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## Ritz says beekeepers will have to wait for ban of controversial pesticide

By Kelsey Johnson | Jul 20, 2013 10:27 am |  1 Comments

Canadian beekeepers will have to wait on a final report on bee health before the federal government will consider banning the use of controversial pesticides, Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz said Friday.

Speaking to reporters in Halifax Friday, Ritz said the decision to ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides must be based on sound science in the field report, currently being led by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), a division of Health Canada.

"Certainly, we're watching with interest what they do," Ritz said when asked if the topic had been discussed at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Halifax, which wrapped up Friday afternoon.

"We're hopeful the report will be out sooner rather than later and we're understanding they're doing everything they can to get it out as quickly as they can," he said, adding reports of this nature are known to take time.

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In May, PMRA officials told the House agriculture committee the final report would not be completed until 2018.

Those results should come sooner, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne told her colleagues when raising the issue at the Halifax meeting.

However, when asked if the Premier's efforts to move the release date up had been successful, the Premier's press secretary Gabrielle Gallant said no new deadline had been set as of yet.

But beekeepers, particularly those from Ontario and Quebec, say that's too long. With apiarists in those provinces reporting higher than average bee losses, ranging between 20 – 60 per cent, they say **they can't wait any longer.**

These losses simply aren't sustainable, Ontario Beekeepers Association President Dan Davidson has repeatedly told iPolitics. Something needs to be done.

That something, he said, is a ban on neonicotinoid pesticides –commonly used as a seed treatment on corn, canola, and soybeans – before next planting season.

That ban should be similar to the European Union's moratorium, which partially suspends the use of the pesticides for two years, he



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said while briefing fellow beekeepers on the issue at their annual summer meeting last week.

Canadian beekeepers want a moratorium that is, at a minimum, three years in length. Three years is the industry estimated half life of neonicotinoid pesticides, although that number is disputed, with some studies saying the pesticides could remain the environment for upwards of 17 years.

But on Friday, Minister Ritz said beekeepers should wait for the research to be completed before jumping to conclusions. "There are a number of factors that enter into the bee mortality here in Canada, as well as around the world," he said.

"The early winter, late spring it's a part of it. There's a number of new diseases and mites the bees are taking on as well as pesticide residue and so on."

But those who deal directly with the insects on a regular basis say they've dealt with mites for years. "We know what mites look like," one beekeeper said while discussing the issue at the Ontario Beekeepers Associations annual summer meeting last week. "We're out working with the bees on a regular basis. These deaths aren't being caused by mites."

Besides, said Davidson, there is already evidence from multiple sources, including the PMRA, that shows the pesticides are toxic to bees. All you have to do is look at the registration papers that date back to 2004, he explained at the meeting.

This lack of action by the PMRA is "completely unacceptable, especially with all the research that is out there. [The PMRA] knows exactly what's going on," he said.

More than 300 peer reviewed studies, including one recent Canadian study, on the issue have been conducted, said Davidson, of which 96 per cent show the pesticides are harmful to bees.

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Any prohibition against pest control products is not necessary. Here are the facts. Between April and June 2012, Health Canada received a small number of reports of bee losses from across southern Ontario, involving a mere 40 bee-keepers, as well as 1 report from Quebec. At present there are 2,900 bee-keepers in Ontario, therefore, the affected bee-keepers represent less than 1.5 per cent of all bee-keepers in Ontario. The information evaluated to date suggests that insecticides used on treated corn seeds contributed to many of the bee losses. Health Canada has issued a document entitled reducing risk from treated seeds which recommends Best Management Practices for corn growers. This document is archived on The Pesticide Truths Web-Site. <http://wp.me/p1jq40-2ba> Overall, there is no evidence to suggest a link between insecticides called neonicotinoids and bee deaths, or bee colony collapse disorder. Overall, neonicotinoid insecticides do not harm bees. It is far more likely that bee-keepers themselves are harming bees, and not neonicotinoid insecticides. When used properly by growers, with Best Management Practices, neonicotinoid insecticides cause no harm, and do not hurt bees. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2BA> <http://wp.me/p1jq40-6H8> WILLIAM H. GATHERCOLE AND NORAH G <http://pesticidetruths.com/> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2rr>

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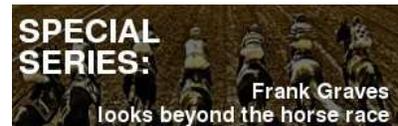


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