

The Bee Cause



Volume 12, Issue 3

March 2015

- Next general meeting is 7:30 Tuesday, March 10th at the Corydon Community Centre River Heights, 1370 Grosvenor Ave., Winnipeg.
- (in room right off maindoor)

Speaker:
Waldemar Damert.
2015 MBA Convention + Spring Management
 Plus:
Integrated Pest Management Workshop

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Article Ontario sue Bayer (copied from CBC web 16Sep2014)

Canadian beekeepers sue Bayer and Syngenta over neonicotinoid pesticides

Class action lawsuit seeks \$400 million in damages

CBC News Posted: Sep 03, 2014 1:48 PM ET Last Updated: Sep 05, 2014 4:49 PM ET

Studies have shown that bees exposed to neonicotinoid pesticides have smaller colonies, fail to return to their hives, and may have trouble navigating. (Emily Chung/CBC)

Canadian beekeepers are suing the makers of popular crop pesticides for more than \$400 million in damages, alleging that their use is causing the deaths of bee colonies.

The proposed class action lawsuit was filed Tuesday in the Ontario Superior Court on behalf of all Canadian beekeepers by Sun Parlor Honey Ltd. and Munro Honey, two of Ontario's largest honey producers, the Ontario Beekeepers Association announced Wednesday.

"The goal is to stop the use of the neonicotinoids to stop the harm to the bees and the beekeepers," said Paula Lombardi, a lawyer with London, Ont.-based law firm Siskinds LLP, which

is handling the case.

As of Thursday morning, more than 30 beekeepers had signed on to participate in the class action.

• Read the statement of claim

The lawsuit alleges that Bayer Cropscience Inc. and Syngenta Canada Inc. and their parent companies were negligent in their design, manufacture, sale and distribution of neonicotinoid pesticides, specifically those containing imidacloprid, clothianidin

and thiomethoxam.

The pesticides, which are a neurotoxin to insects, are widely coated on corn, soybean and canola seeds in Canada to protect the plants from pests such as aphids. Studies have shown that bees exposed to the pesticides have smaller colonies, fail to return to their hives, and may have trouble navigating. The pesticides were also found in 70 per cent of dead bees tested by Health Canada in 2013.

Bee researchers raise more warning flags about neonicotinoid pesticides (**Continues on Pg 4**)

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Presidents Comments for March, 2015

Greetings to all fellow beekeepers!

What a difference from the previous months, the weather didn't spoil us in February.

With more sunny days and the hives not being buried in snow, the outdoor wintered bees have been teased to go out for various reasons. Dead bees in front of the hives in February and March are common. The amount of dead bees is not as high as it seems. If you take a count you will see that 50-100 scattered Bees in the snow look pretty bad. It is only a hand full compared to the cluster of a strong hive of 30,000-40,000 bees. However, if you have hives that are active and lots of bees are coming out and defecating at the entrance, you have a hive in distress. They could be out of honey and shortly before starvation. If you see one like that, you can open the hive and add a couple of frames of honey, preferably not capped. If it is capped, do uncap with the flat side of the hive tool. The frames of honey should be warm, not frozen or out of cold storage.

For myself, I just came back from Europe last week and dove into the nice Manitoba winter. Believe me it is nice even if it is cold. Europe's weather was damp and foggy, to the point where you could cut the fog with the knife. Even though, I had the chance to stick my nose in to some bee-hives. The bees were quiet, there was not much motion. No brood either, even though the temperature was +8C at day time and 0C to +2C at night. The hive boxes were made of 3" high density Styrofoam as was the lid and bottom-board. The bottom-board was screened and completely open with no entrance-reducers. It is done to vent the high moisture out of the hives. The hives were heavy with honey which indicates low food consumption. I also visited a bee supply store. Bee equipment for the most part is quite a bit cheaper even with the current exchange rate of 1.4 Euro. Bee-feed is only 1/3 of our cost. Here is the equalizer; the honey production per hive is 25 kg tops.

Closer to home, the RRAA executive have narrowed down our option for a new meeting place!

I will also report on the convention and things that stood out for me. Hope to have some contributions from people that attended as well.

See you all at the next meeting

Waldemar

IMPORTANT**Integrated Pest Management Workshop**

A mini Integrated Pest Management workshop will be conducted at the March 10 RRAA general meeting. The purpose is to review the booklet "Honey Bee Diseases and Pests", developed by Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists. People attending the workshop will receive a copy of the booklet.

