Beekeeper Speaks Out against Anti-Pesticide Campaigns

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Anyone worried about [honey bee survival](http://safechemicalpolicy.org/honeybees/) should read the [piece by Canadian beekeeper Lee Townsend](http://www.guelphmercury.com/opinion-story/4417531-canada-s-bees-are-thriving-public-needs-facts-not-fear) in the *Guelph Mercury* newspaper. In recent years, beekeepers have seen some of their hives disappear without much explanation, a phenomenon referred to as”colony collapse disorder.”

Green activists have used this situation to randomly initiate bans on various pesticide products in the name of saving the bees, and their latest target is a class of chemicals calledneonicotinoids. But we can’t help the bees if we continue to address the wrong causes. As Townsend points out, honey bees do just fine in many places where neonicotinoids are used, such as Canada. This suggests that neonicotinoids are the wrong target. Not only will bans divert our focus from finding the real cause or causes of colony collapse disorder, it will harm the ability of farmers to produce food.

Reading Townsend’s [entire article](http://www.guelphmercury.com/opinion-story/4417531-canada-s-bees-are-thriving-public-needs-facts-not-fear) on this topic is highly recommended, but here are some highlights that you shouldn’t miss:

No, the newest and most preventable threat comes from the mistaken alliance some beekeepers are forming with environmental activist groups who would turn farmers into enemies and drive a wedge between the farming and beekeeping communities that depend on each other for their livelihoods. …

Unfortunately, we [public officials and bee keepers] haven’t been able to work together to find out what is really happening, in part due to the insertion of special interest groups like the Sierra Club. There is no denying that neonics, like any other pesticide, can be toxic to honeybees if misapplied. But these special interest groups have scared beekeepers, the public, and the media into believing these products are far worse than actual scientific data indicates. …

In addition, these special interest groups fail to acknowledge there are colonies in Ontario and Quebec that are exposed to neonics on both corn and soy, with zero problems. And look at Western Canada. On the Prairies, 70 per cent of Canada’s colonies forage canola without issue. We are even exposed to corn and soy, and except for four beekeepers in Manitoba in 2013, there have been no issues there either.

Clearly there is need for further research, including the health status of these colonies prior to neonic exposure and clear records of the management practices of beekeepers. Most non-beekeepers don’t realize that just as farmers use pesticides to keep pests off their crops, beekeepers use pesticides inside the hive to control for infestations such as varroa mites. There is nothing wrong with this, if it is done properly. But beekeepers should keep this in mind when they link arms with activist groups with a larger anti-pesticide agenda.

{ 5 comments… read them below or [add one](http://www.openmarket.org/2014/03/20/beekeeper-speaks-out-against-anti-pesticide-campaigns/#respond) }

http://0.gravatar.com/avatar/613432b38f6116a49a6b50dbed0995b2?s=44&d=&r=G**Dr. Summeroff** [March 20, 2014 at 11:02 am](http://www.openmarket.org/2014/03/20/beekeeper-speaks-out-against-anti-pesticide-campaigns/#comment-241414)

This article is a blatant misrepresentation of the facts. Lee Townsend ,whom I would be very surprised if he actually even wrote this, is a shill for the chem. industry. Alberta beekeepers imported 50,000 packages(starter beehives) and 100,000 queen bees from places like Australia and New Zealand in 2013 compared to 400 packages for Ontario(a self sufficient province). Yet this guy claims there is no bee problem in Alberta? Approx. 100,000 beehives are rented by Chemical companies (they own the seed companies) annually in Alberta so there are many beekeepers there who can’t or don’t want to know the truth. So no testing for Neonic. pesticide exposure is ever done in Alberta.  
All science and evidence clearly points to Neonic. pesticides as the cause of massive bee deaths in Ontario in 2012 and 2013.

[Editor: The above comment is long on alarmism and short on science. As Jon Entine recently explained in Forbes, growing scientific evidence suggests neonicotinoids are not the cause of bee deaths: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jonentine/2014/02/05/bee-deaths-reversal-as-evidence-points-away-from-neonics-as-driver-pressure-builds-to-rethink-ban/>]

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http://1.gravatar.com/avatar/36b9fc6c3416fd0a8e5011b43877dc04?s=44&d=&r=G**Bill** [March 21, 2014 at 5:23 pm](http://www.openmarket.org/2014/03/20/beekeeper-speaks-out-against-anti-pesticide-campaigns/#comment-241516)

I am having a hard time believing this guy is even a beekeeper, who should we form a alliance with? Syngenta and Bayer?

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http://1.gravatar.com/avatar/37eecae0e4c889cdb8be9686ab461475?s=44&d=&r=G**Albertabeek** [March 22, 2014 at 12:12 pm](http://www.openmarket.org/2014/03/20/beekeeper-speaks-out-against-anti-pesticide-campaigns/#comment-241567)

Dr. clueless decided that queen and package imports are an indicator of bee problems due to pesticides. Alberta historically killed all their hives before winter and imported packages from the continental US due to weather (another issue that Ontario is fighting against) We simply cannot rely on the weather to be warm enough to raise queens and build up splits for the spring and summer honey flows. But someone from southern Ontario may need a reminder like this year of what a Canadian winter is like. Mr. Townsend’s business does not involve canola pollination (a baseless attack), but in fact exports honey to world markets, where residue tolerance is low.  
There are 3 separate beekeeping research stations in Alberta. If the province with the largest number of hives had high bee losses due to systemics, the testing would be available right here.

