



ENVIRONMENT | Save the bees

Ontario bee-keepers suffer devastating losses

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Wednesday, May 16, 2018, 12:40 PM - Ontario beekeepers are facing extreme losses this year – possibly the worst winter loss on record.

Due to the long winter and several false starts to spring, 70% of beekeepers reported unsustainable losses.

“I’ve been getting calls from beekeepers around the province,” President of the Ontario Beekeepers Association (OBA), Jim Coneybeare, said in a press release on Monday. “The number of dead or weak colonies is astounding. These could be the worst winter losses on record.”

When beekeepers lose more than 20% of their colonies, they can have a rough time building things back up. They’ll have to spend money on new bees and will spend a majority of the summer rehabilitating their colonies, ultimately losing money in the process. One in four beekeepers reported to the OBA that if these losses continue, they will not be able to continue beekeeping. It is estimated that the bees are four to six weeks behind where they usually are at this time of year.

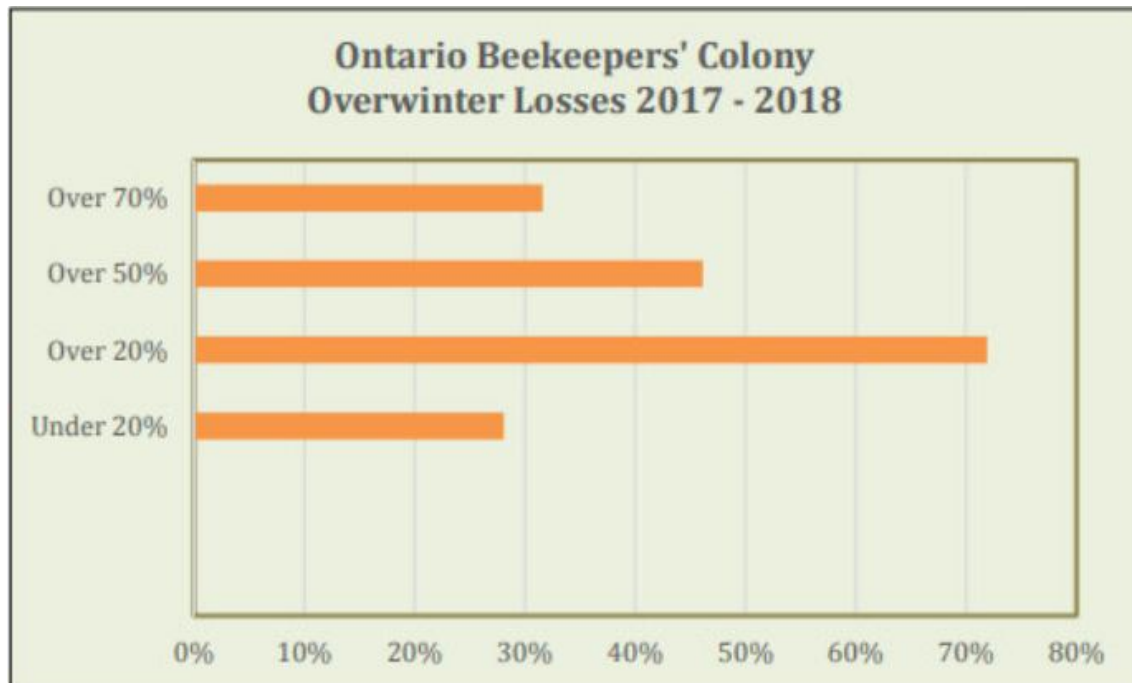


Table courtesy of the Ontario Beekeepers Association.

Fortunately, not all colonies faced losses. Shaun Hensher, a beekeeper from the Orillia area, said all of his bees are doing just fine.

“I’ve seen a lot of reports of other beekeepers having massive losses, so I’m grateful we had such luck,” Hensher said to The Weather Network. “Losses are to be expected... [but] some beekeepers who were already struggling due to low honey prices and repeated years of losses may have to shut down their operations.”

This is bad news not only for the individual beekeepers, but for the entire bee population.

“Native pollinator populations are rapidly declining, and if beekeeping becomes untenable as an industry, we will lose the crucial pollinating services that honeybees provide. This will affect crop yields, leading to food shortages and high prices.” Said Hensher.

Bees contribute a significant amount to food grown in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, honeybees are responsible for 90% of apple production.

Help The Bees: Don't Mow Your Dandelions Yet

How YOU can help

Hensher said that even people who don't practice beekeeping can help sustain Canada's population of pollinators (which includes bees, wasps, butterflies, beetles, and flies).

"The best thing folks can do to support the honeybees and our native pollinators is to avoid using pesticides on their own gardens and lawns and grow wildflowers in every nook and cranny they can."

Hensher also said that limiting neonicotinoid pesticides in Canada will put less pressure on all bee populations. The European Union recently [placed a ban](#) on all neonicotinoid pesticides, so perhaps this means hope for Canada as well.

Coneybeare remains positive that Ontario's beekeepers will recover from this devastating loss. "Honey bees and wild bees are just too important for everyone," he said. "We cannot allow this industry to fail."

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