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NEW WEST FEATURE

Are Regulators Doing Enough to Prevent Bee Die-Offs?

A veteran Colorado beekeeper is challenging the Environmental Protection Agency to remove a widely used pesticide from the market until there's proof it isn't contributing to bee die-offs. Is he jumping to conclusions or catching the EPA using flawed science?

By Brendon Bosworth, 3-15-11

For beekeepers, loss is something that comes with the territory. It's accepted that the cold winter months will whittle down the number of honeybees in a colony. But for Colorado beekeeper Tom Theobald, like many beekeepers across the country, the past several winters have brought losses that eclipse the regular die-offs.



Tom Theobald, a beekeeper from Niwot, Colorado, believes a popular pesticide is a key factor in the honeybee die-offs he and other beekeepers have witnessed in recent years. "The fact that he's taken this fight on and he thinks it's important should scare the hell out of everybody else, because he doesn't fool around with stuff like that lightly," says a fellow beekeeper. Photo by Brendon Bosworth.

"I'm expecting my worst losses this winter," said Theobald on a mild February morning at one of his bee yards in Niwot, a sleepy town in Boulder County on Colorado's Front Range.

He was standing amidst a collection of silent white bee boxes, located on a corner of a friend's property. Some were stacked two levels high, reaching about waist-height. Each had a brick on the lid.

"I started with 24 colonies here. By the end of winter I'll be lucky to have six left," he said.

Behind the wire fence separating the home from the neighboring ranch, a herd of horses grazed on the brown grass. Miles behind them the highest mountains peaks were capped with snow. The intermittent sounds of traffic on the highway punctured the clean morning air.

Earlier that morning, over a breakfast of chicken-fried steak with rye toast at a local restaurant, Theobald explained that save for his early years as a beekeeper, his 2010 honey crop was the smallest he has produced in 35 years of beekeeping. He has since stopped supplying his two regular honey buyers, the Niwot Market and Willow River Natural Cheese, a company in nearby Longmont that sells local and imported cheese.

"I had to cut them off at the end of the year," he said. "There's no honey being sold. There's no money coming in."

Theobald said he could probably survive two more seasons of bad losses.

Theobald is not alone in his slim harvest. Beekeepers across the United States have reported higher than average overwintering losses since at least 2006. A survey of beekeepers who together operated nearly 18 percent of all the managed colonies in the U.S. by Penn State University entomologist Dennis vanEngelsdorp indicates that in the 2009-10 winter, the beekeepers lost 42.2 percent of their colonies on average. After the 2006-07 winter beekeepers reported losses of 32 percent, according to the study.

Losses of roughly 14.5 percent are generally considered acceptable amongst beekeepers.

Scientists are investigating various pathogens, parasites, environmental stresses – including the impacts of pesticides – and management issues as likely contributors to the widespread die-offs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture emphasizes that it's unlikely a single factor is responsible and an interplay between factors is probably to blame.

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Marketplace

While major losses hurt community beekeepers like Theobald, who sell honey locally to make a living, they also impact the commercial bee industry, which profits from using bees to pollinate crops for farmers. In fact, bee pollination is responsible for about \$15 billion in crop value, chiefly for crops such as almonds, nuts, berries and fruits, according to the USDA. Bees are also responsible for pollinating the source of one of every three mouthfuls of food the average person eats.

"What we know is the sick bees are very sick," vanEngelsdorp said in a telephone interview.

"They have a lot of the viruses and other pathogens that bees can get, all at one time. That suggests to us that there is something that's compromising their immune system – making them susceptible to all these. And we haven't been able to find the cause for that," he said.

Chemical Concerns

While scientists and beekeepers have been puzzling over the cocktail of factors that could be driving the die-offs, Theobald suspects that a group of pesticides called neonicotinoids, which attack insects' central nervous systems, paralyzing and killing them, play a key role.

Theobald has been instrumental in a [campaign](#), along with organizations including the National Honey Bee Advisory Board and advocacy groups [Beyond Pesticides](#) and the [Pesticide Action Network](#), to get an insecticide called [clothianidin](#) – produced by Bayer CropScience and sold under the trade name Poncho – suspended from the market until the Environmental Protection Agency has fully assessed its potential for toxic effects on honeybees.

The chemical in question is used to treat corn, canola, sunflower, sorghum and sugar beet seeds against an array of pests.

Like other neonicotinoids, clothianidin is what's known as a systemic insecticide. Instead of being sprayed onto a plant's leaves, it is coated onto seeds, which can be bought pre-treated. As the plant grows, the chemical works its way into the plant's tissues, taking hold from the inside and making the plant poisonous to pests.

