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Ontario to examine pesticides as possible cause of bee deaths

An expert panel of farmers, beekeepers and industry heavyweights will look at how to reduce honeybee exposure to highly toxic neonicotinoid pesticides

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CARLOS OSORIO / TORONTO STAR

David Schuit, owner of Saugeen Country Honey in Elmwood, Ont., believes bee deaths can be blamed on the type of insecticides used on corn around his bee yards.

By: [Alex Ballingall](#) News, Published on Tue Jul 09 2013

Rising clamour over the deaths of Ontario honeybees has prompted the Liberal government to look into widely-used pesticides as a suspected cause.

An expert panel will look at how to prevent bee exposure to neonicotinoid pesticides, which are highly toxic to bees and coated on virtually all corn and soybean seeds planted in the province, the province announced Tuesday.

The Bee Health Working Group will include farmers, beekeepers, scientists and neonicotinoid makers Bayer Crop Science and Syngenta.

"There have been a lot of concerns raised, and a lot of talk about neonicotinoids," said Gabrielle Gallant, press secretary for Premier Kathleen Wynne in her capacity as Minister of Agriculture.

"We want to make sure any steps we take are based on the best possible evidence," Gallant said.

Neonicotinoids have come under increased scrutiny as a contributor to declining bee populations in North America and Europe. In April, the European

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Union approved a two-year neonicotinoid ban, and days later, a U.S. government [report](#) identified pesticides as one of four major contributors to bee declines, alongside parasites and disease, genetics and poor nutrition.

Meanwhile, Health Canada's [Pest Management Regulatory Agency](#) has been "re-evaluating" use of the pesticides since last June.

It expects the review to take "several years."

On May 16, Wynne sent a letter to the federal health and agriculture ministers in May, demanding quicker completion of the re-evaluation.

The letter cited a study last year by the PMRA found traces of neonicotinoids in 70 per cent of the dead bees tested, while the pesticide turned up on 80 per cent of apiaries visited in Ontario.

"People shouldn't be surprised. Pesticides are designed to (kill) insects, and bees are insects," said Ernesto Guzman, head of the [Honey Bee Research Centre](#) at the University of Guelph.

"The issue of debate here is how much or what proportion of the die-off cases can be attributed directly to these pesticides?"

Many beekeepers in Ontario, however, [are convinced neonicotinoids are killing their livelihood](#). Honeybee populations in the province have declined by 30 to 35 per cent every year since 2007, said Guzman.

"We must enact a ban before the next planting season. Our industry simply cannot sustain these losses," said [Ontario Beekeepers' Association](#) President Dan Davidson in a statement Tuesday.

"Allowing the status quo to remain would spell tragedy for the bees that pollinate our fruits and vegetables."

Terry Daynard, a corn and soybean farmer outside Guelph, said the pesticides significantly improve yields, and that taking them away could put crops at risk.

"If these seed treatments were taken off the market, it would be like playing roulette," he said. "There's got to be a way around this."

The bee panel is slated to make recommendations by next spring, in time for planting season.

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norah.gfon



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The corporations care about profit, the politicians care about the corporations & the public cares about-not much unless it affects them in an immediate way.

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foxprof 4 hours ago

We continue to assume that no matter how we change the genetic structure of our edible plants or add pest/herbicides to our environment (to maximize yields and profits from them) that it will have only marginal effects on it. We have limited studies over a relatively short period of time and we also assume that what does not appear to affect the environment over a short period will continue to not effect it over a longer period of time. Time to read Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring"; it is still very relevant; just change the agents of change. To locamedia: And the research sources that you are going to quote to back up your statement are??????



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