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## Ontario, Quebec beekeepers push provinces to ban controversial pesticide » iPOLITICS

By Kelsey Johnson | Jul 5, 2013 9:15 am | | 2 Comments



The queen bee is surrounded by workers in a beehive in Mirabel, Que. CP/Paul Chiasson

Beekeepers in Ontario and Quebec are demanding provincial officials ban a controversial insecticide immediately, arguing the toxic chemicals are deadly to their industry.

In a letter made public earlier this week, both the Ontario Beekeepers Association and the Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec are asking provincial officials "immediately suspend the use of neonicotinoid pesticides."

Neonicotinoids have been widely used as a seed treatment on corn, canola and soybean crops since 2004.

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But beekeepers argue science, and first-hand experience, has shown the chemicals are highly toxic to bees. With apiarists in both provinces continuing to report higher than average bee losses (ranging between 20 – 60 per cent), the groups insist these insecticides must be banned before next planting season.

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"The continued used of these pesticides threatens our beekeeping industry, pollination of our fruits and vegetables, contamination of our ground water and persistent buildup of toxins in our soils," the letter reads. "We are losing colonies daily." These losses are simply not sustainable, it adds.

While some scientist are hesitant to make a direct link between the pesticide and bee mortality rates, at least one Canadian study has **sided with the beekeepers**.

In a recent study, University of Laval master's student Olivier Samson-Robert, argued neonicotinoids are contributing to higher bee deaths, particularly during planting season. Bees are most at risk during seeding time when bees and flowers are coated with contaminated dust particles, he said. High particle levels in the pollinator's drinking water are also of concern, he said.

Earlier this year, the European Union partially suspended neonicotinoid use for two years after reviewing more than 30 scientific studies. Now, Ontario and Quebec beekeepers want Canada to do the same.

"There's a lot in the environment, this stuff does not break down quickly," Ontario Beekeeper Association President Dan Davidson said Thursday.

"We need a ban for at least three years for it to get cleaned out of the environment to see what the difference on bees will be," he said. The half-life of neonicotinoids is estimated to be a minimum of three years.

While Davidson admits a national ban is unlikely — prairie apiarist are just not seeing the same level of losses as their eastern counterparts — some beekeepers need a provincial ban.

"I think we're probably better off getting a provincial ban to happen," he said. "The dose (of neonicotinoid pesticides) on a corn seed is double the dose on a canola seed and canola is the prominent crop in the West. Pretty certain they will see problems eventually, but it's just not happening yet."

"It's more of a Quebec, Ontario problem at this point for sure," Davidson said.

It's not the first time beekeepers have **voiced concerns about neonicotinoid pesticides**. Before rising for the summer, the House of Commons Agriculture Committee was in the midst of examining Canadian bee health. Their final report is expected to be tabled in the fall.

The severity of the issue has not escaped provincial officials either. Pollination is responsible for 70 per cent of cultivated plants, and for 35 per cent of humans' overall food consumption. Currently, there is a provincial working group discussing bee health in Quebec. Its membership includes representatives from all sides of the issue including beekeepers, farmers, and the chemical industry.

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Meanwhile, Ontario officials confirmed they are in the process of creating a similar working group. That group is expected to start round table discussions on the issue July 17th. The issue is also expected to come up when provincial and federal agriculture ministers meet in Halifax for their annual meeting in two weeks time.

While talking about the issue is all well and good, said Davidson, in the meantime bees continue to die. "Everyone is willing to talk about it, there's not a problem there. There's a problem with taking something off the market that people are using."

"They're getting accustomed to using these chemicals... and they don't want them taken away," he said.

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Any prohibition of pest control products is not necessary. 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> Additionally, in 2013, Health Canada will assess how well the Best Management Practices are working. Overall, there is no evidence to suggest a link between insecticides called neonicotinoids and bee deaths, or bee colony collapse



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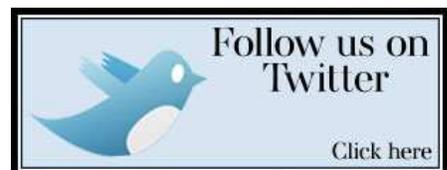
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disorder. Overall, neonicotinoid insecticides do not harm bees. It is far more likely that bee-keepers are harming bees, and not neonicotinoid insecticides. When used properly, with Best Management Practices, neonicotinoid insecticides cause no harm, and do not hurt bees. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2BA>  
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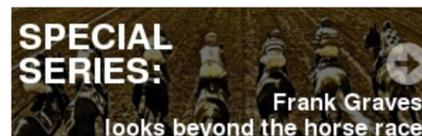
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Europe has already banned the toxic chemicals that are killing the bees but not backwards Canada - we are still studying it. Imagine that. How many bees have to die before they believe. If they don't believe scientists whose advice are they taking? Scary bunch at the top, scary in that they really don't seem to understand things as normal people do. Can't wait to see the back of the them.

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