Clothianidin can manifest in the plant's pollen, nectar and the tiny drops of water or sap found on its tips. This opens the opportunity for bees to be exposed to the insecticide when foraging on pollen and nectar, both of which are taken back to their hives. Nectar is used to make honey, while pollen, which is stored until needed, is mixed with honey and fed to growing larvae.

Neonicotinoids, in general, are a popular class of chemical. Over 90 percent of American corn is treated with neonicotinoids, the largest being Bayer's clothianidin and Syngenta's thiamethoxam – which goes by the trade name Cruiser – said Jack Boyne, Bayer CropScience's director of communications, in a telephone interview.

Studies Implicate Neonicotinoids in Weakening Bees' Immunity

To date, much of the research into the potential effects of neonicotinoids on honeybees has focused on clothianidin's cousin and Bayer's top selling seed treatment, imidacloprid – sold under the trade name Gaucho – which works in a similar way.

Last year a team of French scientists published a [study](#) that shows imidacloprid working in concert with a common bee pathogen, Nosema, to significantly weaken bees' health. The researchers fed bees the chemical and exposed them to the pathogen. The bees infected with the pathogen and exposed to the insecticide at concentrations that would generally be encountered in the environment showed the highest death rate, according to the researchers.

Jeff Pettis, research leader at the USDA's Agricultural Research Services Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland, performed a small but [similar lab study](#), which is unpublished. In a telephone interview Pettis said the study is very much supportive of the French study.

Dr. Henk Tennekes, a Dutch cancer researcher and toxicologist, has written a [book](#) that raises concerns about the long-term, cumulative effects of neonicotinoids on insects and the birds that feed on them. In an [interview on the Organic View radio show](#) he said there may be no safe level of exposure to these insecticides because of their potential to accumulate within animals.

"New research has shown that tiny doses of these insecticides are capable of producing a breakdown of the immune system of honeybees," he said during the interview. "Very small quantities of neonicotinoid insecticides are sufficient to cause collapse of bee colonies in the long run."

On scientific grounds, the chemicals should be banned immediately, he said.

In a statement released by [Beyond Pesticides](#), an organization dedicated to eliminating toxic pesticides, James Frazier, professor of entomology at Penn

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State's College of Agricultural Sciences, said: "Among the neonicotinoids, clothianidin is among those most toxic for honeybees; and this combined with its systemic movement in plants has produced a troubling mix of scientific results pointing to its potential risk for honeybees through current agricultural practices."

"Our own research indicates that systemic pesticides occur in pollen and nectar in much greater quantities than has been previously thought, and that interactions among pesticides occurs often and should be of wide concern," he said.

With regards to clothianidin, vanEngelsdorp said he doesn't think there is enough evidence to warrant removing the insecticide from the market.

"I think it's growing. I think we have laboratory data that's suggestive, but laboratory data doesn't always translate into field data," he said. "I think we have more data to show that fungicides have a negative effect than this right now."

A lot of farmers depend on these pesticides, and the pesticides that would replace them are also, and sometimes more, toxic to bees, said vanEngelsdorp.

"It's a delicate act. I'm glad I'm not the one having to make that call," he said.

vanEngelsdorp was the lead researcher for a [study](#) published in 2009 which analyzed colonies afflicted with [colony collapse disorder](#), or CCD as it's known. The mysterious phenomenon results in beekeepers opening their bee boxes to find skeletal colonies with very few or no live adult bees. The worker bees have practically disappeared, since their dead bodies are not in the hive or nearby. At the same time, the queen remains along with developing bees and a store of honey and pollen.

The researchers analyzed bees, wax comb and pollen in healthy and CCD-afflicted colonies for pesticides, parasites and other agents. According to vanEngelsdorp, they found no levels of clothianidin in any of the samples.

But, as the researchers highlight in the study, there is uncertainty at play: If pollen tainted with a pesticide were responsible for CCD, the bees would have eaten that pollen before the samples were collected and it would not show up in the testing. Also, since most bees die away from the hive those dead bees would not be analyzed.

Pettis explained that bees have a long history of being exposed to pesticides, in agricultural and urban settings, and sometimes they've died as a result.

"We've had a long, bad association with pesticides and beekeepers and growers try to do things to minimize that," he said.

"There's certainly cause for concern, but I don't know that singling out one product is the way to go," Pettis said.

