Varroa Has Lost its Sting

My Experience of Treatment Free Beekeeping

Clive Hudson

BIBBA Conference 2018, Cirencester

10 years Treatment Free beekeeping

Ideas why bees may cope with Varroa

- Hygienic Behaviour
- VSH (Varroa Sensitive Hygiene)
- Superinfection Exclusion: bees having higher levels of the DWV (Deformed Wing Virus) ‘B’ variant , which combats the more harmful effects of the ‘A’ variant (REViVe Project)
- ‘Uncapping / Recapping’: bees may be disrupting the breeding cycle of Varroa
- Evolution by Natural Selection

“Colonies of European honey bees can survive without chemical treatments for Varroa”

Thomas Seeley at the Welsh Beekeepers’ Assoc. 75th Anniversary Conference, Aberystwyth 14th July 2018

History of our own Treatment Free Beekeeping

1985 – 1998: Traditional beekeeping with no Varroa

1998 (Aug): first Varroa found, treated with Bayvoral/Apistan

2006 (Autumn): last treatment with Bayvoral/Apistan as bees became resistant to flumethrin

2007 (Spring): thymol in cooking oil, applied on tissue

2008 (Jan): oxalic acid 5ml/seam of bees. (Apr): thymol crystals, 2tsps on sacking strip

2009 (March): last treatment with thymol or any other treatment, on some hives only

2009 – 2018: Traditional beekeeping with bees coexisting with Varroa!

Why did we stop treating?

1. Concern over chemicals

2. Varroa damage decreasing

3. Wild/feral colonies surviving

Colony in roof space: April 2011
Brood Comb

Colony in roof space: April 2011
Honey comb

Tree Colony

1 June 2015

Tree Colony

1 June 2015

Sugar testing for Varroa

9th June 2018

Lleyn & Eifionydd BKA
Treatment Free beekeepers

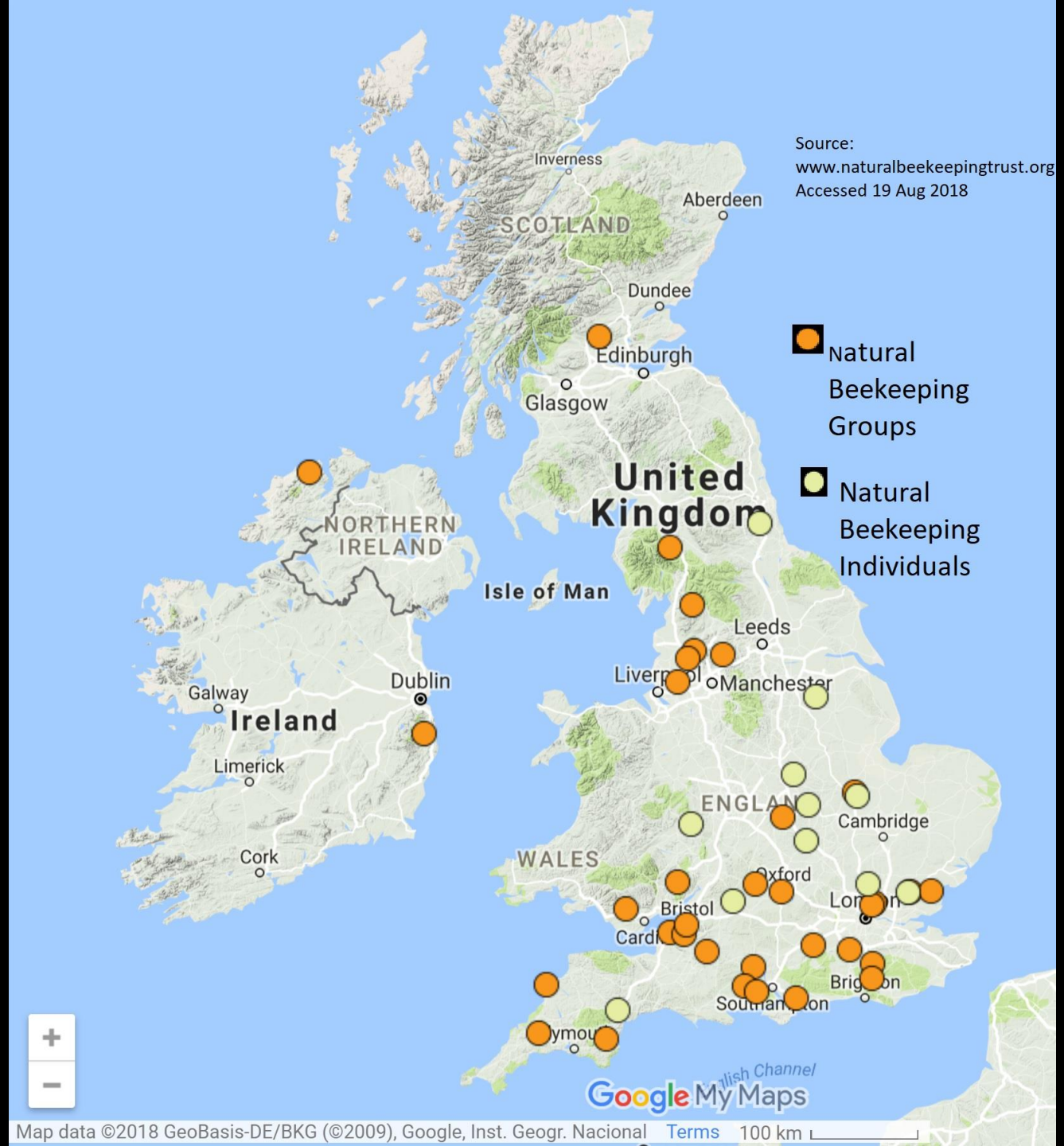
Winter Losses Surveys summary of data 2010 – 2015

