity, electrical conductivity, reaction to heat and ageing.
- 2.15 the main constituents and physical properties of beeswax.
- 2.16 methods of recovering saleable beeswax from used comb and cappings.
- 2.17 the range of uses for, and preparation of beeswax.
- 2.18 the uses of other bee products such as pollen, royal jelly, venom and propolis.
- 2.19 the preparation of comb honey, soft set, naturally set and liquid honey, beeswax blocks, beeswax candles and meads for the show bench and the criteria used to judge these entries at a honey show.

- 2.20 the properties and uses of honey and the associated active constituents associated with dressings in wound care.
- 2.21 a list of ten major nectar and/or pollen producing plants of the United Kingdom and their flowering periods together with a detailed knowledge of those in his/her own locality.
- 2.22 the importance of nectary guides to the foraging bee using a named example and describe how the following flowers, having been successfully pollinated, can indicate to honey bees that their visits are no longer required – clover, forget-me-not, horse chestnut.
- 2.23 an illustrated description of the floral structure of apple blossom.
- 2.24 the processes of pollination and fertilisation.
- 2.25 the determination of the floral source(s) and geographic origin of honey by analysis of its pollen content and the use of such information in the enforcement of regulations governing the labelling of honey offered for sale.
- 2.26 the genetic and evolutionary importance of cross-pollination and an outline of the methods used by plants to favour cross-pollination including but not limited to protandry and protogyny.
- 2.27 the identifying features and structures of pollen grains.
- 2.28 the value of pollen to the honey bee colony.
- 2.29 the location and function of the extra-floral nectaries of broad bean, cherry laurel, cherry and plum.
- 2.30 a list of floral sources of unpalatable honey.
- 2.31 the composition of nectar and its variants.
- 2.32 the factors affecting nectar secretion and the variations in the composition of nectar in different plant species and differing weather conditions.
- 2.33 the origins and typical composition of honeydew with a brief description of the characteristics of honeydew honey.
- 2.34 how the worker honey bees process nectar to change it into honey.
- 2.35 the establishment and development of the National Honey Show, including the purpose and benefits of a honey show to the beekeeper.
- 2.36 the inter-relationship of nectar, honey and water in the honey bee colony.

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Examinations Board Syllabus for Module 3: Honey Bee Pests, Diseases and Poisoning

Applicable for Examinations: November 2025 and March 2026

Unless otherwise specified, when identifying pests and diseases in this module the candidate is expected to use binomial nomenclature (two-term naming system)

The Candidate shall be able to give a detailed account of:

- 3.1 the field diagnosis of American foul brood (AFB) and European foul brood (EFB), including lateral flow devices and a detailed account of the signs of these two diseases.
- 3.2 the characteristics and life cycle of the causative organisms of *Paenibacillus* larvae and *Melissococcus plutonius* including their development within the larvae.
- 3.3 the development of AFB and EFB within the colony.
- 3.4 the ways in which AFB and EFB are spread from one colony to another.
- 3.5 the authorised treatment of colonies infected with AFB and EFB including methods of destruction of colonies and the sterilisation of equipment.
- 3.6 the features that aid recognition of the Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina*) and the notifiable pests, small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) and Tropilaelaps mites.
- 3.7 the life cycle of the Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet, small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mites.
- 3.8 measures a beekeeper can take to minimise the effects of the presence of Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet within an apiary.
- 3.9 the legislation and the statutory requirements relating to notifiable diseases and pests and the implementation of these requirements in the United Kingdom.
- 3.10 the statutory requirements and guidance relating to the Asian Hornet and how these are implemented in the UK.
- 3.11 the legislation relating to the importation and export of honey bees.
- 3.12 the implications of importing packages of honey bees.
- 3.13 the life cycle and natural history of Varroa destructor including its development within the honey bee colony and its spread to other colonies.
- 3.14 the signs of Varroosis describing methods of detection and ways of monitoring the presence of Varroa destructor in honey bee colonies.

