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OP-ED

A Stinging Rebuke of Anti-Agriculture Environmental Activists

Op-ed by Jeff Stier

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Sunday by **Jeff Stier**
National Center for Public Policy Research

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This photo provided by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation shows some of the thousands of dead and dying bees found in the parking lot of a shopping center in Wilsonville, Ore., southwest of Portland. • AP Photo/The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

An estimated one hundred people braved scorching outdoor temperatures to attend a memorial service earlier this month. The honorees, however, were not heroes, community figures, or even human. They were bees apparently killed by accident in Wilsonville, Ore. Deemed a "bee kill," the insects were found dead in a Target parking lot after a pesticide was sprayed on trees infested with aphids.

Media attention to the incident has been heightened by anti-agricultural pesticide activists trying to score political points off the dead bugs. According to experts, however, the problem wasn't the pesticide, it was the application.

"The mistake was that the trees were sprayed while they were in full bloom," said Dr. Dewey Caron, an affiliate professor of horticulture at Oregon State University. The pesticide was sprayed during a window of time in which bees were most attracted to the trees. "It was a bad oversight," he said. "They should well have been aware that there could have been some collateral damage on some unintended targets."

It turns out that failing to read and follow the labels is a big threat to bees. According to Tim Wessels, president of a beekeeper association in Portland, improper use of legal retail pesticides contribute to the death of four out of every 10 urban pollinating bees. Bees play an important role in pollinating many agricultural crops, from fruits and nuts such as oranges, blueberries, apples and almonds, to row crops such cotton, canola, and soy.

Instead of blaming the apparently inept users, the Oregon Department of Agriculture is blaming an entire class of pesticides. The agency has instituted a six-month ban on spraying any plants with any

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 Sen. Gordon Nelson founded Earth Day in 1970 to raise awareness of environmental issues. The idea took off, and part...

 Civil Liberties

product containing dinotefuran, the active ingredient in the pesticide, Safari, thought responsible for the dead bees. In its statement of justification, the department illogically claims that the temporary ban will protect pollinating insects till their investigation is complete.

-  Drugs
-  Activity
-  Economy



WHGANDNORAHG

-  Gay Rights
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As long as people fail to heed product labels, misuse will have consequences. This is true whether the label warns, "do not ingest" or "not for use on blooming crops or weeds." By banning products containing dinotefuran, the Oregon agriculture department is blaming a product for simple (and blatant) human error. That's like banning electricity because improper use can cause electrocution. While it is truly unfortunate that bees were killed by misuse of a safe product, subsequent regulatory over-reach over the deaths is a different matter.

Why the hysteria? Activists, already engaged in litigation, lobbying, media campaigns and fundraising are seeking a broad ban on the class of pesticides that were misused in Oregon. With bee memorial services, Facebook pages in honor of the dead bees, and Twitter hash tags, they've created an environment where their advocacy-driven claims are taken at face value.

Consider the wildly differing claims about the number of bees actually killed. Estimates have ranged from 25,000 to more than 50,000. A spokesman for the Oregon Department of Agriculture admitted that the agency never even attempted to count the bees. Instead, they relied entirely on a claim by an advocacy group, the Xerces Society, which reached the 50,000 number by extrapolating based on a count of bees in one confined area. Now, that unchallenged estimate has turned into unquestioned fact which became the basis for drastic regulatory action.

Adding to the absurdity is the fact that in the name of protecting pollinators, activists are in fact going to harm them. If activists who prefer fear to facts had their way, the class of pesticides to which dinetefuran belongs - " neonicotinoids - would be banned.

Nevermind the fact that "neonics" are a safer alternative to other pesticides, which ironically, activists also sought to ban. As environmental economist Richard Tren explains, "If neonicotinoids are banned, farmers will have to use older insecticides such as organophosphates, which are potentially more harmful to the environment. These older insecticides have been banned in some countries. Without alternative or better means of pest control, crop yields would likely decrease. More land would be needed for agriculture, leaving less habitat for wildlife - including wild bees."

By banning a safe product, the Oregon agriculture department is playing into activists' hands who want to demonize an entire class of pesticides that are safe when used properly.