Another [study](#), which Frazier, vanEngelsdorp and Pettis co-authored along with others, shows that bees around the country are exposed to a plethora of pesticides. Drawing 887 samples from hives in 23 states and one Canadian province, the scientists found two or more pesticides in 92.3 percent of a total of 749 bee, pollen and wax samples. They detected at least one systemic pesticide in almost half of the 749 samples. The systemics were found more frequently in pollen and wax than in bees.

However, researchers only found imidacloprid, Bayer's top-selling seed treatment, in less than 3 percent of pollen samples and 1 percent of wax samples. It was not detected in bees. Clothianidin was not detected at all in the samples at the detection level set by the researchers.

"The high frequency of multiple pesticides in bee collected pollen and wax indicates that pesticide interactions need thorough investigation before their roles in decreasing bee health can be either supported or refuted," the researchers concluded.

vanEngelsdorp stressed the need to reevaluate the way in which pesticides are tested. He emphasized the importance of testing for pesticides' synergistic effects – the way they can act in concert with other chemicals to enhance or decrease toxicity, even at low levels. Pesticides' sublethal effects – the impacts that result from doses that don't kill insects – also need to be accounted for, he said.

In lab studies researchers have demonstrated the [sublethal effects](#) of exposure to imidacloprid to include impaired brain functioning and abnormal [foraging behavior](#) in bees.

Some European Countries Prefer the Precautionary Principle

Boyne maintains that there is no documented support behind the claims that Bayer's products are responsible for causing reported bee declines.

Nevertheless, some European countries have banned or suspended

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neonicotinoid seed treatments, including clothianidin and imidacloprid, on certain crops because of the suspected implications for honeybees.

In Germany, clothianidin was whisked off the market as a seed treatment for corn in 2008 after beekeepers in the Baden-Württemberg region in southwest Germany reported losses of up to two-thirds of their colonies after the pesticide was applied to maize seeds planted nearby. A September 2008 statement by Bayer states that the product was incorrectly applied, which led to the active ingredient attaching to dust particles and being blown into the environment, where it was taken up by bees. Clothianidin remains banned for use on corn seed in Germany, although it is registered for use on other seed types.

In France, imidacloprid has been suspended for use on sunflower seeds since 1999 and on corn seeds since 2003. Clothianidin was denied registration in France. Clothianidin and other neonicotinoids are banned for use on corn seed in Italy, too.

But this hasn't put too much of a dent in Bayer's annual sales. In 2010, global sales of imidacloprid earned Bayer CropScience \$830 million, while clothianidin pulled in \$267 million.

EPA Reclassified Bee Health Study and Questions Remain

While researchers continue to investigate the potential toxic effects of neonicotinoids on bees, Theobald and others have taken the Environmental Protection Agency to task about the status of the scientific study used to satisfy the registration requirements for clothianidin.

Last year Theobald publicized an EPA memo, dated Nov. 2, 2010, which he says was supplied to him by a source within the EPA. The memo highlights that the EPA reclassified a Bayer-sponsored study to evaluate clothianidin's effects on honeybees and clear the chemical for registration as "supplemental" instead of "acceptable." (The memo has since been posted on the EPA's website.)

The study, performed in Canada, involved placing bee colonies in the middle of 2.5-acre fields for three weeks. Some fields contained clothianidin seed-treated canola, while others contained non-treated canola, both in bloom. Researchers later moved the bees to a bee yard. They assessed the health of the bees and tested their honey, wax, pollen and nectar for clothianidin residues for 130 days after initial contact with the canola. They compared bees who had been placed in fields of treated canola to those from non-treated fields.

The researchers concluded that "honeybee colonies will, in the long-term, be unaffected by exposure to clothianidin seed-treated canola."

The study was accepted in 2007, but the EPA has since reclassified it because it did not fulfill the agency's required guidelines. On its website, the EPA notes that deficiencies include "some cross contamination between treated and non-treated (control) experimental plots and inadequate separation between treated and control portions of the study."

Besides being downgraded last year by the EPA, the study has been criticized by some beekeepers. In an article for Bee Culture magazine, Theobald described the study like this:

"Let's say you had a noxious weed that was affecting your cattle and you wanted to assess the dangers. So you plant two and a half acres of the suspect weed in the middle of 2,000 acres of lush Wyoming grassland and put four cows on the test plot. The cows aren't fenced in, however, and are free to roam over the entire 2,000 acres. What do you think is going to happen? How long do you think your four cows are going to stay on your dinky little test plot? How significantly is that noxious weed going to be represented in their diet?"...

"Here's what the life cycle study of bees and canola consisted of: four colonies of bees were set in the middle of one hectare (2.5 acres) of canola planted from treated seed, with the bees free to forage over thousands of surrounding acres in bloom with untreated canola, which they most surely did. What do you think the results were? They were exactly what Bayer wanted of course."