- 3.15 methods of treatment and control of Varroosis, including Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and an outline of the consequences of incorrect administration of chemical treatments, together with a way of determining the resistance of varroa to such treatments.
- 3.16 how to recognise the signs of the hygienic behaviour of natural varroa-resistant honey bees and the management a colony to encourage and maintain this behaviour.**
- 3.17 the historical spread of Varroosis between countries, including the mechanisms of the spread and how beekeepers in the UK have adapted to the presence of varroa.
- 3.18 the cause, signs and treatment (if any) of adult bee diseases currently found in the United Kingdom. To include those diseases caused by *Nosema apis*, *Nosema ceranae*, *Acarapis woodii* and *Malpighamoeba mellificae* and the condition dysentery.
- 3.19 the structure and function of the alimentary, excretory and respiratory systems of the adult honey bee and of the life cycle of the causative organisms of adult honey bee diseases.
- 3.20 the causative organisms, signs and recommended treatment of chalk brood, sacbrood virus and stone brood.
- 3.21 the signs and any recommended treatment of chilled brood, bald brood and neglected drone brood.
- 3.22 the laboratory methods of identification of Acarine mite, *Nosema* spores and *Amoeba* infestations in worker honey bees including the rationale for sample sizes employed.
- 3.23 the fumigation of comb using ethanoic acid (acetic acid), including safety precautions to be taken.
- 3.24 procedures by which a colony can be transferred onto clean comb including any precautions that need to be taken and the circumstances which merit such procedures. These procedures to include shook swarm and Bailey comb change for a healthy colony and for a weak colony.
- 3.25 the effects of acute bee paralysis virus, black queen cell virus, sacbrood and deformed wing viruses together with an elementary account of the effects of other viruses affecting honey bees including their association with other bee diseases and pests where applicable.
- 3.26 the signs, effects and transmission chronic bee paralysis virus (both syndromes) and the recommended actions of the beekeeper.
- 3.27 the life cycle of *Braula coeca*, its effect on the colony and a description of the differences between adult *Braula coeca* and *Varroa destructor*.
- 3.28 the signs of poisoning by natural substances, agricultural chemicals, other chemicals and treatments to which honey bees may be exposed.
- 3.29 the ways in which honey bees can become exposed to agricultural chemicals.
- 3.30 the action to take, and practical measures possible, when prior notification of application of toxic chemicals to crops is given.
- 3.31 the BBKA recommended spray liaison system.
- 3.32 the action to be taken when spray damage to a colony is suspected.
- 3.33 the damage caused to colonies and equipment by mice, woodpeckers and other pests and ways of preventing this.
- 3.34 wax moth damage and the life cycle of both the Lesser and Greater wax moth (*Achroia grisella* and *Galleria mellonella*).

- 3.35 of methods of treating or storing comb with reference to preventing wax moth damage and the spread of honey bee diseases.
- 3.36 the legal requirements for the recording of all veterinary medicines introduced to a colony of honey bees and how this should be recorded.
- 3.37 the legislation and statutory requirements relating to the reporting and recording of the presence of the varroa mite within a hive.
- 3.38 the roles of the Animal & Plant Health Agency and the National Bee Unit, including how the BeeBase website is employed to support beekeepers.

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Examinations Board Syllabus for Module 5: Honey Bee Biology

Applicable for Examinations: March and November 2025

The Candidate shall be able to give a detailed account of, referring to histological features as necessary:

