

Opinion / Readers' Letters

## Overall bee health a complex issue

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**Re: Ontario bees need swift action to save them from killer insecticides: Editorial, May 13**

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A recent editorial suggested that “old-fashioned co-operation” can help protect bees from unintended exposure to dust from insecticide-treated corn seed. I couldn’t agree more.

This is why the plant science industry, which includes the makers of pesticides, has been diligently working with beekeepers, growers, regulators and other parties to ensure bees are protected while farmers are given the tools they need to produce a healthy and abundant crop.

The spring of 2012 saw extremely unusual weather conditions in Ontario that led to the release of more seed dust than usual. Our industry has developed a comprehensive set of best management practices to help growers protect bees from exposure to dust when planting corn this year. It is important that we ensure incidents like those that happened in Ontario last spring are not repeated.

On the issue of bee health more broadly, the most recent numbers from Statistics Canada show that bee populations in this country are not in decline. The reality is, overall bee health is a complex issue that scientists largely agree is impacted by a number of factors here in Canada, including hive pests and parasites, disease, inadequate diet and climate change. Our industry has a role to play in addressing some of these challenges, including developing new and improved hive health products.

It has become far too easy to blame any reported bee deaths on pesticides, a conclusion that is simply not supported by scientific data. Certain regions of the world that do not use neonicotinoids are experiencing major bee losses while others that make widespread use of these tools have healthy, thriving bee populations.

Canada has one of the most vibrant agricultural sectors in the world, enabled in part through our science-based regulatory system. While it’s easy to get wrapped up in the rhetoric around bee health and pesticide bans, we encourage the Canadian government to stick to science-based decision-making.

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