The EPA has called for another study to evaluate the effects of clothianidin on bees, yet the chemical remains on the market. This despite the fact that the memo reads: "Information from standard tests and field studies, as well as incident reports involving other neonicotinoid insecticides (e.g., imidacloprid) suggest the potential for long-term toxic risk to honeybees and other beneficial insects."

While calling for another study, the memo also states that "exposure through contaminated pollen and nectar and potential toxic effects therefore remains an uncertainty for pollinators."

Frazier, the Penn State entomology professor, said the most prudent course of action would be to take the pesticide off the market while the flawed

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study is being redone, according to a statement released by Beyond Pesticides.

New West sent questions on March 9 to the EPA regarding the reclassification of the lifecycle study, the anticipated deadline for a new study, and the reasons for clothianidin's conditional registration. Despite multiple requests for a response, the agency had not replied by March 14.

Boyne said the EPA has not yet given Bayer a requirement for a new study, but the company aims to begin fieldwork for a new study in 2012 that will continue through the spring of 2013.

In a letter dated Dec. 8, 2010, a coalition of groups asked EPA administrator Lisa Jackson to put an immediate ban on sales of clothianidin until a satisfactory study has been completed.

The EPA responded 10 weeks later with a letter confirming that clothianidin's registration would not be suspended or canceled, because clothianidin does not pose an imminent hazard. The agency said it would open a registration review docket, which involves reevaluating the safety of the product, for clothianidin in 2011.

"That letter was written by George Orwell," said Theobald, referencing the author whose work birthed the concept of doublespeak.

"It's ridiculous. They need to step up to their responsibilities, in my view, and they want to play word games. That letter was totally unacceptable," he said.

Conditional Registration Allows Product Onto Market Before All Testing Completed

Clothianidin's protracted registration process provides an insight into the EPA's practice of conditional registration, which essentially allows pesticides onto the market even though certain issues still need to be resolved. Conditional registration of pesticides is not uncommon. The National Resources Defense Council estimates that 68 percent of the 16,000 pesticides currently registered in the U.S. were conditionally registered.

In April 2003 the EPA granted Bayer CropScience a conditional registration for clothianidin for use as a seed treatment on corn and canola. At this time the EPA was aware of the possible risks to bees and called for the now reclassified study to assess the possible chronic exposure of the insecticide to bees across the period of two life cycles.

The EPA had initially proposed that a label for clothianidin-treated corn seeds would read: "This compound is toxic to honeybees. The persistence of residues and the expression of clothianidin in nectar and pollen suggests the possibility of chronic toxic risk to honeybee larvae and the eventual stability of the hive." But, along with the conditional registration, it was decided that this label be deferred until after the life-cycle study had been reviewed.

Bayer was given until December 2004 to provide the EPA with the life-cycle study. But this deadline was later extended to May 2005. The study was completed in August 2006, but the EPA only approved it in November 2007. Clothianidin was given full registration in 2010.

It is not unusual that there would be some give and take, since the study was not considered a "core" registration requirement, Boyne said in a telephone interview.

However, Beyond Pesticides has challenged the idea that the EPA did not consider the study a core requirement, since it was listed as part of the registration requirements from the outset.

Boyne said Bayer provided the EPA with a draft protocol for the field study in 2003, which was required before the company could begin the study, but didn't receive feedback until April 2004.

Stepping Into the Public Eye

Theobald finds the concept of conditional registrations for products like clothianidin, where questions remain at the time of putting the chemical on the market, unacceptable.

"What the EPA has done is turn the environment into the experiment. And we've become the experimental subjects," he said. "I think most EPA employees want to do the right thing, but I think this is an enormous management failure."

Corporations, such as Bayer, need to be reined in, said Theobald.

"A new word has come into my vocabulary – corporatism – which in my understanding is the flipside of fascism," he said. "Fascism would be the takeover of industry by government; corporatism is the takeover of government by industry."

At the same time, Theobald, who worked for IBM for 10 years after graduating from the University of Wisconsin, said he is not against

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corporations and believes the corporate model is a good one when managed properly.

"But corporations are like children," he said. "They pursue their interests very narrowly without consideration to the potential collateral consequences. They're in pursuit of profit."

Theobald said he would continue to raise public awareness about the EPA's decision to keep clothianidin on the market.

"I think they have an obligation to explain themselves and the basis for their decisions to the American people," he said in an email.

As president of the Boulder County Beekeepers' Association, an organization he helped found, for 30 years until 2006 and formerly the Boulder County Bee Inspector until the position was retired in 2000, Theobald is well experienced in the bee world. He has mentored many beekeepers and taught beekeeping courses at the Colorado State University Extension.