Red River Apiarist's Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the
Red River Apiarists' Association
Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the
Red River Apiarists' Association
February 10, 2015

Chairman: Waldemar Damert
Recording Secretary: Art Quanbury

Approval of the Minutes of the previous AGM
Motion: That the minutes of the AGM held on January 13, 2015
be accepted

Moved: Ken Rows
Seconded: Armand St. Hilaire
Carried

President's Report

Waldemar welcomed everyone to the meeting; his first as president. He commented that the executive had met and were laying out plans for some changes to take place in the future. These changes would reflect the changing interests of the members and hopefully create increased interest to encourage new members. He mentioned that a number of committees would be formed and members would be asked to volunteer on these committees to ease the workload of the executive and to encourage the input from the membership at large. In particular, an education committee and an events or social committee would be formed. He also mentioned that alternative locations for future meetings were being investigated. The membership list shows that the majority of the out of town members live either north or east of Winnipeg and a location in the NE part of the city would be more convenient for these members. Further information will be collected and reported on at the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report

John Speer reported that the association has about \$3400.00. Dues are \$25.00 per year and are now due for 2015.

MBA Report
None

Fort Whyte Update

Armand had contacted the Ft. Whyte farm to inquire about their bee operation. RRAA had provided funds last year for 2 volunteers to attend the University of Manitoba Beekeeping course. One of the volunteers, Dustin Hoft, was in attendance. The farm had 16 hives last year and collected 1700 lbs of honey that was sold in the Ft. Whyte store. They are hoping to double the number of hived for next year. The operation is well organized. They receive a lot of visitors and groups can suit-up and tour the apiary.

Presentation

The video "Keeping Bees in Frozen North America" was shown. This is a video taken of a presentation by Mike Palmer, a beekeeper from Vermont and he provided details of how he manages his hives for winter survival. He mentioned the importance of starting with bees that are local and can withstand the local winter conditions. He went on to talk about splitting hives, replacing queens and other details. Considerable discussion followed as to whether his practices were appropriate for Manitoba. Some of his practices were considered to be out of date and others not appropriate for our climate. One message did

seem clear: It is important to have a system that is compatible with and for your bees. Bees can be different and the system of managing them can be different but it is important to have the right system for your bees. In some cases the bees might need to adapt over time to a system that you want to follow in your bee yard. It is alright to experiment somewhat with a few hives if you want to try something new but in general, you should stick with the system that you have learned from your mentor and that you know works for your bees. Making a major change in your system could be catastrophic to your colonies.

Loony Draw

There were a number of prizes for the draw including: gallon jars for hive feeding, a hive tool and loaves of bread baked by Alex Remkes.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm. The next meeting will be on March 10, 2015 at 7:30 pm at the River Heights community Centre.

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MBA Report March 2015 Jim Campbell, MBA Representative

Directors of Manitoba Beekeepers' Association (MBA) took part in the Annual Meeting of Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) January 28-29, 2015. Dan Mazier, Justice (NW of Brandon), was elected President for 2015. The Delta Hotel saw several hundred representatives from across Manitoba debating resolutions from their respective districts. Being treated fairly for land values for the Bipole III route garnered lots of discussion, MBA presented a resolution seeking broader support for the Temporary Foreign Worker issue. This resolution was referred to Committee, since KAP is already working in this area.

Jocelyn Marceau, an Engineer working with Quebec Agriculture, presented Manitoba beekeepers with an alternative approach to moving bees outdoors too early in the spring during his talk at the MBA Convention Feb 27-28, 2015. The overwinter building design idea includes a refrigeration unit to be used during warm days in spring. The experiments with this continue in Quebec. However, during his visit to Winnipeg, Jocelyn took the opportunity to tour various overwinter facilities across Manitoba, along with other interested beekeepers.

MBA representatives met informally with Patty Rocher, Director, Boards, Commissions, and Legislation on 23 January 2015 to review Regulation activities of MBA, and other items of interest to the Manitoba Farm Products Marketing Council. MBA members approved a fee increase along with approving changes to Administration By-law 1/92 during their Annual Meeting in 2014. MBA is one of several boards overseen by Council.

Similarly, MBA representatives were invited to the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC) board meeting on 3 February. At this time the board reviewed their operations for the past year and noted concern for the viability of the Overwinter Bee Insurance program due to continued heavy losses the past few years. Coverage for Wildlife damage to bees and equipment continues to be useful to beekeepers faced with bear and other wildlife wandering through apiary sites. //\

(From pg 1) The European Commission restricted the use of the pesticides for two years and Ontario has indicated it will move toward regulating them, due to concerns over bee health.