The problem in this bee kill wasn't the product, it was the misuse. Instead of demanding that a useful product that has been tested extensively be banned, activists would do more for bees by mounting a public information campaign about the importance of heeding label instructions. But they haven't, and they won't. Perhaps it is time to question not the pesticides, but the activists.

Jeff Stier is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research, in Washington, D.C., and heads its Risk Analysis Division. Follow him on Twitter at @JeffASTier.

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Yes

Somewhat

No

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Ryuo

Sun

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A bigger threat: <http://dhmo.org/>          WHGANDNORAHG

↑2 • Vote Up ↻9 Replies



Rocker

Sun

Ever notice on the product labels that companies apply usually don't address the use while judgement impaired by stupid.

3 really good consumer products would be a 'Stupid Repellent', a 'Stupid Indicator', and an electronic device one can wear that alarms when one is about to do something stupid.

LOL

↑4



Thunderchicken

Sun

That killer should be taken away from everyone!!!

↑1



harold_lloyd

Sun

Please tell me that you already know that it's water....

↑2



Rocker

Sun

@Rocker - I could really make use of the 'Stupid Alarm' device here lately.

↑4



Ryuo

Sun

@harold_lloyd ssh!

I would add to Rocker's product list a humor indicator, with different colors. Blue for dirty jokes, etc. Nah, the EPA would ban them.

↑1

[↻ Load more replies](#)



Arumizy

Sun

Got to love leftist activist.

↑2 • Vote Up ↻7 Replies

Comment removed for [Engagement Etiquette](#) violation. Replies may also be deleted.

Sun



dontmatter

Sun

@harold_lloyd that was rude.

Comment removed for [Engagement Etiquette](#) violation. Replies may also be deleted.

Sun



Real4WheelDrv

Sun

@dontmatter Yes it was, but as long as Arumizy keeps up his anti-fat/anti-foodstamp rants while using that as his avatar, a dig here and there is to be expected.

Arumizy

Sun

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	<p>@Real4WheelDrv And if i was fat on food stamps you might have a point, but since i work to earn the money i use to make my money you point is lost. People should not be getting fat on food stamps, its a suppliment not a way of life.</p>	Activity			WHGANDNORAHG
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↑ 1

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harold_lloyd

Sun

Know your source.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Center_...

The problem of bee death and subsequent colony collapse is not a trivial issue.

Right now, bees are dying off in numbers that will result in a loss of apian services if the current trend continues.

If that doesn't scare you, then you should find out for yourself that the loss of bees means a collapse of the world food production system.

It would be bad especially in the US, where so many of the crops we come to think of as commodities are bee pollinated.

I suspect that before long we will have laws that make it a crime to willfully harm bees. It will be another loss of freedom, but as pesticides get more potent, and our dependence on bees becomes apparent, it will be seen as necessary to our food security, which is already under pressure from drought and heat.

↑ 11 • Vote Up ↻ 17 Replies



HawkTheSlayer

Sun

Good post. It's hard for the average person to understand the complexity of the business or the science involved. Education is the key.

↑ 5



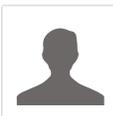
harold_lloyd

Sun

@HawkTheSlayer

And yet we're dumbing down education...

↑ 2



tomincali

Sun

darn that was rough voting you up.

we do need bees,yet most products if used as directed will not be around the bee colonies.

↑ 4



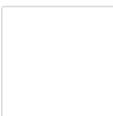
harold_lloyd

Sun

@tomincali

And yet we're developing crops that contain their own pesticide.

↑ 1



mountain-folk

Sun

@harold_lloyd I think we will see that the genetic modified seeds that have a pesticide incorporated into there DNA will prove to be the primary cause of the bee die off.

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	Your comment about the states having problems is an equally dangerous condition here in America.	Activity		 WHGANDNORAHG
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People do not realize that with no bees we will have no food; but the drug producers will report big profits.

↑2

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miketost

Sun

The destruction of bee's is a serious threat and precautions need to be taken. With out the bee's for pollination the food supply will be in serious trouble .That is what all the buzz is about.(pun intended)

↑4 • Vote Up [↻ 11 Replies](#)



harold_loyd

Sun

What are you, some kind of liberal? That's actually rational.

↑1



Rocker

Sun

@harold_loyd - That topic actually bridges the partisan ranks like gun control. It's an environmental, existence, farmer, thing. Go Organic!!!

