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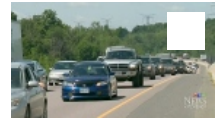
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16.8% of honeybee colonies lost over winter, survey finds



A hive of honeybees appears on display at the Vermont Beekeeping Supply booth at the annual Vermont Farm Show at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction, Vt., Jan. 28, 2014. (AP / Andy Duback)

Ryan Flanagan, CTV Kitchener
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Canadian beekeepers report that they lost about 17 per cent of their colonies over the winter – which actually represents the third-lowest figure since tracking began.

The Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists (CAPA) has been surveying beekeepers about winter colony losses since 2007.

Its latest survey reveals a great deal of disparity, as some beekeepers lost less than 8 per cent of their colonies, while others lost nearly a quarter.

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Responding beekeepers from Ontario said that they had lost 17.9 per cent of their colonies this past winter, above the national average but significantly lower than the previous winter.

According to Grain Farmers of Ontario, more colonies seem to be lost during severe winters than mild ones – and that, not the neonicotinoid pesticides currently subject to a provincial crackdown, may be the biggest factor behind bee deaths.

“The most recent overwintering numbers are prior to Ontario’s seed treatment regulations being in place,” Grain Farmers of Ontario chair Mark Brock said in a press release.

“As we continue to see data that indicates strong bee populations and numerous bee health factors, it reinforces that Ontario’s rush to restrict neonicotinoids was unnecessary.”

Ontario beekeepers said poor queens and starvation were the main reason for their losses during the most recent winter.

CAPA gathered its data by surveying 611 beekeepers responsible for more than 60 per cent of Canada’s honeybee colonies.

Despite the annual losses during winter, the organization estimates that Canada now has 22.4 per cent more honeybee colonies than it did in 2007.

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