Bayer maintains that the risk to bees from the pesticide is low, and it has recommended ways that farmers can minimize bees' exposure to the pesticide.

Both Bayer and Syngenta told CBC News they wouldn't comment on the lawsuit because they haven't yet been served with it.

The lawsuit is seeking more than \$400 million in damages, alleging that as a result of neonicotinoid use:

1-The beekeepers' colonies and breeding stock were damaged or died. **2-** Their beeswax, honeycombs and hives were contaminated. **3-**Their honey production decreased. **4-**They lost profits and incurred unrecoverable costs, such as increased labour and supply costs.

Beekeepers or companies involved in beekeeping services such as honey production, queen bee rearing and pollination who are affected and want to join the lawsuit are asked to contact Lombardi.

The Ontario Beekeepers Association is not directly involved in the lawsuit, but along with the Sierra Club Canada Foundation, helped connect beekeepers with the law firm. The association also helped with the research for the lawsuit. //\\

Red River Apiarists' Association Executive Meeting

February 10, 2015

Present: Armand St. Hilaire, Ken Rowes, John Speer, Waldemar Damert, Art Quanbury

Presentations were made by Armand St. Hilaire, John Speer and Ken Rowes of locations they had contacted in the North East area of the city for possible venues for future meeting places. They included: churches, legions, Canadalns. The most promis-

ing from a perspective of ease of getting there, parking and cost were two legions. They will be explored further but Waldemar will announce at the general meeting that locations are being considered.

Armand reported that he had contacted Ft. Whyte farm and they had a successful year with 16 hives and 1700 lbs of honey. One of their volunteers will attend the meeting this evening. Ken submitted an "ideas" sheet that included a list of association events, committees that could be formed and other ideas. It will be useful to refer to this sheet in future.

For the March meeting it was felt that there should be a list of training day activities (to take place in a later month) and a sign up sheet for members to indicate their preferences. Activities could include: opening a hive and general inspection for queen, brood, mites, etc, queen rearing, making nucs, etc. Waldemar indicated that he would head up the education committee. Art expressed interest in being on the committee also.

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Article ON lawsuit 9 from Western Producer web, copied 9dec2015)

More beekeepers join neonic lawsuit

Posted Dec. 4th, 2014 by Jeffrey Carter

MARKHAM, Ont. — The Alberta Beekeepers Commission doesn't support the proposed lawsuit against Bayer Crop-Science and Syngenta over neonicotinoids, but individual beekeepers may have other ideas.

Paula Lombardi with the litigation law firm Siskinds LLP of Toronto said there have been "serious inquiries" from beekeepers in Alberta about joining the more than 100 producers from Ontario and Manitoba who have already signed on to the suit. "We're seeking more beekeepers to support the claim by signing a retainer," Lombardi told the Ontario Beekeepers' Association's annual meeting in Markham Nov. 21.

"We are, without a doubt, the best-known firm in Canada, if not North America, in this area."

Siskinds filed the lawsuit in September on behalf of two apiaries in Ontario: Sun Parlour Honey near Windsor and Munro Honey near Sarnia. The suit asks for \$450 million for a claim period from 2006 to 2014 for all beekeepers in Canada except Quebec.

In October, the law firm announced that it will pursue a second class action against Bayer and Syngenta on behalf of Quebec beekeepers.

The first hurdle is to have a motion for certification approved by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. That decision will come no earlier than the second half of next year, according to the Siskinds' litigation team handling the case.

Time will then be set aside for discovery and possibly a trial. A settlement could be reached out of court at any time during this process.

"The idea is to let claims be brought forward together so that cases that would otherwise be brought to **(Cont'd on Pg 5)**

(from Pg 4) court are heard," said Siskinds partner Mike Robb.

"It levels the field against companies like Bayer and Syngenta."

Beekeepers will have an opportunity to opt out of the lawsuit if it is certified, said Siskinds partner Dimitri Lascaris, who is working on the portfolio with Robb and Lombardi. If a compensation settlement is reached, beekeepers who have not opted out will have an opportunity receive damages.

"There's no downside at all if you stay in the lawsuit," Lascaris said.

Meanwhile, Robb hopes more beekeepers will sign a retainer with Siskinds so the lawsuit gains momentum. The objective is to bring 3,000 beekeeping operations on board in Ontario. Media reports have suggested that beekeepers will put themselves at financial risk by pursuing the action.