"In this area he's like a guru," said Miles McGaughey, who has been a beekeeper for 25 years. A friend of Theobald, McGaughey is a martial arts instructor and bee extractor - a person who removes and relocates unwanted swarms from people's homes.

"He was the bee inspector when I started, who was like the law," said McGaughey, who jokingly admitted that he spent his first few years of beekeeping evading Theobald.

"Really, he's the most helpful guy in the universe if you're interested in bees," he said.

Theobald is a very trustworthy person, McGaughey said.

"The fact that he's taken this fight on and he thinks it's important should scare the hell out of everybody else, because he doesn't fool around with stuff like that lightly," he said.

"And people are just, like, ignorant of the fact that we're talking about our food supply. Nobody cares about bugs, but everybody likes to eat three nice meals a day and that's what we're really talking about," he said.

Laura Tyler, a Boulder beekeeper and documentary filmmaker, is making a documentary about Theobald, which she stressed is not an activist film. She first met Theobald 11 years ago when she took one of his beekeeping classes.

Over a cup of honey-sweetened black Earl Gray tea, she explained that Theobald hasn't always put himself "up front," but has recently become a spokesperson for the pesticide issue. She referred to him as a citizen journalist who has done extensive research.

"He's the only person doing this work. I'm totally serious about that," she said. "There are other people who hold pieces and parts of it, but he's the one person who has been kind of obsessive with it, like a dog with a bone."

Brendon Bosworth is based in Boulder, Colorado.

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Comments**By Tim J Eagen, 3-15-11**

Censoring the truth we see!

By Graham White, 3-15-11

The demands for more and more research, more and more analysis, more and more debate and discussion - is a smokescreen.

The only issue worth debating here is why has the EPA ignored the very environmental safety laws that it was created to uphold? Clothianidin was judged by the EPA's own scientists to be 'highly toxic to honeybees' and 'highly likely' to pollute groundwater. Despite that withering judgement - the EPA gave it a conditional registration - a 'rubber stamp' which allowed it to be used on 80 million acres of American corn, every year, for the last 8 years.

When Bayer 'finally' carried out this JOKE of a lifecycle study - and this was rejected by the EPA's own scientists - the EPA gave the pesticide FULL registration anyway.

So the only issue is: what is the point of a \$10 billion a year Environmental Protection Agency that ignores the Science and refuses to protect the environment? They have allowed this incredibly dangerous poison to be used coast to coast, without it ever satisfying the regulatory conditions.

One wonders if they would EVER refuse to license ANY poison. Zyklon B perhaps? Plutonium? Depleted Uranium?

By John Rexford, 3-15-11

The only reason the EPA allows this, because Bayer lines their pockets with a whole hell of a lot of CASH!!!!!!

By Jimmy, 3-15-11

Is there any government agency that isnt on the take anymore? I seriously doubt it.

By Dave, 3-15-11

Well, I guess the sensible way forward is to refuse to use your bees on crops that are GM or use these pesticides. This die off syndrome does not happen when bees land on organic crops, there is your answer. You keep putting your bees on these crops and watching your bees die, why would anyone be so stupid as to keep on doing such a thing?

By Graham White, 3-16-11

Dave - beekeepers are far from 'stupid'. Here's the problem: when bees leave the hive, they can travel up to 2 miles in any direction - so if you assume a 'foraging radius' of 1.5 miles, a single colony would collect nectar and pollen over 3,000 acres of crops and range. So they cover dozens of farmers' fields, woods, meadows, gardens, forests. Neonicotinoids will be used on 90 million acres of American corn this season; tens of millions of acres of canola; millions of acres of barley, wheat, potatoes, tomatoes, peas, beans etc. Last year, farmers used ONE BILLION pounds of crop pesticides in total. Unless you keep your bees in a wilderness area or a national park, or on an organic farm that is bigger than 3,000 acres (most organic farms are quite small) - you cannot stop your bees collecting poisoned nectar and pollen. Even worse - these systemic poisons get into the soil and kill all the earthworms, beetles etc - but they also dissolve in rain-water and travel out of the fields into ditches, streams and ponds. They get re-absorbed by WILD plants and flowers, which - in turn kill more bees.