↑2



harold_loyd

Sun

@Rocker

I wish we could just all go organic, but we can't.

Organic practices give us better food, but not enough of it.

Unless we want to start reducing the population, we have no choice but to use factory farming methods.

Will we divide society into those who can afford organic food and those who can't? Organic veggies vs McDonalds?

↑1



HawkTheSlayer

Sun

@Rocker

Lo!

True.

We can live without politicians but we can't live without honeybees!

Nice to see politix bring up national issues of relevancy and urgency.

↑2



Rocker

Sun

@harold_loyd - I have to start at the start. I use very little pasture additives. From there we use the 'Moo Poo' on gardens. A good cheap insect repellent is cucumber peelings. Veggie waste is turned right back to the Moo Cows.

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The Greener Side of Growth



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HawkTheSlayer

Sun

	<p>Whole heartedly agree. Beekeepers are the backbone of the agricultural community. They face many problems from tracheal and varroa mites, American and European foulbrood, and many other nature related woes. Events like this one are irresponsible. This has always been a huge problem in this nation.</p>	Forum	Activity			WHGANDNORAHG
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Today's American bee population is only half of what is was ten years ago. Pollination contracts have soared from \$35/hive to \$145/hive in some locales.
 This op-Ed hits home for me.
 Although I'm down to hobbyist class today, at one time I ran 110 hives.
 USDA will only through token research into the devastating causal factors, while they are ultimately responsible for allowing the trucking of colonies across the border into Mexico and back into the US knowing the mite infestation was rampant in Mexico.
 Education is needed.
 Beekeeping is complex.
 Pesticides are only part of the issue.
 In general, herbicides kill more bees.
 Bees work many so called "weeds".
 ↑ 3



seedtick Sun

Well, I wonder what kind of person they had overseeing the spraying of the trees. I know that city slickers know little about such things, but then you would think a qualified person would do the spraying. Most every one of us who grew up in the country with gardens and fields know better than this silly act. That's why certain insecticides require a license to purchase and use. But, READ THE DIRECTIONS ON EVERY INSECTICIDE BOTTLE before you use it. Even something a common as Seven Dust can be deadly to the bees that pollinate your crops.
 ↑ 4 • Vote Up ↻ 3 Replies



harold_loyd Sun

Target likely has a pest control contract with some local company that calls for spraying the trees a specified number of times.
 Someone in an office, who never looks at what's going on in nature, gave the crew a work order.
 The crew boss didn't notice or didn't care that the trees were blooming, and just wanted to get the job done.
 Poof.



seedtick Sun

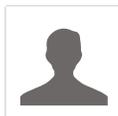
@harold_loyd Or....one of the low-bidding contractors who uses illegal alien labor just handed it to his foreman, Jorge, who stopped at the end of the day and did the job for extra pay.



harold_loyd Sun

@seedtick

Either way, it comes down to dead bees, and you forgot to say that 'Jorge' was an illegal.



Buckfan4life2 Sun

Does anyone in this government know what the hell they are doing? I have known for years we have had a serious problem . When I was young I could never go barefooted in the yard from all the bees on the clover. Now when you see a yard with clover you very seldom see a honey bee. I made my son years ago stop stepping on

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them or catching them in jars and letting them die. This is a serious matter and everyone needs to take it serious. Home Debates Quizzes Guests Forum Activity

1 • Vote Up 5 Replies

WHGANDNORAHG



harold_loyd Sun

The govt knows about it, and they working very hard to find a fix. Not just here, but around the world.
You don't hear politicians talk about it because they don't understand it and they don't know how to fix it.



HawkTheSlayer Sun

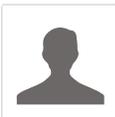
Most people have no idea how serious its become. It's taken its toll in a stealth but decimating manner as almost all wild colonies have perished, also.
It's caused northern beekeepers to completely change strategy.
In years past it was common practice to sacrifice the colonies for financial reasons. In other words to overwinter the bees in those climates about 70 lbs of honey would have to remain in the "supers". These are old figures and prices are much higher today. 70 lbs of honey at 50cents/lb=\$35.
In the spring they purchase a 3lb package from a southern beekeeper for \$ 20-25. Net gain,at least \$10 hive.
\$10 times 1000 hives=\$10,000 in extra revenue. Some outfits run tens of thousands of hives.
With the advent of the mite infestation, the package industry has all but dwindled because of the two factors of fear of mite transmission to uninfected colonies(it was too late anyway) and the sheer fact so many colonies are lost we spend more time making "nukes" and divisions just to maintain the existing numbers of colonies already in place.
Now in northern climates, almost all colonies are overwintered.
I have one yard about 8 miles from my house on 40 acres.
Things are better today as most farming have ceased there and much of the acreage has been converted back to pasture land.
Here at my house in town, its the same situation.
I can sit in the middle of a clover patch all day and not see a honeybee.
Not a single one.