In an opinion article appearing in the Oct. 27 edition of the Financial Post, Paul Driessen wrote: "Beekeepers blaming pesticides for bee losses could face bigger losses in court."

However, Lascaris said financial risk does not extend to beekeepers, even the two plaintiffs.

Munro Honey and Sun Parlor have signed a contractual arrangement with Siskinds that shifts the financial risk to the law firm, he said.

In addition, Siskinds plans to apply for a type of insurance through the Law Foundation of Ontario that will cover the costs of the lawsuit if it is lost.

Lascaris said there's been a campaign to discourage beekeepers from participating in the lawsuit.

"They're trying to persuade people to opt out of the case so that their liability will be less," he said.

Siskinds will profit in the case of a win. Lascaris said the usual fee amounts to 20 to 25 percent of the recovery.

Siskinds will pick up the tab in the case of a loss, including some of the costs accrued by the defendants.

Lascaris said it typically takes years for a lawsuit of this type to reach trial. However, less than 10 percent of suits reach trial for a variety of reasons, including out of court settlements.

Siskinds has taken on powerful clients before, Lascaris said, including Bayer and other defendants over a case related to the price fixing of chemical products. —/!\—

Class action no honey pot

Beekeepers blaming pesticides for setbacks could face bigger losses in court

Source: National Post Oct 28, 2014 3:08 Page: FP13
Section: FP Comment Edition: British Columbia
Byline: Paul Driessen

Beware of class action lawyers promising gifts.

A number of Ontario *beekeepers* have signed up for a major class action lawsuit against the makers of a group of pesticides that they blame for setbacks in hives. They should seriously reconsider this compensation scheme.

Under Canadian law, the bee stewards and their law firm risk running in the red if their claims are ultimately unproven. They better get out their chequebooks, because their claims are likely to bounce. The evidence is simply not on their side. Canada law firm Siskinds is suing agricultural technology companies Bayer and Syngenta for \$400-million in damages. "This class action relates to the impact of these pesticides on the bee population and, consequently, on Canada's *beekeepers* who produce *honey* and provide pollination services essential to the production of Canada's fruits and vegetables," said a release announcing the suit.

The lawyers have cobbled together a few Ontario *beekeepers*, but advertise in their announcement that they are looking for more plaintiffs from all provinces. Derived from a synthetic form of nicotine and applied to seeds, "neonicotinoids" are incorporated into plants to defend them against pests. This allows *growers* to be much more targeted in killing crop-threatening insects. Only insects that actually feed on the plants are affected.

The technology has also resulted in fewer blanket applications of insecticide sprays to grow a successful crop, and to a radical reduction in more toxic pesticides that do harm wildlife, including bees. Real-world field studies of neonics have shown that bees foraging on plants treated with the substance are not impacted. Canada's western provinces house roughly 80 % of the nation's beekeeping industry. The dominant crop is *canola*, which is based heavily on neonicotinoid treatments. Yet bees are thriving in those fields.

The Alberta *Beekeepers* Commission issued a statement explaining why it does not support the Ontario class action suit. "Compared to the organophosphates and foliar applications of pesticides previously used," it noted, "seed treatment technology significantly reduces honeybee exposure to pesticides." *Beekeeper* organizations in Quebec, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are poised to make their own statements against the suit, and the Canadian *Honey* Council warned against making "accusations of blame."

These responses are necessary, because Siskinds structured its complaint in a way that claims it represents all Canadian *beekeepers*, whether or not they believe neonics harm their bees. That's one of the ways class action suits are rigged in favour of plaintiff lawyers.

Beekeepers who do not wish to go after the pesticide makers must officially "opt out" of the suit, or they are automatically included. However, the lawyers have refused to explain how that can be accomplished, despite multiple requests for clarification.

Many *beekeepers* want to opt-out because most are doing well. The number of hives in Canada overall has increased, even as the use of neonics has gone up over time. In Ontario, the number of hives has increased over recent years as well, from 84,000 in 1995 to 97,500 in 2013 - while neonicotinoid use continued to expand.

(Continued on Pg 7)



Editor's Note

by Ken Rowes

Did you know that the deer tick should be renamed mouse tick as mice are its natural host!

Our condolences to Charles, Verna Polcyn and family on the loss brother and uncle, GERALD MICHAEL POLCYN 1935 – 2015.

Jerry passed away suddenly in early February in Whitemouth, Manitoba. He was born in Montello, Wisconsin. He served in the USAF, taught biology at Sioux Falls College, South Dakota, and the University of Winnipeg. He worked for 20 plus years in north east Ontario at Sabourin Lake Lodge. He also played a major role in the Scott's Hill honey production and bee farm, Whitemouth, Manitoba. /\

BEE WELL.

