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More than half of Ontario's bees did not survive winter



An Ontario beekeepers' group is concerned by a new report that says nearly six in 10 of the province's bees didn't survive the winter, a rate three times that of other provinces. (AFP PHOTO / FRANK RUMPENHORST)

Will Campbell, The Canadian Press

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TORONTO -- An Ontario beekeepers' group is concerned by a new report that says nearly six in 10 of the province's bees didn't survive the winter, a rate three times that of other provinces.

The Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists survey found that 58 per cent of Ontario bees died during what was an especially long winter, while other provinces lost on average about 19 per cent of their swarm.

While the report fingers the weather as the main culprit for the bee deaths, hive-minders in Ontario and Quebec also cited acute and chronic pesticide damage or insufficient recovery from pesticide exposure last year as contributing factors.

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Ontario Beekeepers' Association president Dan Davidson says bees' exposure in the hive to pollen contaminated by pesticides "almost guarantees they will not survive the winter."

The group is calling on the governing Liberals to fast track a plan looking at permits restricting the number of plant seeds treated with neonicotinoids, a widely used pesticide that some scientists and environmentalists say are killing bees and other insects.

The apiculturists association states Canada's overall winter mortality rate averaged 25 per cent, well above what it says beekeepers deem the "acceptable" loss limit of 15 per cent.

The Ontario bee group says nearly all corn seeds and about two-thirds of soy seeds sold in the province are pretreated with neonicotinoid coatings, though only a minority of the crops are at risk from pests the insecticide is meant to stop.

It did its own winter survey earlier this year and found more than a quarter of beekeepers lost 75 to 100 per cent of their colonies.

"Beekeepers cannot sustain these losses and many will have to leave the business if these losses continue," group vice-president Tibor Szabo said in a release Wednesday.

"The government of Ontario must immediately take the initiative to ensure this permit (system) is in place for the 2015 growing season if we are to

have a sustainable industry as well as the pollinators we need for our fresh fruits and vegetables."

An international panel of 50 scientists working as the Task Force on Systemic Pesticides said last month the use of neonicotinoids and another popular insecticide called neonics should be phased out.

The panel said its study of 800 research papers provides conclusive evidence that the pesticides are causing the mass deaths of insects that are essential to the process of pollinating most crops.

A Health Canada report has suggested that seeds treated with neonicotinoids contributed to the majority of the bee deaths in Ontario and Quebec in 2012, likely due to exposure of the pesticide-laced dust during planting.



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NORAHG RESPONDS TO FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF WINTER BEE LOSSES.

Anti-pesticide bee-keepers pretend there is a bee crisis. However, weather is the major factor contributing to winter bee losses, and not neonicotinoid insecticides. The imagined danger against these insecticides has led to chemophobia among anti-pesticide bee-keepers, who are expressing mere unscientific concerns regarding so-called bee colony collapse disorder. Consequently, anti-pesticide bee-keepers are demanding that governments go to extreme lengths to impose reckless and arbitrary prohibition against neonicotinoid insecticides used in the agriculture industry. Anti-pesticide bee-keepers ridiculously assume that insecticides are somehow causing bee losses unless it can be proven that they do not. Anti-pesticide bee-keepers pretend there is a bee crisis. However, according to the government of Ontario, there is no bee crisis. According to Ontario Premier Wynne — « Although large bee die-offs have been observed in Ontario apiaries, they are NOT OCCURRING UNIFORMLY across all operations or areas of the province — many bee-keeping operations HAVE NOT BEEN AFFECTED and have been able to maintain strong and healthy bee colonies as evidenced by hive strength and honey production ». <http://tinyurl.com/ndavhaa> Anti-pesticide bee-keepers pretend there is a bee crisis. However, only a very limited number of bee-keepers report losses, less than 1 per cent. Over 99 per cent of all bee-keepers are reporting no losses. Anti-pesticide bee-keepers are falsely blaming bee deaths on neonicotinoid insecticides. The bee colonies are far from collapsing since the numbers do not lie. Both the total number of honeybee colonies and the total number of bee-keepers in Canada has risen dramatically since 2008. Moreover, according to Agriculture Canada, the nation's honey yield is twice the world's average. <http://wp.me/s1jq40-28297> It is INESCAPABLE that the ALLEGATIONS about insecticides are FALSE! Anti-pesticide bee-keepers with vested interests in keeping the public afraid are not a credible sources of information. NORAHG is the National Organization Responding Against HUJE that seek to harm the Green space industry. WILLIAM H. GATHERCOLE AND NORAH G. Get the latest details at The Pesticide Truths Web-Site <http://pesticidetruths.com/> and go to The Complete Library Of Web-Pages, Reports, & References <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2rr>.

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