2



Buckfan4life2 Sun

@HawkTheSlayer Thanks for the info. I bet you use to be a beekeeper?



HawkTheSlayer Sun

@Buckfan4life2
Still am.
See the post. Ran 110 colonies at one time.



HawkTheSlayer Sun

@Buckfan4life2
My bad. I guess I shouldn't be using terminology like " yards"= hive locations
And
"Nukes"= 3 frame starter hives with a laying queen.
My mind sometimes takes things for granted.
Incidentally, as HL mentioned , new info is arriving on the scene. They've isolated a suspected viral infection which is probably spread by the mites themselves.

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ST_Louie_Sue

Nanny state stay away from my pesticides and herbicides. They ARE safe if used as directed. Only an idiot would do otherwise.

2 • Vote Up 2 Replies



flech

11 hr

Should we also stay away from your cigarettes, dioxins, DDTs and leaded gasoline? Stop living with your head in the sand and realize that new research tells us that the things Man creates are deadly to the environment and if the environment dies, so do you and your loved ones.

1



ST_Louie_Sue

11 hr

@flech What is it you don't understand about personal responsibility? God gave me a brain and I use it well.



tomincali

Sun

first off these folks braved the heat? crap a lot of us work in it,nothing brave it is just what alot of us do,farmers are out there as well sometimes sunup to sundown.

from what i have seen over the decades,the farmers at one time could use just about anything they wanted and it did not kill off the bees back then,most would not put something on their produce that would hurt anyone,they do eat what they grow as we do,and they rely on bees so that would be like shooting yourself in the foot.

all things have to be used as directed or problems start,we had a nut in a crop duster soak our whole job down after being told not to do it while we were on the job,big fine,you bet yet he was not following directions,most things are labeled on their use and how to aply them.

1 • Vote Up 1 Reply



Colts333

Sun

I agree, it couldn't have been that hot there any way. And what about the world wide decline in bees, do they think its all caused by pesticides?



DARSB

Sun

Dinotefuran has been linked to the colony collapse syndrome of great recent concern, and not only when the bees are sprayed with it. There's a growing body of science indicating the stuff is lethal to colonies over large distances.

Blaming "inept users" for mass bee kills without consideration of the available data is not persuasive.

2



jeffreyknee

Sun

No because they could use a non-patented home remedy to spray blooming plants anytime of the year (to kill aphids and not bees): a mixture of water, vegetable oil and liquid dish soap in a spray device. But done when its not raining outside. This will kill tiny pests but not bees.

But nobody makes money on home remedies and nobody advertises them in commercial media.

1

mimi57

Sun

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	<p>Banning DDT in Africa has resulted in 1.1 child deaths a year, and that's only children. Malaria is an unnecessary human tragedy and a very costly one also. There are many safe pesticides,</p>	<p>Forum</p>	<p>Activity</p>	<p>  WHGANDNORAHG</p>
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Brown eyed girl

my father-in-law sold them, graduated w/ a degree in agriculture and minored in Chemistry.
 If used properly, by professionals, pesticides work well. All third world countries should be using DDT. In my opinion, it would save the lives of millions of people. I am all for 'natural' solutions, however on a magnitude scale , like in Africa, etc., it makes sense to me.
 ↑ 2 • Vote Up ↪ 3 Replies



mimi57 Sun
 * million* deaths . Geesh!!!(:



Zazziness Sun
 Have you read up on the side effects of DDT?



mimi57 Sun
 @Zazziness ...Yes, and it's better than billions of people in third world country's dying...Only not to a Liberal, they will never 'get' it! That's why I think it's a mental illness. H e l l o!
 ↑ 2



ErnestPayne Sun
 When used properly is the operative phrase. The stuff is used to kill fleas and ticks,etc on plants and your pets. Considering that the stuff comes with instructions I would certainly only allow people trained to use the stuff handle it. Not just sell it, willy nilly, to the great unwashed. Good for the protestors in bringing this to the forefront. They may have been wrong this one time but better safe than sorry.