The Bee Cause is the official publication of the Red River Apiarists' Association for distribution to its members and their colleagues in the beekeeping industry. It is published eight times a year on a monthly basis except December and the summer months of June, July, and August when membership meetings do not occur.

Articles can be best submitted in word documents as email attachments. Though they may be edited for spelling and basic grammar, no changes will be made to their contents, message and opinions. They are those of their originator and not of the Red River Apiarist Association.

Deadline for any submission to this newsletter is the second Saturday preceding the membership meeting to allow for publishing and mailing delays. Regular membership meetings are normally scheduled 7:30 PM on the second Tuesday of every month at the **Corydon Community Centre River Heights** located at 1370 Grosvenor Avenue in Winnipeg except the months as noted above.

The Red River Apiarists' Association, formed in 1963, represents the beekeepers of the Red River Valley and environs in southern Manitoba. The association provides a forum for the promotion of sound beekeeping practices through education, networking opportunities, meetings, field days, workshops, presentations by local apicultural experts, as well as the dissemination of this monthly newsletter.

We are on the web!
www.beekeepingmanitoba.com

CLASSIFIEDS

1 Wanted: Automatic uncapper; honey tank. Phone 204-712-6783, Email; lancewld@gmail.com

For Sale: Plastic queen excluders \$3.50 each. Contact, Lance W. Phone # 712-6783, Email; lancewld@gmail.com

2 For Sale: nucs: 5 frame nucs 160, 4 frame nucs 140, 3 frame nucs 120. with new queens. also will have nucs with marked laying queens from 2014. for less money. call Dennis Ross 204 878 2924 cell 204 782 7838

3 For Sale: 1) Nucs with 4 frames full of bees. Lots of brood on 2 of them. All nucs have 2014 raised queens from winter hardy, mite tolerant, own local stock. No foul brood in my apiary. Price TBD. 2) New inner covers 7/8" x 7/8", pine rimmed with 3/8" solid plywood. \$8.50 each 3) 2015 raised queens, not mated, from my own stock. Available last week of May. \$25.00 each. 4) 2015 raised queens, mated and laying, from my own stock. Available first week of June. \$35.00 each. Contact: Ted Scheuneman 204-338-6066

5 Wanted: Honey contact: John at

204-943-0166 Email:honeyb@mymts.net

6. Wanted: Milk tank for honey.

Several members asked so if anyone knows of an available tank please contact the editor at 204-755-3427 or e-mail roweskd@mymts.net

7. For Sale: Downsizing 150 hive operation — items to go; Full size hive boxes (plain or insulated), brood boxes with bees, honey supers, 4 frame nuc boxes, a variety of feeders and queen excluders, hive tops metal covered, bottom boards—plain or screened, inner covers and feeder covers. Frame parts, frame assembly and wiring jigs, pure beeswax foundation, wax melter, barrel cart, electric barrel honey melter, electric fencer, poles, wire and insulators, bee blowers, beekeeping clothing and tools, electric uncapping knife and plane, electric stainless steel bottling tank—300 lb capacity, plus an assortment of plastic and metal honey pails.

Reasonable prices most equipment will be sold in groups. Contact Charles_polcyn@ymail.com or Charles 204-284-7064 Wpg. Or farm 204-348-2506.

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(From Pg 5) Last winter was a good one for bees in most of Canada, while Ontario had relatively high losses. However, that may be because this province is distinct from others in having a greater proportion of hobbyist *beekeepers*.

Well-meaning, small-scale *beekeepers* who dabble in managing hives as a hobby generally cannot be as diligent as those who manage bees for a living.

"When you hear numbers like [Ontario's], it makes you wonder what they're doing to their bees," commercial keeper Lee Townsend observed. "They're not as current as the commercial *beekeepers*...[who] are generally more up to speed on what we're doing [to protect our hives], because this is our living, this is how we make our money, this is how we support our families. It's not like somebody who has a 9-5 job and plays with his five-to-ten hives after work. There's a big difference."

Add a financial incentive to this reduced knowledge and attention, and a fuller picture of the motivations behind the *beekeeper* class action suit emerges. The government of Ontario offered a \$105 per hive payout for everyone with losses over 40 % of their bees. It subsequently reported a high number of losses - and payouts.

In defending against the lawsuit, the neonicotinoid manufacturers will surely use the discovery process to determine the true culprit for Ontario's bee problems. Those investigations are likely to reveal the multitude of other problems that have been afflicting bees in Canada, the United States and Europe.