The issue is not that pesticide companies are funding the EPA - YOU are funding the EPA to the tune of \$10 billion a year. What the corporations do is fund the election campaigns of the politicians who are supposed to oversee the EPA. Ever since Bush appointed Monsanto's top lobbyist to be deputy head of the EPA in 1992 - the EPA has often been staffed by the pesticide industry. Even worse, pesticide lawyers and lobbyists have been appointed into leading roles in the USDA, the FDA and many branches of government. In many ways it is arguable that the Pesticide Companies ARE the government and are INSIDE the EPA. They intend to keep it that way. They do not care if ALL the bees, butterflies, bumblebees and bugs in all of America and Europe are wiped out - such wildlife is 'expendable' or 'collateral damage'.

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By Mike Paiser, 3-16-11

Wisconsin beekeeper. Simple ! Huge chemical & AG. companies have deep pockets. That means they have lobbyists employed. That means they can buy politicians. That means they will be heard, even if they are wrong. That proves that money talks and BS walks. That means that beekeepers don't stand a chance. BUT that's not bad, because all Americans are getting screwed and we're just part of the masses. All of America has 2 options: A) do something about the "bribes" that lobbyists provide, B) or get used to it and quit complaining.... p.s. before the 1970's, all my old commercial beekeeper friends tell me that the over-winter success rate was an average of 94%. But I'm just a kid compared to them at my young and tender age of 60 with 13 years experience.

By Dave, 3-16-11

@Graham White. Fair point Graham, no insult intended. I have kept bees myself, but no longer do. I should say that having read the approval by the leaders of the bee keepers association for neonicotinoids, that the vast majority of bee keepers and all other people have been betrayed, I have no doubt that the vast majority of bee keepers would never accept neonicotinoids as their supposed representatives did. It is the case that the people selected to be at the head of the bee keepers to represent their best interests actually sold them out, which is truly tragic and lamentable. I know bees don't die off on organic areas, but I take your very valid point and accept your very expansive info. It is very obvious that bee keepers could put pressure on farmers to ensure that safe areas are available, free of these toxins, if groups of farmers can come together to ensure this. They could state to the farmers and to Monsanto, Bayer or whoever, stating that unless they stop destroying the bees and the livelihood of the beekeepers, then the beekeepers should withdraw their service and thus pressure the farmers and these companies to properly look at their own options. If the farmers stand to lose a large proportion of their crops without the bees, and the chemical and GM companies stand to lose their custom because of this, then the GM and chemical companies and farmers should all be made to work together to look after each other and the bees. I know, in an ideal world, etc., but some economic pressure should surely be possible in this manner to stop the pig headed arrogance and callous nature of the offending parties.

By Mary Rausch, 3-16-11

Bees = Food. We need them and must do whatever we can to stop their decline.

By Dave, 3-16-11

One possible approach is the encouragement of a very powerful strategy for the farmers themselves to employ, which would completely obviate the necessity of the use of chemical pesticides, is the use of insect predators; they do work very well as I myself employed the use of them for a number of years in the production of food crops. Couple this with the use of basalt rock dust as the main fertiliser, which is vastly more effective in producing nourishing food than the near useless NPK, which does little else but pump crops full of water and not with nourishing minerals, such as neodymium, praseodymium, samarium and lanthanum, which have been shown to double the lifespan of animals eating food rich in these microminerals. Dr Samuel Epstein said that 95% of all disease could be attributed to mineral deficiency, and a United States Senate hearing in 1936 declared that even then, for a human being to get enough minerals to prevent malnutrition, a human would literally need to consume the contents of a wheel barrow of food every day; this situation is far worse today, but could be completely resolved by the use of basalt rock dust. Basalt rock dust is the same stuff they cover the roads with, it is extremely plentiful and cheap, it also greatly increases the size and number of fruiting bodies, and makes plants more hardy, and also much more resistant to disease and pests. If farmers can be persuaded to use basalt rock dust, they really won't have so many problems resulting from chemicals or disease, and yields will be massively up, and the crops will be much more friendly for the bees, and the produce will be vastly superior to most of that presently grown. Basalt rock dust presents the opportunity to totally remineralise soil, which takes 20,000 years to form, and only another 60 years to lose altogether through run off and 'dust bowl' effect we are told. Using basalt rock dust instead of chemicals will preserve the integrity of the microculture of organisms in the soil and the integrity of its physical composition, making it resilient to being washed or blown away (alternative

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ploughing methods could be used to enhance this effect). The farmers and bee keepers, and the bees themselves, would win all round. The only enemy would be the Monsanto GM salesmen and the Bayer chemical salesmen hell bent on annihilation of the earth's natural species; there is masses of excellent info on the internet about basalt rock dust, and plenty of gleaming testimonials, except for one almost incomprehensible hatchet job done on basalt rock dust by 'Glasgow University' 'proving' that basalt rock dust had no benefits in agriculture whatsoever. No prizes for guessing who funded their research and why they came up with that result, just like the recent British research that 'proved' organic food is less nutritious than food grown with NPK. I hope this suggestion will produce good results. A excellent testimonial video on Youtube is called 'Landward, the rock dust one.'

