

FACTSHEET: Bees and bee health in British Columbia

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- The B.C. government recognizes the vital role bees play in British Columbia's food production and environment and is working to support and expand bee habitat and health throughout the province.
- The B.C. government is exploring opportunities to enhance bee habitat at government buildings by planting bee-friendly plants and looking into the potential of placing bee hives at appropriate government buildings.
- The B.C. government is working with stakeholders to promote the inclusion of bee-friendly plants at farms, and increase the sales and public planting of bee-forage plants.

Background:

- There are more than 2,300 beekeepers throughout B.C. operating as a hobby, part-, or full time business with about 47,000 colonies, and as many as two billion bees.
- Honeybees play a major role in agriculture as pollinators of crops, contributing an estimated \$470 million to the economy in British Columbia (\$250 million in field crops and \$220 million in greenhouse crops), and over \$2 billion in Canada.
- B.C. has one of Canada's foremost apiary specialists on staff and has assigned bee inspectors in six regions, who provide free support services to B.C.'s beekeepers.
- The B.C. government's response to bee health issues has not changed. If there are any indications of a disease outbreak – anywhere on the Island or in B.C. – services are offered to the beekeeper(s).
- The B.C. government supports the commercial beekeeping program at Kwantlen Polytechnic University: <http://www.kpu.ca/cps/commercial-beekeeping>
- Information about all facets of beekeeping management is at: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/animal-production/bees/beekeeping-bulletins>

Bee health and neonicotinoids

- The B.C. government and provincial bee inspectors work with counterparts in other provinces and at other levels governments to share the latest science and information regarding bee health.
- The use of pesticides falls under federal authority and is administered by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency.
- The registration of pesticides falls under federal authority and is administered by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA).
- In 2012, the federal government announced it would re-evaluate three of the most commonly used neonicotinoids in Canada.
- In late 2016, the PMRA published a decision calling for a phase-out of all commercial agricultural uses of imidacloprid (one of the neonicotinoids under review) based on risks to aquatic organisms.
- The PMRA also launched a special review of two additional widely used neonicotinoids to assess their potential impact to aquatic organisms.
- The Province is keenly interested in the final evaluations that will result from the federal review and will rely on its scientists and expertise.
- Any changes to the B.C. regulatory model would have to be done in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, the agricultural sector, beekeepers and the pesticide industry.
- Prior to the development of neonicotinoids, chemicals like organo-phosphates and

organo-chlorines, which have high-toxicity profiles for people and other mammals, were used.

- B.C.'s Integrated Pest Management Act can restrict the use of specific pesticides by requiring a permit; however, this would require an amendment to the regulation.
- Currently, most agricultural uses of pesticides do not require an authorization under B.C.'s Integrated Pest Management Act and are exempt from most of the requirements placed on commercial pesticide users. Any modification to this would require an amendment to the regulation.
- The use of neonicotinoids, like any treatment, needs to be science-based and judicious, and used only when appropriate and with care.

More information:

- More information about bees, apiculture and support services offered to British Columbian beekeepers is at: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/animal-production/bees>
- The Ministry of Agriculture introduced a new bee regulation in 2015 as part of the Animal Health Act. A summary of the regulation is at: http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/DownloadAsset?assetId=967AEEE3507946A2A6CDFCB5ADE57AEE&filename=bee_regulation_summary.pdf

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