

CBKA Swarm collectors policy

The BBKA swarm collectors list is administered by the BBKA and operates on the BBKA website as a service to the public. The purpose is to remove bees that might otherwise cause a nuisance, and to use the opportunity to speak to members of the public and educate them about honeybees and bees in general. It is thus primarily an altruistic service, not one that is meant to directly benefit the individual beekeeper.

CBKA puts forward names of members for this list in order to perform this service in the Cheshire area. Beekeepers on the list must at all times remember that they are representing Cheshire BKA and must do nothing to bring the Association into disrepute.

It follows from the above that –

- Having offered his/her services, the beekeeper will remain on the list for the whole of the season.
- Once a swarm call has been accepted, the beekeeper owns the problem until it has either been resolved or passed on to a fellow beekeeper or other operative. The problem must not be ignored: the member of the public must not be left in the lurch.
- It is entirely inappropriate for anyone to use the scheme in order to make money in any way or to further a business. Beekeepers on the list will not collect swarms to sell for personal financial gain.

Anyone found not to be conforming to the above will be removed from the list and required not to use the name of the CBKA or the BBKA if collecting swarms.

If it is established that it is a case of wasps or bumble bees, the beekeeper should give advice to the member of the public and be as helpful as possible, but explain that beekeepers can only deal with honeybees.

If a swarm has taken up residence in a cavity of any sort, and has built comb and produced brood, it is no longer a swarm, but a “nest”, and it is beyond the remit of this service to remove nests of bees from cavity walls etc. It is likely that a beekeeper on this list will not be equipped to remove such a nest, but he/she should make every effort to refer the member of the public to someone who could help. Once removed, it should not be sold until it fulfils the requirements of a “nucleus colony”.

Eligibility:

CBKA will only recommend, and the BBKA will only accept, full – i.e. Registered or Partner - members for the list.

To be added to the BBKA list, a Swarm Collector must have experience of beekeeping (at least 3 years is recommended) and of collecting swarms.

To be added to the list, CBKA requires that the beekeeper shall have achieved the BBKA Basic Certificate.

Definition

For the purposes of this policy, a swarm is defined as follows –

A mass of honeybees which has swarmed, and perhaps been collected, but which is not yet established as a viable colony which fulfils the requirements of the BBKA/NBU standard for a nucleus colony.

It is still a swarm as long as –

- it is not yet known whether there is a queen OR
- there is no brood as yet, although perhaps housed on comb, OR
- the brood is less than three weeks old (so that it has not gone through all the brood stages and had chance to show signs of any disease that might be present) OR
- there are no significant stores of pollen or honey

After this time, once the bees have brood in all stages, have produced adult bees, and have obvious stores of pollen and nectar/honey, it can be called a “nucleus colony” rather than a swarm, and can legitimately be sold as a viable stock of honeybees.