On Tuesday 18th October, Philippa Norman, Dorset’s Senior Trading Standards Officer, gave us an update on the legislation regarding sales of honey.

As far as amateur bee-keepers are concerned, there is nothing too onerous in the regs.

Suppliers of labels are expected to comply with the current regs. But if you have labels about which you are not sure, email a copy to Philippa at Dorsetforyou.gov and she or one of her colleagues will advise.

The smallest font must be 1.2mm measuring a lower case ‘x’, and we are exempt from supplying nutritional information as we are selling an unprocessed single ingredient product. We must show the name of the food; a best before date (this is up to the producer, there are no guidelines for honey); the net quantity; the manufacturer’s name and address (the ‘post card’ test can be used. If you put the address on a post card and posted it, would it find you?); metric then imperial weight (but you do not have to put the imperial weight); short weight is an offence, over weight is not; there is no prescribed quantity in which honey must be sold, providing that it is clearly stated you can sell any weight that you like.

There will be no Brexit driven change for two years, and Philippa expects little change after that.

The Honey Regulations (England) 2003 specify that you must use the correct name ‘Honey’. You can say ‘Blossom Honey’, ‘Heather Honey’ etc, but the product must be predominately that ingredient. ‘Floral’ is acceptable as is a regional name such as ‘Dorset’, Hampshire’ honey. A question was asked “People are asking for raw honey”. All unprocessed honey is raw so the answer, pointless though it may be is “Yes, it’s raw honey”. The honey must be wholesome, not fermenting and have no strange tastes or odours. You cannot make any health claims at all for the product, that is illegal. If it were found that your honey was polluted by pesticides, if you had no control over the administration of the pesticide, you would not be prosecuted.

If you sell a reasonable amount of honey, the use of batch numbers, where the batch is discrete and identifiable is a good idea, so if there is a problem, only that batch need be recalled.

But in all her years as a Trading Standards Officer, Philippa has never known a bee-keeper to be prosecuted.