



## Beekeeper groups don't support Ontario beekeepers on pesticide lawsuit

ALBERTA — Ontario beekeepers are getting flack from their own because of their lawsuit against two pesticide companies.

One of Canada's national beekeeper organizations, representing 7,000 apiculturists across Canada, says there are better ways than a lawsuit to solve the problem of pesticide-treated soybean and corn seeds killing honeybees.

Canadian Honey Council chair Gerry McKee said that "accusations of blame" do not welcome innovative solutions and the council's position is that beekeepers need to work with others to ensure optimum bee health.

"The Canadian Honey Council views pesticide exposure, both internally and externally as an extremely important bee health issue," said McKee by email. "By working co-operatively with governments, agricultural producers, agri-chemical companies, equipment manufactures and beekeepers, significant improvements have been made that have mitigated exposure risks to honeybees.

"Accusations of blame do not provide an environment that welcomes new and innovative solutions and as such we will continue to work together with all parties to ensure optimum bee health, and at the same time, uphold our responsibility to beekeepers all across Canada to represent their interest in a respectful manner."

The Alberta Beekeepers Commission, which represents 45 per cent of Canadian beekeepers, released a statement Sept. 17 saying it does not support the class-action lawsuit filed by two Ontario beekeepers against Bayer CropScience and Syngenta regarding neonicotinoid-treated seeds. In early September, Munro Honey and Sun Parlour Honey filed a \$450-million lawsuit against the two pesticide companies, claiming they were "negligent" in the development and sale of neonicotinoids, and the prevention of damages of neonicotinoids to bees.

About 55 Ontario beekeepers have joined the lawsuit, which has not been proven in court.

"The Alberta Beekeepers Commission recognizes that the use of certain agro chemicals can adversely affect honeybees, but also recognizes the benefits of using seed treatment technology in agriculture," reads the statement. "In particular, compared to the organophosphates and foliar applications of pesticides previously used, seed treatment technology significantly reduces honeybee exposure to pesticides."

The commission says that working together, along with appropriate research, management and education, will ensure that modern agriculture and honeybees can coexist.

Ontario commercial beekeeper Hugh Simpson, of Osprey Bluffs Honey, at Feversham in Grey County, walked away from the Ontario Beekeepers' Association when it called for a ban on neonic seeds. Simpson started the Independent Commercial Beekeepers Association, which has 20 members. He said he does not act as an association spokesman but said commercial producers he knows don't support the lawsuit and put much of the blame for bee deaths on part-time and hobbyist beekeepers with poor management practices.