- 5.1 the contributions of R.E. Snodgrass and H.A. Dade to the understanding of honey bee biology.
- 5.2 the alimentary system of the adult honey bee including the process of digestion by enzymes and the absorption and assimilation of the products of digestion.
- 5.3 the excretory system of the adult honey bee and the substances excreted.
- 5.4 the respiratory system of the adult honey bee, including the muscular ventilation of the air sacs, the structure and operation of the spiracles and the exchange of respiratory gases, both at rest and during active flight.
- 5.5 the circulatory system of the adult honey bee, including the heart, dorsal and ventral diaphragms and the composition and functions of haemolymph.
- 5.6 the exocrine glands of both castes and sexes of adult honey bees and larvae, their location, the functions and main compositions of their secretions including pheromones; hypopharyngeal, mandibular, post-genal, Nasonov, poison gland, Koshevnikov, Dufour, Arnhart, post cerebral, thoracic salivary, wax glands, silk glands and tergite glands of the queen (Renner-Baumann).
- 5.7 the different structures of the exocrine glands for the queen, worker and drone.
- 5.8 the structure and function of the nervous system and sense organs of the adult honey bee including the compound eyes, ocelli, organ of Johnston and the sensilla.
- 5.9 the endocrine glands and the functions of their secretions particularly the neurosecretory cells, the corpora allata, corpora cardiaca and the prothoracic glands.
- 5.10 the composition, location and function of the fat body throughout the life cycle of the honey bee.
- 5.11 the reproductive system of the queen and drone and the production of sperm and eggs.
- 5.12 the structure of the egg, development of the embryo within the egg and the hatching of the larva.
- 5.13 the external and internal structure of the honey bee larva.
- 5.14 the metamorphosis of the larva with outline accounts of ecdysis, apolysis, larval defaecation, cocoon spinning, the external anatomy of the pro-pupa, its change to a pupa and then to an imago.
- 5.15 the effect of feeding and other factors on caste determination and the differences between brood food and royal jelly.
- 5.16 the physiological and structural differences between laying workers and normal workers and the role of pheromones in bringing about these differences.

- 5.17 the differences between summer and winter worker honey bees including the role of vitellogenin, juvenile hormone and the fat body.
- 5.18 the structure and main constituents of the cuticle, of the larva and the adult honey bee, with an outline account of its invagination within the body to form linings of the gut and tracheae.
- 5.19 the external anatomy of the queen, worker and drone.
- 5.20 the function and structure of the wings, legs, feet, antennae, mouth parts and setae (hairs).
- 5.21 the structure of the sting mechanism and how this mechanism operates to penetrate human skin and deliver the venom.
- 5.22 the role of the direct and indirect muscles in flight and in the colony.
- 5.23 the structure and function of the exoskeleton of the bee.

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Examinations Board Syllabus for Module 6: Honey Bee Behaviour

Applicable for Examinations: November 2025 and March 2026

The Candidate shall be able to give a detailed account of:

- 6.1 the function and behaviour of the worker bee throughout her life including the types of work done, duration of work periods under normal circumstances, the variations in behaviour due to seasonal changes in the state of the colony.
- 6.2 the mating behaviour of the queen and drone including an account of the pheromones involved and the concept of drone congregation areas.
- 6.3 the queen's egg laying behaviour and its relationship to changing circumstances in the hive and external factors relating to climate and season.
- 6.4 the role of different pheromones on honey bee behaviour including the work of Dr C. Butler and J. Free.
- 6.5 the seasonal variations in the population size of a honey bee colony and an explanation of such variations.
- 6.6 the social organisation and behaviour of the honey bee colony including worker policing.
- 6.7 the methods of communication used by the honey bee including food sharing (trophallaxis), dancing, scenting and vibration.
- 6.8 the behaviour of the queen before and after emergence from the cell.
- 6.9 the behaviour of the worker before and after emergence from the cell.
- 6.10 the piping behaviour of the worker and queen.
- 6.11 the behaviour of the foraging bee and her work methods in the field.
- 6.12 orientation and navigation by honey bees including the use of visual and solar cues.
- 6.13 how colonies recognise intruders, the behaviour of the worker bee towards intruders and how a honey bee challenged at the entrance will react.
- 6.14 the balling behaviour associated with *Apis mellifera* and *Apis cerana*.
- 6.15 the collection of nectar and water and their use by the colony.
- 6.16 the behaviour of the honey bee in converting nectar into honey and its storage.
- 6.17 the collection, storage and use of pollen by the honey bee colony.
- 6.18 the collection and use of propolis by the honey bee colony.
- 6.19 the behaviour of honey bees prior to swarming.

