



## Comment: Neonicotinoid ban not the best option

Posted 18 mins ago by [Rod Scarlett](#) in [Comment](#), [News & Opinion](#), [Opinion](#)

Recent articles in the *Co-operator* seem to suggest all beekeepers are calling for a ban on neonicotinoid seed treatments and that is far from the truth.

While two of our member associations (the Ontario Beekeeper Association and the Federation des Apiculteurs du Quebec) have publicly asked their respective governments to ban neonicotinoid seed treatments, this strategy has yet to be adopted by the majority of members of the Canadian Honey Council.

The council has preferred a different course of action to protect beekeeper interests, and has spent a great deal of time and energy addressing the matter of neonicotinoids and the dusting events of 2012 in Quebec and Ontario.

While initial claims were directed towards an incident, more recent claims are being targeted towards the systemic nature of the pesticide and its sublethal impacts. In 2012, at the request of the Ontario Beekeeper Association, the council formed a Bee



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Incident committee, which has put forward a number of recommendations (which can be found at [www.honeycouncil.ca](http://www.honeycouncil.ca)). These recommendations represent a national, co-operative perspective and were vetted by all board members and approved by every provincial representative.

The committee took the view that co-operation and association with all those involved in the agricultural sector will yield greater benefits for beekeepers versus an adversarial approach. In turn, the council's board did not attempt to interfere with the actions that individual associations were taking. Members of the council have considerable sympathy for the beekeepers that were, and are, being impacted by corn seed treatments. Those beekeepers who are situated in and around the nearly 3.3 million acres of feed corn grown in Ontario and Quebec are experiencing situations that other beekeepers from across Canada are either not experiencing or not reporting.

It is hoped that as acute and sublethal effects of pesticide poisoning are better understood and identified, more beekeepers will come forward. Nevertheless, there were over 21.3 million acres of seed-treated canola planted in Canada last year, and there were no reported incidents of neonicotinoid poisoning. In addition, there were millions of other acres planted with crops that use the seed treatments such as soybeans, and again, no reported incidents, at least none that the council is aware of.

While the sublethal impacts may be proven in these crops, they have not been evident to date, at least in widely accepted scientific form.

While it may seem contrary to some, we have been working with CropLife Canada in putting forward information, and BMP and IPM recommendations to minimize the risk. We have been working with, and gathering information from national commodity organizations like the Grain Growers of Canada, the Canola Council of Canada, and the Grain Growers of Ontario — all of whom are directly impacted by seed treatments. We have been working with the equipment manufacturers' association, the PMRA, and other interested parties to ensure beekeepers' needs and representations are effectively heard and recognized.



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We also have been looking at the alternatives should a national ban or moratorium be placed on neonicotinoids, and how that would impact beekeepers across the country and our fellow agricultural producers.

As a national organization we are aware there is a vast array of interests and opinions and try as we might to support all provincial actions, sometimes the national perspective needs to take precedence. The council will continue to work toward getting answers, whether through sponsoring additional research as with the Corn Dust Research Consortium, working with the PMRA in ensuring its investigation covers all the necessary bases, working with chemical companies urging them to develop more pollinator-friendly products, working with farmers in engaging their awareness of the importance of bees, and most importantly, working for and with beekeepers to ensure their livelihood is nurtured, protected and sustained.

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