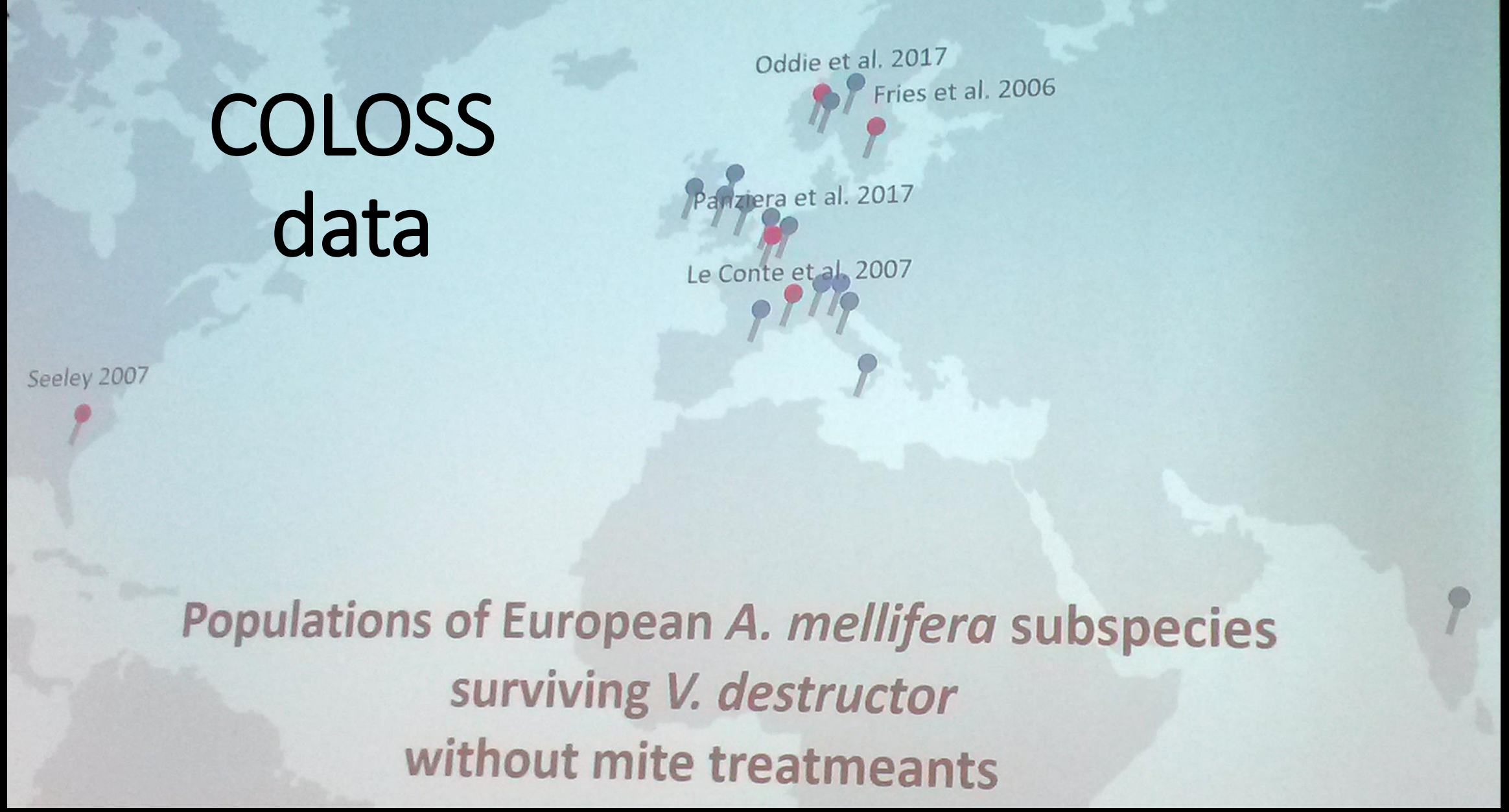
Winter	Survey Participants			Colonies				
	Total	Treating	Not Treating	Total	Treated	% Loss	Not Treated	% Loss
2010 – 2011	14	10*	5*	71	44	27	27	11
2011 – 2012	40	11*	31*	355	180	8	175	7
2012 – 2013	53	8*	46*	251	75	41	176	32
2013 – 2014	65	12*	55*	396	81	9	315	6
2014 - 2015	77	17*	65*	500	97	8	403	8
				Total 1573	**Total 477**	**Average 19**	**Total 1096**	**Average 13**
*some participants treated some colonies and not others								

Full article in *BBKA News* Dec. 2016

Natural Beekeeping Trust:

Distribution of Groups and Individuals





Credit: Peter Neumann, Learning from the Bees,
The Netherlands Conference, 31 Aug – 2 Sep 2018

A Trio of Bee Inspectors

11th July 2013

REViVe Project Salford Uni.

Prof Stephen Martin & team

22nd Aug 2017

For more information see
https://beemonitor.org/

“….sit down at your computer, tablet or generic fruit themed phone for an hour. Bring up Google, type in ‘Honey Bee Varroa Resistance Natural Selection’ and start to read.”

quote from letter by Joe & Chris Ibbertson, Welsh Beekeeper Magazine (Issue 197, Autumn 2017).

They conclude their letter by saying:

“The solution to the Varroa predicament is in the hands of the hobbyist beekeeper”.