By Dave, 3-16-11

Here is the link to the excellent video I mentioned above, though it's presentation is somewhat marred by the trollish comment about the research done by Glasgow University made by one viewer in an attempt to sabotage the good work being done

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4co_pfmJxA&feature=related

By Dave, 3-16-11

http://infiniteplaythemovie.com/rock_dust_remineralization.htm
Good info to validate the use of basalt rock dust to massively increase crop yield without weed killers or chemical fertilisers

By mike paiser, 3-17-11

Graham,,

Are you from an area in which agriculture is dominated by the necessity of honey bees? I ask because, as stated, I'm from Wisconsin and the farmers grow corn, hay, soybeans and oats. They could care less about the bees. They just want milk from the cows. period. I went to the local SEED SALES operation and asked the manager what percent of the seed he sells is genetically modified? ANSWER= 100%. Well, bees feed pollen to their babies. The pollen is not fertile. So, instead of being like mothers breast milk for the babies, it's like feeding a baby skim milk. That's point #1. Point #2 is that while still in the seed state, prior to planting, the seed is treated with the neonicatanoid (imidacloprid) and the plant becomes toxic to the insects. While on the insecticide subject, let's not forget about all of the other chemical pollutants we've unleashed upon the earth. It's just a matter of time. NOW, Arthur Daniels Midland corp. Dow Chemical, Monsanto, and all the rest, are padding pockets at a level that beekeepers can NOT compete with. Period.
It will take a "zero" almond crop, oranges at \$20 each, & \$50 watermelon before we get anybody's attention. Here's your answer if you really want one.....Start at the local level> if you catch a politician not acting in the best interest of the people, then hang him in the town square> can you say "public servant"! I think you get the idea, & you just work your way up the ladder from there all the way to the top. PUBLIC SERVANT !
That is true freedom and also democracy in action. Our forfathers would roll over in their grave if they saw what was going on in this country. Just pray that God doesn't decide to get even too soon.
But it is coming, He knows it, I know it, you know it, and so do those who testify falsely.....Now, as far as getting the farmers together.....well, good luck !

By Cristine, 3-17-11

Im with a project and research! This feature has help me a lot. Thanks! <http://ezinearticles.com/?Five-Ways-to-Prevent-Uncontrollable-Blushing&id=6011885>

By jeremy, 3-17-11

Brilliant article about a very important issue. Thank you.

By Mike Paiser, 3-17-11

DID YOU READ ?

"In France, imidacloprid has been suspended for use on sunflower seeds since 1999 and on corn seeds since 2003. Clothianidin was denied registration in France. Clothianidin and other neonicotinoids are banned for use on corn seed in Italy, too.

But this hasn't put too much of a dent in Bayer's annual sales. In 2010, global sales of imidacloprid earned Bayer Cropscience \$830

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million, while clothianidin pulled in \$267 million."

PLEASE RETURN TO MY FIRST POST OF 3/16/2011

Did you read what I said? or just skip over it for various and sundry reasons? \$830,000,000 + \$267,000,000 How much went to campaign contributions? It's nothing short of being self convicted of greed. Proverbs 6:16-19 It's simple.

"money talks and BS walks", freakin' period! The politicians are in their pockets. period, again!

I gotta go, I'm gonna insult somebody for their ignorance! Maybe I'm too ignorant to leave comments. I'm outa here.

By Graham White, 3-17-11

"By mike paiser, 3-17-11

Graham,, Are you from an area in which agriculture is dominated by the necessity of honey bees?"

Hi Mike,

No - I am from an area dominated by canola (oilseed rape), wheat, barley and potatoes - what you would call 'mixed arable crops' here in the UK. However, you are 'spot-on' in your analysis about the corporations' attitude to bees and pollinators.

Almost all the 'big' crops they are interested in - GM Corn, GM Canola etc are wind pollinated (to different degrees). The corn farmers don't need bees, but the bees DO need the corn pollen - and when they get it from Clothianidin treated corn, they get poisoned.

For a long time I could not understand WHY the pesticide manufacturers and GM seed promoters didn't appear to be worried about honey bee losses. Then a friend pointed out that they have no interest whatever in bees or pollinators or wildlife.