- 6.20 colony behaviour relating to supersedure.
- 6.21 the behaviour of swarms and the method of selection by the swarm of a site for a new home, including the work of T. Seeley.
- 6.22 the initiation of comb building and the construction, structure and use of comb.
- 6.23 the colony in winter and summer with special reference to ventilation, humidity and temperature control (homeostasis).
- 6.24 the behaviour of a colony with laying workers or drone laying queens.
- 6.25 the effects of pathogens, parasites and pests on bee behaviour.
- 6.26 grooming and other forms of the hygienic behaviour of natural varroa-resistant honey bees.**
- 6.27 the learning behaviour of honey bees.
- 6.28 how honey bee behaviour observed at the entrance of a nest can reflect the state or activity of the colony.
- 6.29 the life histories of one selected species of each of the following found in the UK: solitary bee, eusocial bee, solitary wasp and eusocial wasp, and their interaction with honey bees.

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Examinations Board Syllabus for Module 7: Selection and Breeding of Honey Bees

Applicable for Examinations: November 2025 and March 2026

The Candidate shall be able to give a detailed account of:

- 7.1 the principal characteristics and performance traits that could be used in the selection of breeder queens and drones.
- 7.2 a system that could be used in a honey bee breeding programme for the assessment of queens and their progeny.
- 7.3 the difference between bee breeding and queen rearing.
- 7.4 a programme of queen rearing suitable for the annual production of at least fifty queens in the UK.
- 7.5 the contribution to bee breeding by J. Dzierzon, Brother Adam, and B. Cooper.
- 7.6 methods of queen rearing suitable for a beekeeper with five to ten colonies including methods developed by C. Miller, I. Hopkins, H. Alley, G.W. Demaree and L.E. Snelgrove.
- 7.7 methods of raising queen cells.
- 7.8 a method of instrumental insemination and assess the role this technique could play in bee breeding.
- 7.9 methods of queen introduction, the principles underlying the processes involved, the precautions to be taken, and the attendant difficulties in relation to different strains of honey bee and colony condition.
- 7.10 the setting up of mating nuclei and any precautions that need to be taken.
- 7.11 *Apis mellifera mellifera*, *Apis mellifera carnica*, *Apis mellifera cecropia*, *Apis mellifera ligustica*, *Apis mellifera caucasica* and the Buckfast bee with specific reference to their behavioural and physical characteristics.
- 7.12 how a beekeeper might identify the genetic inheritance of their honey bees.
- 7.13 Mendel's Laws of Inheritance and explain how and why they are important to the honey bee breeder.
- 7.14 the following terms and explain their importance to bee breeding: chromosome, gene, allele, allelic pair, allelic series, phenotype, genotype, recessive, dominant heterozygous, homozygous, hemizygous.
- 7.15 inheritance in the honey bee and the use of the Punnet square.
- 7.16 the genetic basis of sex determination in the honey bee including parthenogenesis and diploidy in drones.

- 7.17 mitosis and meiosis showing an understanding of the unusual nature of meiosis in the drone honey bee.
- 7.18 the reproductive system of the queen and drone with an outline account of sperm and egg production.
- 7.19 the mating behaviour of queens and drones and how this behaviour can be utilised in bee breeding programmes.
- 7.20 the causes of drone laying queens and laying workers and ways to recognise the presence of these in a colony.
- 7.21 methods of marking and clipping queens and the advantages and disadvantages of these practices.
- 7.22 the differences between queen cells produced under the emergency, supersedure and swarm impulses.
- 7.23 the problems inherent in cross breeding subspecies of honey bee.
- 7.24 the advantages and disadvantages of inbreeding and out breeding and how it can be assessed.
- 7.25 the effect of pathogens and pests on bee breeding.
- 7.26 methods of quantifying the hygienic behaviour of honey bees regarding pathogens and pests.**
- 7.27 the implications of the importation of queen honey bees.