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http://0.gravatar.com/avatar/613432b38f6116a49a6b50dbed0995b2?s=44&d=&r=G**Dr. Summeroff** [March 23, 2014 at 10:28 pm](http://www.openmarket.org/2014/03/20/beekeeper-speaks-out-against-anti-pesticide-campaigns/#comment-241663)

Things that make you say hmm…. “Lee Townsend says the loss of bee colonies across Canada has been devastating.  
“In the past four years we’ve seen losses of anywhere between 30 percent and 100 percent across the province, and it’s not isolated to Alberta—it’s also happened in other regions of the country as well.”” <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/canada/honeybee-deaths-spur-diagnostic-research-centre-59105.html>

[REPLY](http://www.openmarket.org/2014/03/20/beekeeper-speaks-out-against-anti-pesticide-campaigns/?replytocom=241663#respond)

http://1.gravatar.com/avatar/d3b03adbe16ee8422e73329211eab7fa?s=44&d=&r=G**Beekeeper** [March 24, 2014 at 7:07 pm](http://www.openmarket.org/2014/03/20/beekeeper-speaks-out-against-anti-pesticide-campaigns/#comment-241707)

I find Dr. Summeroff’s comments humorous. First off, Ontario is anything but self sufficient. Far more than 400 packages enter that province every year but they also import thousands of off-shore as well. Yes, Alberta relies on imported stock. That’s also why it represents close to 50% of the colonies in Canada. Ontario keeps claiming they can fill that void but they’ve had since 1988 to achieve this, and they have failed horribly. Before you critique AB, realize that without AB/SK/MB this industry would be doomed. Hobby beekeepers (which is what most of ON is) cannot sustain industry in Canada.

Second, the article linking the diagnostic centre in Beaverlodge is very accurate. In 2011. That means in the past 3 years AB has worked on it’s problems and solved many of them. Ontario on the other hand continues to stick it’s head in the sand and blame a product that is not the “silent killer” they claim it to be.

Finally, while the Ontario Beekeepers Association has been allying itself with mindless environmental groups it forgot about the members it is supposed to represent. As such, the Independent Commercial Beekeepers has now formed in ON and is well on it’s way to becoming the true voice of beekeepers in that province.

I realize Ontario has always suffered from “little man” syndrome, but it’s pathetic the way they’ve gone about getting attention. In the meantime, nothing has been accomplished towards solving this issue there and nothing will be accomplished in the foreseeable future. Just as “CCD” is blamed in the USA, I believe “PPB” is accurate in describing Ontario.

**NORAHG RESPONSE**

**RENEGADE BEE-KEEPER TRADE ASSOCIATIONS**

Bee-Keeper Trade Associations in Quebec and Ontario now OPERATE AS ANTI-PESTICIDE & ENVIRONMENTAL-TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, under the direction of Sierra Club, Environmental Defence, and others. These RENEGADE Trade Associations include Ontario Bee-Keepers’ Association and Fédération des Apiculteurs du Quebec. The actions of these Trade Associations are DESPICABLE and DESTRUCTIVE and RECKLESS and SUBVERSIVE by DEMANDING ARBITRARY PROHIBITION against Neonicotinoid insecticides, which are IMPORTANT AND IRREPLACEABLE TOOLS for the control of damaging insects in the Agriculture and Golf Industries. The RENEGADE Bee-Keeper Trade Associations DEMAND PROHIBITION UNDER THE FALSE PRETEXT that bees are somehow affected by Neonicotinoid Insecticides. In fact, this effect, which is called Bee Colony Collapse Disorder, is NOT caused by Neonicotinoid Insecticides since THE WEIGHT OF THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE CLEARLY SHOWS THAT THESE INSECTICIDES DO NOT AFFECT BEES. Moreover, Canadian Honey Council, which is the NATIONAL trade association that oversees these trade associations, DOES NOT SUPPORT PROHIBITION. If they are successful, the CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITION WILL BE CATASTROPHIC for the Agriculture Industry and the Golf Industry. In fact, any prohibition against Neonicotinoid Insecticides is not necessary. Overall, there is NO EVIDENCE to suggest a link between insecticides and BEE COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER. Overall, Neonicotinoid Insecticides DO NOT HARM BEES. It is far more likely that THE BEE-KEEPERS THEMSELVES ARE HARMING BEES through their own MIS-MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, and NOT Neonicotinoid Insecticides. When used properly by the Agriculture Industry, with Best Management Practices, Neonicotinoid Insecticides CAUSE NO HARM, and DO NOT HURT BEES. The Bee-Keepers and their RENEGADE Trade Associations are THE LEAST CREDIBLE AND THE LEAST QUALIFIED to provide any advice concerning Neonicotinoid Insecticides, and therefore, CANNOT BE TRUSTED. Actually, Bee Colony Collapse Disorder is THE FAULT OF BEE-KEEPERS and their MIS-MANAGEMENT PRACTICES. If we had less pesticide use in the environment, WE WOULD STILL HAVE Bee Colony Collapse Disorder, because MANY BEE-KEEPERS ARE NOT COMPETENT TO MANAGE THEIR HIVES. For more information regarding RENEGADE BEE-KEEPER TRADE ASSOCIATIONS, go to The Pesticide Truths Web-Site ... <http://wp.me/p1jq40-79F> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2BA> WILLIAM H. GATHERCOLE AND NORAH G <http://pesticidetruths.com/> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2rr>

Beekeeper Speaks Out against Anti-Pesticide Campaigns and Hobby BeeKeepers from Ontario -- Ontario Beekeepers Association has been allying itself with mindless environmental groups it forgot about the members it is supposed to represent. As such, the Independent Commercial Beekeepers has now formed in ON and is well on it’s way to becoming the true voice of beekeepers in that province

<http://pesticidetruths.com/2014/03/25/beekeeper-speaks-out-against-anti-pesticide-campaigns-and-hobby-beekeepers-from-ontario/>