Varroa mites carry at least 19 bee viruses and diseases - and parasitic phorid flies, Nosema intestinal fungi and the tobacco ring spot virus also cause significant colony losses. Some *beekeepers* have accidentally killed off entire hives, trying to address such health problems. It's harder for hobbyists to be as vigilant or effective in fighting these problems. But that doesn't mean courts should reward them by finding a convenient scapegoat in the form of pesticide companies.

Beekeepers who have signed on to the suit may have dollar signs in their eyes. But revelations about their management practices could bankrupt their reputations - and having to compensate neonic makers for defense costs under Canada's "loser pays" system, could hit their lawyers and them with significant fees.

Paul Driessen is senior policy analyst for the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow (www.CFACT.org) and author of *Eco-Imperialism: Green power -Black death*.

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REBUTLE:

Standing Up for the Hobbyist

I wonder who is paying Mr. Driessen?

Not to insult or demean but to put some perspective on professional dialogue that I believe to have gone askew. We all have faults.

I am taking the liberty to speak out for myself, as a hobbyist beekeeper / apiculturist.

I believe a rebuttal is in order against Paul Driessen insinuating remarks that hobby beekeepers (2 – 50 colony apiarists or mid-line 50 to 500 colony apiarists) are irresponsible lacking the knowledge or initiative to operate hives in a diligent bio-secure manner.

Having been a hobby apiarist for some 50 years this coming summer of 2015 I have found just the opposite to Paul Driessen's comments. And that many hobbyists are the more intuitive, even professionals, somewhat scientific minded in the realm of beekeeping and honey production (bee care, bee / colony research) most interestingly to discuss bees, their different and dynamic ecology let alone the year round management of the bee colony (s). The hobbyist will also have been exposed to mostly likely more varied beekeeping practices achieving a practice to suit his or her environ. And willing to improve their practice to be more inefficient.

The larger the operations in the commercial arena you may find a few that will lack the initiative to take appropriate action and continue to follow in more traditional practices.

Unfortunately I have experienced attitudes cloud issues that what is common sense and well meant dialogue is taken as unreliable and nonsense.

I believe that the bee wellness is paramount and all beekeepers should be respecting each other across the board and supporting where they can.

Now to the point, these articles are addressing chemical impacts, and that a judge in the court case needs to know that the Canadian beekeepers as whole are wanting change with less impacts upon pollinators wild or domestic. From Mr. Driessen discussion, it seems he wants to dampen the numbers in support of the class action.

I also believe that altering the methods of application does not address the fact that the plants are contaminated and so some of the bee colonies and our food.

Respectfully Hobbyist,
Ken Rows B Agr. Sc., MSc.

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Wild pollinators at risk from diseased commercial species of bee

January 16, 2015 University of Exeter

Summary:

Viruses carried by commercial bees can jump to wild pollinator populations with potentially devastating effects. The researchers are calling for new measures to be introduced that will prevent the introduction of diseased pollinators into natural environments.

New study from the University of Exeter has found that viruses carried by commercial bees can jump to wild pollinator populations with potentially devastating effects. The researchers are calling for new measures to be introduced that will prevent the introduction of diseased pollinators into natural environments.

Commercial species of honey bee and bumble bee are typically used to pollinate crops such as tomatoes, sweet peppers and oilseed rape. Fast evolving viruses carried by these managed populations have the potential to decimate wild pollinator species, including bees, hoverflies and butterflies, placing biodiversity and food security at risk.

The global value of insect pollinators has been estimated to be around €153 billion per annum. Commercial pollination services are provided predominantly by honeybees and bumblebees, but wild pollinators play an important role pollinating crops as well as native plants. Pollinators have suffered declines and extinctions in recent years as a result of habitat destruction, with pesticide use and infectious diseases playing a potentially increasing role.

Dr Lena Wilfert from Biosciences at the University of Exeter's Penryn Campus in Cornwall said: "Our study highlights the importance of preventing the release of diseased commercial pollinators into the wild. The diseases carried by commercial species affect a wide range of wild pollinators

but their spread can be avoided by improved monitoring and management practices.

"Commercial honey bee keepers have a responsibility to protect ecologically and economically important wild pollinator communities from disease."

The researchers reviewed existing studies to determine the potential for disease emergence within wild pollinator communities based on known honey bee viruses.

