



**The British Beekeepers' Association**  
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**NEWS RELEASE**

**14 December 2007**

# **MORE BEEKEEPERS WANTED TO KEEP BRITAIN'S BEES HEALTHY**

## **Disease Could Wipe Out Honey Bees in 10 Years**

As millions of people will be watching DreamWorks' Animated comedy 'The Bee Movie' in cinemas across the UK, the British Beekeepers Association, (BBKA), is calling on the public to respond to the message in the film that pollination by honey bees is essential to the future of mankind. The BBKA wants more people to make their own contribution towards protecting our natural eco-systems by taking up the craft of beekeeping.

Tim Lovett, Chairman of the BBKA, said: "The BBKA is delighted that such a hugely entertaining film will be introducing millions of people to a fantasy world of bees. It shows how bees work cooperatively in the hive and only sting as a last resort. Vitally too it makes the point that bees and pollination are important to everyone one of us.

"In the real world, honey bees only survive in the UK because of the activities of beekeepers, who keep them healthy to produce the honey we love to eat and to pollinate the crops which provide more than 30 per cent of our food.

"Keeping bees healthy and productive requires knowledge and skill. As the government is considering regulating the beekeeping industry, I would strongly urge anyone wishing to take up the craft to contact their local beekeeping association who will mentor them into the best practices of beekeeping today, and encourage them to take the basic beginners examination.

"Our membership has increased by more than 10 per cent over that last 12 months. Beekeeping is an enjoyable, relaxing hobby which helps the natural environment and crucially contributes an estimated £165 million in extra yields to the horticultural industry."

Details of the 70 associations affiliated to the BBKA can be found on [britishbeekeepers.org.uk](http://britishbeekeepers.org.uk) or advice can be obtained from the National Beekeeping Centre, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Warwickshire. CV8 2LG telephone 02476 696679.

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**Further press information contact: Christine Gray, Press Officer, British Beekeepers Association. 01462 450707/07891 000207**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

The BBKA is a charity set up in 1874 by the gentry and the clergy to help poor cottagers. Today it supports and promotes bees and beekeeping and educates the public of the importance of bees in the environment. Membership through its 70 affiliated associations has increased by 10 per cent over the last 12 months to nearly 12,000 members. Members benefit from public, product and bee disease insurance, a telephone helpline, local support and mentoring legal advice and an

examination and assessment programme. Representation and lobbying of government, European and statutory bodies is a key role for the BBKA. Members report any concerns about bee diseases to regional bee inspectors working for the National Bee Unit, a DEFRA funded organisation.

## **BEE FACTS AND FIGURES**

In the UK there are approximately 44,000 beekeepers looking after around 240,000 hives.

They produce 6000 tones of honey per year.

Each hive is worth about £400 to the agricultural economy.

We produce only 20% of the honey we consume - the rest is imported.

A hive can contain up to 70,000 bees in midsummer. There will be 1 queen, 250 drones, 20,000 female foragers, 30,000 female house-bees, 5,000 to 7,000 eggs, 7,000-11,000 larvae being fed, 16,000 to 24,000 larvae developing into adults in sealed cells.

The queen makes mating flight during her early life and stores the sperm from up to 20 drones that she collects on these flights. Drones that mate with her die in the act. She can store the sperm for up to 5 years.

To collect a pound of honey a bee might have to fly a distance equivalent to twice round the world. This is likely to involve more than 10,000 flower visits on perhaps 500 foraging trips.

A worker honeybee in summer lives only 6 to 8 weeks from the time she hatches as an adult bee. Before that, it takes just 3 weeks for her to develop from an egg.