



Farming for bees

**What farmers can
do for pollinators**

Email: bees@nfu.org.uk

Search on Twitter for [#farming4bees](https://twitter.com/farming4bees)

Provide habitats and food for wild insect pollinators

Finding food and sites for nesting and hibernation is a challenge that faces all bees. Farming can provide these resources by taking up relevant voluntary measures under the Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE). By encouraging pollinators, farmers and growers can also improve crop productivity.

Your farm will already be home to a range of bees. By using the right environmental measures, putting them in the right place to make the biggest difference, and managing them in the right way, you can help increase the number and diversity of insects that pollinate the crops and wild plants across your farm.

By implementing the following CFE Voluntary Measures you will provide food and shelter for pollinators:

- Sow a wildflower or a pollen and nectar mix to provide food.
- Provide legume and herb rich temporary grass to provide enhanced food supplies and habitat.
- Avoid spraying or adding fertiliser to cereal headlands.
- Uncultivated field corners create habitat for pollinators.
- Provide fertiliser free permanent pasture.
- Reduce the use of spring herbicide use on land to encourage a diverse range of non-competitive weeds in the crop.
- More information is on the CFE website (<http://www.cfeonline.org.uk/campaign-themes/pollinators/>.)



Provide sites for honeybees

Honeybee pollination can help farmers and growers improve yields, crop quality and consistency. Farmers and growers have a key role to play in increasing the number of UK beehives, by working with bee keepers to identify good places to put groups of beehives (known as apiaries) on their land.

What makes a good apiary site?

Bees need:

- To collect nectar and pollen to sustain strong viable colonies. So a continuity of flowering plants is essential.
- A clean water source close to the hive

Hives should be:

- Sited away from frost pockets
- Sited away from public rights of way
- Protected from prevailing winds
- On well-drained sites, free from flooding
- On sites free from over-hanging trees
- On sites with some sunshine in winter
- Protected from horses

If you have a good site and want to find out more, send your details to bees@nfu.org.uk and we will put you in touch with a beekeeper in your area.



Take care when using insecticides

Bees are at particular risk when insecticides are used in, or close to, flowering crops or wild flowers. You should make sure local beekeepers are informed before you plan to use a pesticide at a time of year when bees are at risk or whenever a pesticide labeled as 'harmful,' or 'dangerous' or 'high risk' to bees is intended to be used.

At these times:

- Do not spray unless you have to and consider whether you could use an alternative to an insecticide
- Spray in the evening, early morning or on a cloudy day when bees are not flying
- Be aware that bumblebees might be active later in the evening than honeybees
- Avoid pesticide drift into beehives or hedgerows (check wind speed is less than 5mph and nozzles are as close to the crop as possible). Also, check that you are using the correct nozzles and they are properly cleaned.
- Check annually with beekeeper associations for locations of local hives.
- In all cases it is a legal requirement to use products as directed on the label. Environmental information sheets are available for all pesticides, containing specific information on how to protect wildlife (including bees). Go to www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk



The UK has around 267 species of bee



one honeybee species



24 bumblebee species



the rest are solitary bees

Helping pollinators on your farm:

There are three important actions that you can take to help pollinators:

- **Provide habitats and food for wild insect pollinators**
- **Provide sites for honeybees**
- **Take care when using insecticides**

This range of species, together with their exclusive diet of pollen and nectar, means bees are seen as the main pollinators of most of our wildflowers and insect-pollinated crops. Bee populations in the UK and many other countries throughout the world have declined. It is widely acknowledged that there are many factors challenging bee health, including pests and diseases, loss of habitats, changing climate, invasive species and the chemicals bees encounter in their environment, like pesticides.

The pollination services provided by bees:

- **improve the look of landscapes, gardens or parks**
- **maintain and spread populations of insect-pollinated plants that provide food, shelter and resources to other wildlife.**
- **Are vital to the production of many horticultural and agricultural crops in the UK.**

Agricultural pollination by bees is valued at £510m per year.

There is growing evidence that managed pollinators like honeybees are only able to supplement, rather than replace, the vital pollination performed by a diversity of wild insect pollinators such as bumblebees.



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