

Maximising fruit set and quality continued

This season the farm is using BEESURE AUDAX hives in a bid to maximise pollination. The team already has experience of using bees to pollinate its indoor strawberry crop. “These new audax hives are easy to use as they come in the tried and trusted BEESURE format,” says Robert England. “As these hives for outdoor pollination contain the native UK species, we don’t have to ensure the hive is killed, by freezing after ten weeks of use.”

While at the time of producing the Technical Review in May it is too early to comment on the effects of the native hives on yield or quality, Robert says; “Research has shown that although blueberries will set a crop without bees in the field, where they are present fruit size at harvest is bigger boosting overall yield.”

Commenting on the introduction of these native bumblebees, technical adviser Kevin Workman of horticultural distributor UAP says: “A major pollination challenge is the sheer volume of flowers on soft fruit crops and newer apple varieties, such as Braeburn.

It is important to maximise pollinating insects to ensure good even pollination, this ensures maximum fruit set and quality, while poor pollination contributes to misshapes.”

Traditionally growers have used honey bee hives rented from local beekeepers, however declining populations have made this more difficult.

“We very much welcome the availability of commercially reared bumblebees as a substitute, and to compliment other pollinators,” says Robert England. “Bumblebees work at lower temperatures putting in a longer working day!

“In the past we used commercial bumblebees on the farm for apples but were disappointed when the regulations on use came in. This initiative by BCP Certis to provide native bumblebees for outdoor crops means we can once again use bees to boost pollination to maximise yields and quality in the future.”

Please note: BEESURE AUDAX is recommended where there are insufficient naturally occurring pollinating insects. Audax will provide a short term boost to the population of pollinators during the critical flowering period and will then slowly decline.



Kevin Workman UAP (left) and Robert England, Boxford Suffolk farms