

This is Sara, the beekeeper from Sudborough. I came out to a few swarms in your houses last year so thought I would extend what we do for Sudborough to your village too. Bees are not aware of village boundaries!

It is approaching that time when the honey bees decide that they would like to swarm into trees or our houses! As far as they are concerned, both are equally good. Last year, you will recall, was pretty frenetic over one or two weeks. It may be the same this year.

Swarming is a natural part of the colony life - old queen goes off with half the colony to allow the new queen to start her own colony in the existing tree or house nest (or hive). But living in such a unique area with bees in trees all around us, and with a particular type of native bee, we need to do what we can to live in peace with them and their housing requirements!!

Colonies are now building up. We are surrounded by oil seed rape - great forage for early spring time (bees are at bigger risk of starvation in Spring than in Winter as they have more mouths to feed) so local bees will be active. It all depends on the weather as well of course.

BEES IN BUILDINGS

1. Make sure your buildings are well maintained - holes in chimneys and roof areas and walls nicely sealed up. Bees are great for testing the quality of your house maintenance.

2. In Sudborough, I have been tracking where bees swarm to, and from, over the past 3 years and have been able to pick up a picture of how the swarms 'use' our village (swarm stop off, nesting in houses, foraging etc.) and how they go from the woods, to the village, and back to woods/elsewhere. So this year I am baiting (with bait boxes) areas that are susceptible to swarms moving into houses in Sudborough. It would be helpful, if you would like me to do the same for your village in coming years, if you could report sight of swarms that have settled, swarms in trees that then move on etc, and nests in village houses (if you wish to) so that I can track them and their behaviours in conjunction with Sudborough. Either via the Facebook page or messaging me (my number is below.) It'll take me a couple of years to pick up the picture for your village but hopefully it will help the villagers whose houses are most at risk of (sometimes) unwanted guests in the future.

3. If you were happy last year to leave any bees in your property, fine. If you were not, and did not get them removed, the bees will start to get very active again now, as colonies increase in size. They are also likely to throw out at least one swarm which may (or may not) end up elsewhere in your building (or a neighbour's!). If you would like them removed, contact Matt who is a professional (details below), although please bear in mind he will start getting very busy in the next few weeks. If your property is listed, Matt might pass you onto Tim, depending on both of their availability, but Tim lives much further away.

4. If you did not get the bees removed as a live removal (so if you used a pest controller who uses chemical sprays to kill the bees because it is cheaper - see below), you need to be very clear that the area is closed up and sealed. Removing only bees, and leaving wax comb and honey in there, will attract more insects and possibly rodents. Which might cause damage to your property.

SWARMS

1. For our village in Sudborough, and now for yours if you call us, we have a team of 4 local beekeepers who will help (Abi up at the farm between our villages, Jak over the A6116, and Adrian who lives a bit further away) and me. There is a helpline of beekeepers who will

collect swarms (see below) but the 4 of us are more local AND we are more aware of the behaviours of our local bees. You need to call me (number below) if you see a bee swarm. I will see who is available at the end of the day to fetch them. We do not remove bees before the end of the day because we shan't get all of them. We do this voluntarily. There is no charge for our time or our kit. So please bear with us as we do have day jobs and evening commitments. But we will help where we can.

2. Beekeepers are not insured to work 'at height'. So - if a swarm is too high for us OR in a building, I will let you know to call the professionals who ARE insured.

3. If you see bees in and around your buildings, and you think they might have only just settled in a building, then you need to act fast. Before they lay down comb and honey stores. Take a video. Call the professionals. Or me if you are not sure. The worst thing you can do is leave it, unless you want them to stay. Some people light a fire (if they see them in the chimney). If you do this, you need to be VERY sure they have only just gone in or that there has not been a colony in there in the past. Fire reaching up to wax and sugary honey is never a good look with the insurance companies!

4. Bees in a swarm situation look like a very loud black cloud moving across the village, hovering in a kind of circle around an area, and then they 'clump'. They are in a clump because they are waiting for the scout bees to come back and tell them that there is a better place for them to live than a tree stump or branch or fence post. The clump is there to protect the queen bee, who will be right in the centre. They will usually move on from the clump - usually before the end of the day. If you see a swarm in the air or a clump, let me know because this helps us track where they came from, where they might be going, and we need to stop them going into houses rather than trees! Also, sometimes they move on from living in your house after a short period of time (your property may not be as hospitable as they thought!), so we need to track them then as well. Keep me posted via the village Facebook page (I am on your page, as is Abi). Or via my 'phone number.

Contact details:

Me – 07970 597 017

Matt – iX5 Pest Control (and Beekeeper / Live Bee Removals) Tel: (01604) 328545. Matt's website for more advice and helpful blogs on bees is at: <http://www.iX5.uk>