The main culprit of disease-related losses from commercial honeybee colonies is the *Varroa* mite. This parasite helps spread viral diseases and may increase their virulence. One of these viruses -- the Deformed Wing Virus -- has recently been identified as an emerging disease in pollinators and its prevalence in commercial honeybees has been linked to its existence in wild bumblebees.

The social behaviour of honeybees, bumblebees and social wasps, provides perfect conditions for disease transmission both within the colony and between different species.

The risk of disease transmission can be further increased through poor management of commercial species including international transportation of bees without appropriate checks, intensive breeding, poor pathogen screening, and the release of commercial bees into the environment to interact freely with wild pollinators. Future work will investigate which commercial species is driving disease transmission. The researchers will also monitor the effectiveness of existing conservation schemes to determine their success in protecting wild pollinator populations.

Story Source:

The above story is based on materials provided by **University of Exeter**. Note: Materials may be edited for content and length.

Journal Reference:

1. Robyn Manley, Mike Boots, Lena Wilfert. **Emerging viral disease risk to pollinating insects: ecological, evolutionary and anthropogenic factors**. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 2015; DOI: [10.1111/1365-2664.12385](https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.12385)

Agents from federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Houston have seized close to 450,000 pounds of illegal Chinese honey worth more than \$2 million over the last few months, with the latest bust happening last week
Modernfarmer.com/2015/02

Chinese companies are trying to get their sometimes sub-par products to the U.S. market while avoiding high tariffs. The honey that makes its way into the U.S. illegally can not only undercut fair market prices but can damage the product's reputation with consumers.

Richard "Rich" Halverson, assistant special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Houston, says the city is becoming a "key point of entry" into the country for this honey. In the latest bust, ICE obtained information about incoming shipments they believed contained honey originating from China. The smugglers used forged documents indicating the honey was from Latvia to try and hide its origins, says Halverson.

The investigation is ongoing and while Halverson doesn't like to speculate how an individual case may conclude, he says if the situation warrants, they will bring the case to federal prosecutors and file charges.

"We always try to find the individuals responsible for illegal activity," Halverson says.

The reason for all this cloak-and-dagger behavior is the hefty tariff on Chinese honey that was put in place in December 2001 by the U.S. Commerce Department. In the early 2000s, a number of companies involved in the U.S. honey industry filed suit against the Chinese, believing they were selling honey to the U.S. below the cost of their own production, making it "very difficult" for U.S. producers to compete, according to Jill Clark, vice president for sales and marketing at Dutch Gold Honey, one of the nation's largest honey packers.

When the tariff was put into place there was a drop-off of honey originating from China, but before long, honey began pouring in from countries that hadn't traditionally been big producers, including Malaysia and Indonesia. ICE got involved in 2008 and learned the honey was originating from China and being relabeled in other countries to try and circumvent the federal tariffs, Clark says.

Chinese honey's reputation isn't the best, especially after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a warning in October 2002 over the concern some Chinese honey contained a broad-spectrum antibiotic not approved for use in the product.

"It's very important to know where the honey originated from in order to ensure a quality product," says Clark.

The U.S. produces about 150 million pounds of honey annually, but consumes about 450 million pounds, she says.

"We are a huge honey importing country," says Clark.

Clark sits on the board of True Source Honey, an industry-supported, voluntary certification program that provides traceability from hive to table through outside auditors in an attempt to prevent illegal trade in honey.

Clark says thanks to ICE's efforts, the current honey market for U.S. companies is in a much better position than it was five years ago.

Halverson wouldn't venture a guess on whether ICE is seeing more or less of the illegal honey these days, but says it's a crime that's on their radar.

"It's something we're actively looking at," he says. //\

Are bees addicted to caffeine and nicotine?

Date: February 15, 2010 **Source:** University of Haifa

Summary:

Bees prefer nectar with small amounts of nicotine and caffeine over nectar that does not comprise these substances at all, a study from the University of Haifa reveals. "This could be an evolutionary development intended, as in humans, to make the bee addicted," states Prof. Ido Izhaki, one of the researchers who conducted the study.

Flower nectar is primarily comprised of sugars, which provide energy for the potential pollinators. But the floral nectar of some plant species also includes small quantities of substances known to be toxic, such as caffeine and nicotine. The present study, carried out by researchers at the Department of Environmental and Evolutionary Biology and the Department of Science Education at the University of Haifa-Oranim, headed by Prof. Ido Izhaki along with Prof. Gidi Ne'eman, Prof. Moshe Inbar and Dr. Natarajan Singaravelan, examined whether these substances are intended to "entice" the bees or whether they are by-products that are not necessarily linked to any such objective.

