

Bee health crucial

BY LORNE HEPWORTH, THE STARPHOENIX APRIL 24, 2012 2:05 AM

Re: 'Likely culprit' found in honeybee collapse (SP, April 10). Pollinator health is a pivotal part of agriculture and Canada's plant science industry, which has a natural interest in working to preserve the health of pollinators, takes the issue very seriously.

Renowned Canadian researchers concur that the stressors causing colony losses are many, varied and probably interrelated. Research shows pollinators face significant stress from multiple factors including parasites, diseases, lack of genetic diversity and impacts such as the transport of managed colonies. Thus pollinator health must be viewed from a broad perspective. Otherwise efforts to promote bee health will be in vain.

Both the study from Harvard School of Public Health and those published in Science magazine did not account for real-world factors that affect bee and colony health. Neither study bothered to address the disparity between their results and those of earlier studies that demonstrated no adverse effects at field-relevant concentrations.

The plant science industry supports further research involving pollinator health.

However, the weight of evidence from other studies that show no association between properly used pesticides, and overall bee health must also be considered.

In-depth research into pesticides is conducted from a very early stage to minimize any harmful impact on beneficial insects like bees. Pollinators are further protected through Canada's rigorous pesticide regulatory system, which includes the review of a comprehensive set of more than 200 studies before a pesticide is allowed on the market.

Contrary to what the article assumes, both organic and conventionally grown foods use pesticides approved through Health Canada.

Lorne Hepworth President, CropLife Canada

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