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Examinations Board Syllabus for Module 8: Beekeeping and Honey Bee Management

**This module is only to be completed on passing modules 1-3 and 5-7.
The Candidate is expected to give an account of the beekeeping topics included in syllabi
1-3 and 5-7.**

Applicable for Examinations: March and November 2025

The Candidate shall be able to give a detailed account of:

- 8.1 the assessment and management of the quality of a colony for honey production.
- 8.2 the management of colonies to produce oil seed rape (*Brassica spp.*) and ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) honey, the techniques involved in overcoming problems associated with extracting these honeys.
- 8.3 the management of colonies to produce comb honey (sections and cut comb) and its preparation and presentation for sale.
- 8.4 the properties and composition of honey including specific gravity, refractive index, viscosity, hygroscopicity, electrical conductivity, reactions to heat and ageing.
- 8.5 the process of honey granulation including factors that affect its speed, crystal size, and the texture of the final product.
- 8.6 the preparation and bottling of liquid honey and set honey, including the requirements of the current UK statutory regulations relating to hygiene, handling, bottling, composition, labelling and weight of packs of honey.
- 8.7 the identification of pollen grains by their colour, size, specific shape and structure, using named examples, and an outline of the technique of melissopalynology to determine the floral source(s) and geographic origin of honey samples.
- 8.8 how contamination and adulteration of honey may occur, the methods used and how these may be detected.
- 8.9 the nutritional value of honey to the colony.
- 8.10 the properties and composition of beeswax and propolis.
- 8.11 the commercial manufacture of wax foundation.
- 8.12 how foundation can be made on a small scale by the beekeeper including one method of wiring frames and embedding the wiring into this foundation.
- 8.13 the production and use of pollen supplement and pollen substitutes.

- 8.14 the assessment of the qualities of a queen and her colony and their subsequent management for queen rearing.
- 8.15 the changes in function of the exocrine glands throughout the life of the castes of a honey bee colony, and the implications this has for the management of a honey bee colony.
- 8.16 the management of colonies used for migratory beekeeping for both honey production and pollination services.
- 8.17 the use of honey bees as pollinators in orchards and fields of seed crops including arrangements to be made with the farmer/grower.
- 8.18 the management of honey bee colonies needed to cope with geographic localities, weather conditions and the timing of the flowering of forage plants.
- 8.19 methods of swarm control suitable for use in small and large beekeeping enterprises.
- 8.20 the setting up, and management throughout the season, of an observation hive, and the uses to which it can be put.
- 8.21 the preparation of a risk assessment and safety policy relating to the handling, demonstrating and showing of live honey bees.
- 8.22 methods of monitoring and seasonal management of the health of colonies.
- 8.23 the signs of disease and pest infestations of honey bees; the potential impact on bee health, the economic effect and how these diseases and pest infestations impact on the management of the colony.
- 8.24 procedures related to good hygiene practices on matters of personal clothing, manipulations and equipment to prevent the spread of disease between colonies and between apiaries.
- 8.25 the developments leading to the modern colony management based on the moveable frame hive including the work of the people below:

Hives	Names
Collateral hive	Rev S. White, T. Nutt
Leaf hive	F. Huber
Stewarton	R. Kerr
First moveable frame hive in UK	T.W. Woodbury
First Double walled hive	T.W. Cowan
WBC	W.B. Carr
Langstroth and bee space	Rev L. Langstroth
Dadant	C. Dadant
Commercial	S. Simmins
Smith	W. Smith
Warre	Warre
Flow hive	C. and S. Anderson
Top bar (the Kenyan)	Tredwell and Paterson
Dartington	R. Dartington

- 8.26 the comparison of the different beekeeping management methods required for different types of hive.

8.27 the founding and history to the present day of the following beekeeping organisations:

Apimondia
British Bee Journal (BBJ)
British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
British Isles Bee Breeders' Association (BIBBA)
Central Association of Beekeepers
International Bee Research Association (IBRA)
National Diploma In Beekeeping (NDB)
National Honey Show (NHS)
Scottish Beekeepers' Association (SBA)
Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBA)

8.28 the role of NBU and the purpose of BeeBase.

8.29 the roles and purpose of national regulatory authorities relating to beekeeping.

8.30 the advantages and disadvantages of the importation of queen honey bees and packages of bumblebees and honey bees.

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