Their wind-pollinated crops do not need bees. And rumour has it that UC Davis is working flat-out on a GM wind-pollinated Almond tree - so that when bees are completely extinct in the USA - in about 5 years time - they will no longer need bees for the Almonds. I suspect they plan to create wind-pollinated GM varieties of 'roundup ready' or Bt crops for just about every crop in America. And they are trying to force control of the same crops/ markets in Europe, India, Africa, South American and Iraq.

The goal is global food control; once you have that youi don't need armies or an airforce to direct global policy - hungry people do as they are told.

By xcuntry, 3-18-11

Maybe if more people took responsibility of growing their own food these major farmers with their GM seeds would go out of business.

I will be starting my own food source this year. I even would like to learn how many bees I would need to keep in order to provide enough honey for my family for a year. We are a family of 8 plus extended family visiting occasionally making us a family of about 30. What we had extra I would donate to the food banks in our area or families in our near community.

When people take back their power and start taking care of themselves instead of depending on others to care for them...then we may see a decline in all of this political crap and 'pay-offs'...

I really have no clue as to what I am doing...I just know that subjecting myself and my family to all this GM foods with chemiclas in the plant that cannot be washed off is scary! I would rather live off roots and berries that grow in the mountains, above the run-off.

Good day.

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By mike, 3-18-11

I have no idea what your location is. The volume and type of honey in each region varies, sometimes quite significantly. In Wisconsin, we average 1 barrel (55 gallons) for every 5 hives.

There are 3 pounds in a quart and 12 pounds in a gallon. If you decide to do that, buy a book called "Hive Management" by Bonney and do a google search for "Georges Pink Pages". That will give you an idea of what you're getting into.

best of luck to all of you,

By kathleen lundy, 3-18-11

Hurray...let us know how we can help...

By xcuntry, 3-18-11

I live in South East Idaho...LONG COLD WINTERS!!

By xcuntry, 3-18-11

Is this what you were referring to when you mentioned 'Georges pink pages'?

<http://pinkpages.chrisbacherconsulting.com/>

I am originally from Southern Indiana...so growing a garden here in the area is going to be a new experience for me...knowing what grows here is going to take some research...and how to preserve these new foods for winter is also going to be fun! I am new to the mountains and the edible plants that grow in the mountains as well...I do know where some huckleberry bushes are...but so do a thousand other people...I am sure that we will have to continue buying from the store for the next year :- (but I hope to be on our own after that!

By xcuntry, 3-18-11

So, I have been reading over the 'pink pages'...that fella is straight forward...I like it!

Thank you for sharing this information with me!

Oh, and I guess stating a little more clearer about my location...Rigby Idaho is where I live now and trying to find my way back to living the way we use to live...

Thank you again!

By bearbait, 3-18-11

European honey bees are exotic, imported insects used across our vast landscape for pollination. The real threats are to the native pollinators, and it is they who are in trouble across so many landscapes.

Bombus, the bumble bees, are going extinct, variety by variety. There is a reward out for finding a "white butted bumble bee" in Oregon, which was once the most abundant. Like earthworms, the imported exotics have taken over the whole of the landscape, and we sometimes forget that there were native earthworms here, and native pollinators. Single nesting bees like orchard and mason bees, and the ground living miner bees. Those are the ones we need to protect. Fungicides that don't bother European honey bees kill single nesting bees.. You have to work with your bee man to cross check on which pesticides you can and cannot use before and during the time he or she has bees on your farm. Meanwhile, you have no control over farms in the area that don't use bees, and how and what they use for pesticides and when. It is hard to do the "right" thing. But we all try, I believe. And we try to do our best to grow our crops with as much attention to all the critters in, on, and above the soil. Pesticides cost a lot of money, and we have to use them sparingly. We also have to use the amount that produces efficacy and the amount that does not abet resistance forming. And believe me, we now see lots of weeds with resistance to the cheap herbicides we are used to and some depend upon. Not changing chemistries each year to avoid resistance has produced the very weed you never wanted, and the one that you deride the Big Pharm outfits for producing plant phenotypes that don't succumb to the pesticide that is now bringing about resistance in the weeds you thought you were going to control. That sword has two edges, and both will cut you sooner than you want.

Part of the hard work of farming is getting the information you need to make good decisions. You can't work ground or a crop when you are looking for answers, trying to find the right way to react to a problem.

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And beware of the people who want to sell you the easy answer. There are none.

By Janine, 3-19-11

So now I have to add the EPA to a long list of bad guys. I despair. Our addiction to chemicals must stop. Monoculture needs to stop as well. Check out Permaculture folks, grow lots of natives and sunflowers in your yard. Between the bats and the bees I could just cry myself silly.

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