Real4WheelDrv Sun
 The death of pollinating bees worldwide is on its way to becoming a dangerous problem, regardless of cause.
 ↑ 1



BravoJuliet Sun
 For a lot of us who farm, we know you have certain windows of use when spraying insecticides for exactly this reason...you never want to kill you beneficiary insects like the bees. The sellers need to put big idiot signs on the shelf next to products like this...very important ton read the label with this stuff.
 ↑ 2



jeepstermike Sun
 Some of the commercial pesticides IS linked to colony collapse in bees, runoff poisons the area ecosystems and eventually ends up in the water table. It IS linked to tumours and cancers, male infertility and superweeds are emerging that are resistant to these chemicals. It's funny how a certain big chemical company has a large amount of ex high level employees working in key positions in the government. The FDA, dept of Ag and even a supreme court justice. There are other Agriculture techniques that don't involve heavy duty poisons brought to by the same folks that gave us agent orange.
 ↑ 1 • Vote Up ↪ 1 Reply



HawkTheSlayer Sun

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	I'm in total agreement with your observations and views. Just one note: "Colony Collapse", is a specific term used to describe the losses from varroa, tracheal mite infestation and more recently " disappearing bee syndrome". Losses incurred from pesticides, herbicides and other factors including weather are identifiable and classed as either specific or general losses. Most of these losses are preventable with education providing anyone really gives a damn about the future of their food supply. It's not easy to stand against the Cargill's, Monsanto's, and ADM's money supply and lobby.	Home Debates Quizzes Guests Forum Activity	  WHGANDNORAHG
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used to describe the losses from varroa, tracheal mite infestation and more recently " disappearing bee syndrome".
 Losses incurred from pesticides, herbicides and other factors including weather are identifiable and classed as either specific or general losses.
 Most of these losses are preventable with education providing anyone really gives a damn about the future of their food supply.
 It's not easy to stand against the Cargill's, Monsanto's, and ADM's money supply and lobby.

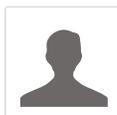
↑ 1



fraps

Sun

One problem is that the overuse of warning labels has the effect of most people totally ignoring them. Blame this on the lawyers and congress. If warning labels became simpler, smaller, and more relevant accidents like this one would be less likely to occur. A big "do not use on" label would have been read. Two dozen lines of information in tiny type is ignored.



SenseOfFair

Sun

Products that in general have useful use but are dangerous are very often restricted. Do the same.



Zazziness

Sun

First, I find it interesting the author was evasive about the fact he works for a conservative think tank with a definite political agenda. Second, why don't conservatives have any interest in conserving our environment.

Our agriculture industry is overladen with pesticide and herbicide use, following the instructions or not. And the European honeybee is teetering on the edge, as colonies die off more and more each year. Ubiquitous pesticide residue? No one knows. But we do know if we manage to extinguish them there goes every crop that requires them for pollination -- and that's just about everything except the grains. I think we should be safe rather than sorry. Very surprising that's not a conservative view.

↑ Vote Up ↩ 2 Replies



HawkTheSlayer

Sun

Your second paragraph is on spot.
 Your first is biased jibberish.
 You never see the forest for the trees.



Zazziness

18 hr

@HawkTheSlayer I doubt very much that your disapproval makes writing jibberish. It just makes it a statement you don't agree with.

I am tired of politicians and those who have a political agenda trying to control science. If I want to know about the environmental impact of pesticides, I'm not going to turn to a conservative political group for its opinion any more than I'm going to ask a fox how to keep the chickens safe at night.

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Phreakwars

Sun

Lets let all the bees die. They say after the bees are all gone, humans only have about 4 years left before they are gone too... Bet some liberal scientist who likes

	facts and went to college and had a liberal professor said this, lets prove em wrong an kill off all the bees	Debate	Debates	Quizzes	Guests	Forum	Activity		 WHGANDNORAHG
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