



## **Re: Protecting positive relationships with farmers.**

Ontario Beekeepers'  
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### OBA's advice for protecting good relationships with farmers.

Since we sent out our newsletter a couple of days ago we have heard from a few beekeepers who have received concerned calls from farmers hesitant to allow hives on their land without entering into some kind of waiver of liability.

Some grain farmers may be anxious as a result of a recent letter from Grain Farmers of Ontario which stated that:

*"The new Pesticide Act regulations, mandated by the Ontario Government, prohibiting treated seeds will leave most grain farmers with no alternative but to return to traditional spraying for pest control/crop protection...Grain farmers and knowledgeable beekeepers have expressed concern that such applications may be more harmful to bees than the seed based treatment that has been banned.*

*It is important that this risk be communicated to and understood and accepted by beekeepers before they are allowed to place their hives on a grain farmer's property.*

*This will necessitate some form of written documentation whereby the beekeeper accepts all risks to the hive and bees placed on a grain farmer's property and releases the grain farmer from any liability."*

OBA has been unable to determine what they mean by 'traditional spraying', but it is our belief that if farmers are complying with the principles of Integrated Pest Management, that bees will be safer than under the current neonicotinoid regime.

It is in all our best interests to maintain the positive and mutually beneficial relationships we have enjoyed for generations. We encourage beekeepers to engage in a constructive and reassuring conversation with their farming partners. Here are a few points you can make:

- The current class action suit is not an OBA action and it does not involve farmers. The class action has only been filed against the manufacturers of neonicotinoids, Bayer and Syngenta on the basis that they knew or ought to have known that neonicotinoid are highly toxic to bees. Farmers are not exposed to this action at all.
- Beekeepers do not want to sue farmers. To our knowledge there are no historical or pending law suits related to beekeepers and farmers.
- Beekeepers are farmers, too. We understand the challenges and constraints of farming and want to work collaboratively for mutual success.
- Encourage a discussion on ways to work together to mitigate the risks to bees.

**However, we do not recommend that you sign a blanket waiver of liability. Before you sign any questionable document, you can send it to the OBA. We will ask our counsel to review it for you and will provide you with an opinion at no cost to you.**

As the organization representing the interests of Ontario's beekeepers, we will do everything we can to ensure a healthy and productive beekeeping industry.