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### Is The "Ban Everything In Sight" Movement Being Weakened, At Least In Europe?

Bee Colony Collapse Disorder

by Art Drysdale

by **Art Drysdale**

email: [art@artdrysdale.com](mailto:art@artdrysdale.com)

Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has reno-vated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over radio station Easy 101 FM out of Tillsonburg at 2 PM weekdays.

Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>



March 24, 2013



*Since I do not have anything appropriate to illustrate this item, I'll use some photos of the dolphins at what was the Kahala Hilton hotel when I visited there in April 1977. It is now called The Kahala. In my February 17th article, I mentioned our visit to the hotel, some 36 years after my first visit. At that time I had not been able to process the old slides into digital pictures which is now complete. Above: an historic lighthouse en route to the Kahala; not the greatest picture, but an indication of how friendly the dolphins were and are; and two of the 1977 dolphins performing*

Bee Colony Collapse Disorder, wherein entire beehives die, has been attributed to everything from cell phones to certain insecticides, particularly including Imidacloprid and the group of insecticides to which it belongs—Neonicotinoids.

Imidacloprid if an effective control for white grubs and other soil-borne insects and only professional pesticide applicators and farmers are allowed to use it here in Canada.

For some time, the EU, through its Commission, has tried to have the neonicotinoids totally banned from use in all member countries. Now, on March 18th, a majority of Member States refused to support the proposal to restrict their use on all bee-attractive crops. The Commission must now decide whether to appeal the decision or amend its proposal.

In the U.S. *AgProfessional* magazine is a monthly that provides editorial and advertising for agronomic and business management solutions specifically to agricultural retailers/distributors, professional farm managers and crop consultants. For more on this "hot topic" of to ban or not to ban Imidacloprid, I turned to the Website of *AGProfessional* and I shall quote generously here from two separate items, the first on the attempt by bee keepers and certain environmental groups (in the U.S.) to sue the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its lack of action against chemicals such as Imidacloprid. And, the second, the decision of the EU Commission to take any action against Bayer AgroScience and Syngenta.

According to *AGProfessional*, "U.S. environmental regulators are failing to protect honey bees and their role in pollinating important food crops, and should immediately suspend use of some toxic insecticides tied to the widespread deaths of the bees, [lawsuit filed on Thursday March 21 charges.](#)

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together. Below: one of the 1977 dolphins up close; and my favourite shot from that year, one dolphin carrying a Hawai'i flower lei; and finally a shot from January this year, again showing a dolphin up close and personal with a visiting family (as explained on February 17). Author photos.



"It is a catastrophe in progress," said migratory bee keeper Steve Ellis who maintains 2,000 bee hives for pollinating crops from Minnesota to California. "We have an ongoing problem that is worsening."

"Orchard operators use bees to pollinate a variety of important U.S. crops, including almonds, cranberries, blueberries, avocados, apples, cherries, pears, and more. But over the last several years both the number of bees and the vitality of the bees have been in marked decline in the United States. Many studies have linked the prevalence of some new insecticides with the loss of the bees.

"Several bee keepers and environmental groups unsuccessfully petitioned the EPA last year to restrict the insecticides, saying the toxic impact on honey bees could threaten the future of beekeeping worldwide.

"On Thursday last week, four professional beekeepers and five environmental and consumer groups said they would try to get a court to order the EPA to take action. The groups filed their lawsuit against the EPA in the Northern District Court of California, demanding that the regulatory agency suspend the use of pesticides clothianidin and thiamethoxam. [Note though, imidacloprid while a part of the neonicotinoid group, is apparently not a part of the lawsuit.]

"World-wide, Bayer CropScience and Syngenta are the two major suppliers of neonicotinoids to farmers. Syngenta Chief Operating Officer, John Atkin, said: 'We are pleased that EU Member States did not support the European Commission's shamefully political proposal. Restricting the use of this vital crop protection technology will do nothing to help improve bee health.'

"Bayer CropScience also welcomed the fact that no consensus was reached by the EU Member States in favor of the European Commission's proposals regarding the use of most applications of neonicotinoid-containing products. This provides hope to European farmers, that they can continue to have access to safe and effective crop protection products supporting their ability to grow safe, high-quality, affordable food. The failure to reach a conclusive decision is a clear recognition that there is no convincing argument against the continuing use of neonicotinoid-based products.

"Syngenta has repeatedly highlighted that the European Commission tried to justify its actions on the basis of a hurried and highly theoretical review by the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA). This review made fundamental mistakes which led to a serious over-estimation of the amount of pesticide bees are exposed to under field conditions. It also ignored key studies and independent monitoring by governments which prove the safety of neonicotinoid pesticides.

"The decline in bee health is one of the biggest challenges facing agriculture. However, even the European Commission's own data show that pesticides play a negligible role compared to diseases, viruses and loss of habitat.

"Syngenta urged the European Commission to broaden efforts to tackle the real causes of the decline in bee health rather than continuing to focus on neonicotinoid pesticides, which deliver significant socio-economic and environmental benefits.

"Syngenta has, for many years, supported bee health through Operation Pollinator, <http://www.operationpollinator.com/>. Syngenta's business is based upon biodiversity, including thriving pollinators, and the company remains committed to enhancing ecosystems wherever it operates in the world.

"Bayer CropScience believes this response provides an opportunity to reach a fair and just outcome as the European Commission has relied too heavily on the precautionary principle, without taking the principle of proportionality into account. Not only had the Commission incorrectly based its rationale on recent EFSA reviews of these products, they had failed to make the appropriate impact assessments of any decisions they proposed on the broader interests of European stakeholders.

“Bayer continues to believe that any political decision relating to registrations of neonicotinoid-containing products, should be based on clear, scientific evidence of adverse effects of the affected products under realistic conditions of use, including the extensive stewardship measures that are in place in the field. There has been a long history of the safe use of neonicotinoid insecticides and it is clear that when they are used responsibly and properly, any impact on bees is negligible. This has already been confirmed by the competent EU and Member State authorities in their market authorization assessments, based on the extensive safety data that had previously been submitted and proven in many monitoring studies.”

As I see it, one cannot blame the beekeepers for taking some action even if they may well be wrong on the source of their problems. Some of the environmental groups we know from past experience, particularly here in Canada, will say virtually anything to get themselves some attention, and funds, which this type of stuff does!

I think the action of the European countries is significant and perhaps will be the beginning of a more balanced approach to the just straight banning of virtually every chemical that comes along.

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