Nicotine is found naturally in floral nectar at a concentration of up to 2.5 milligrams per liter, primarily in various types of tobacco tree (*Nicotiana glauca*). Caffeine is found at concentration levels of 11-17.5 milligrams per liter, mostly in citrus flowers. In the nectar of grapefruit flowers, however, caffeine is present in much higher concentrations, reaching 94.2 milligrams per liter. In order to examine whether bees prefer the nectar containing caffeine and nicotine, the researchers offered artificial nectar that comprised various natural sugar levels and various levels of caffeine and nicotine, alongside "clean" nectar that comprised sugar alone. The caffeine and nicotine concentrations ranged from the natural levels in floral nectar up to much higher concentrations than found in nature.

The results showed that bees clearly prefer nectar containing nicotine and caffeine over the "clean" nectar. The preferred nicotine concentration was 1 milligram per liter, similar to that found in nature. Given a choice of higher levels of nicotine versus "clean" nectar, the bees preferred the latter.

According to the researchers, it is difficult to determine for sure whether the addictive substances in the nectar became present in an evolutionary process in order to make pollination more efficient. It can be assumed, however, based on the results of the study, that the plants that survived natural selection are those that developed "correct" levels of these addictive substances, enabling them to attract and not repel bees, thereby giving them a significant advantage over other plants. The researchers emphasized that this study has proved a preference, not addiction, and they are currently examining whether the bees do indeed become addicted to nicotine and caffeine.

Story Source:

The above story is based on materials provided by **University of Haifa**

Note: Materials may be edited for content and length.

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Farm Marketing conference

The Direct **Farm Marketing conference** committee would like to remind you of the 20th Annual upcoming conference being held in Brandon on March 6 & 7. Attached please find the brochure highlighting the conference, the session and the speakers. The theme of this year’s conference is *Achieving Milestones*. The committee is thrilled to have Charlie Touchette of the North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association as the keynote speaker for this conference. The conference will look at trends, marketing, human resources, farmers markets, grass fed beef, agri-food and fruit/vegetable production. A mini-market will be on site as well as an evening for vendors of the mini-market/trade show to “Pitch Your Trade” Feel free to share with those who may be interested and benefit from attending the 2015 conference
*****NOTE: Early Bird Registration has been extended to Friday, February 6*****
 Details on the conference and links to online registration and payment can be found at:
http://bit.ly/direct_farm-Market_15
 Karen Walker Tibble, PHEC
 Business Development Specialist, Direct Farm Marketing
 Agri-Food and Rural Economic Development Division
 Food Commercialization and Marketing Knowledge Center
 Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Development
 Box 160
 Russell, MB R0J 1W0
 Phone: 204-821-5322

**Volunteer sought for RRAA
MBA Representative**

A volunteer from the RRAA membership is needed to fill a position on the Executive for 2015. The job description for MBA Representative is fairly simple and outlined in the RRAA By-Laws (published on beekeepingmanitoba.com under “Resources”) as follows:

 The **MBA Representative** shall represent the Association views, recommendations, questions, requests and opinions at the Manitoba Beekeepers' Association director's meetings. The representative may provide verbal or written reports of director’s discussions during regular or executive Association meetings. Outside of the by-laws, specifics of the role include attending semi monthly meetings of the MBA Board, typically held in Neepawa on the second or third Thursday of a month. The exact dates will vary according to the busy schedule of commercial operators thus April, July, August and September are usually avoided. The representative may participate in discussions of the board, yet are excluded from voting. The role is to act as a liaison between the concerns of the hobbyists and the directions of the commercial operators. In addition the rep typically provides a monthly report for publication in the RRAA newsletter BeeCause with supplemental information at regular club meetings.

 Volunteers should contact Waldemar, RRAA President, if you are interested.

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**Red River Apiarists’ Association
Winnipeg, Manitoba
2015 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

I apply for membership in the Red River Apiarists’ Association. Membership includes one-year subscription to the newsletter “The Bee Cause” (8 issues)

RRAA membership fee (cheque payable to RRAA or Red River Apiarists’ Association. @ \$25.00/year
NEW: Optional Beekeeper Liability Insurance (details on RRAA web, Links, Insurance) @ \$45.00/year

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED.....\$_____

Name _____ Tel. _____
 Address _____
 City _____ Prov. _____ Postal Code _____
 E-mail address _____
 Signature _____

New Member [] Renewal [] Student U of M Beekeeping course [] [free 1st year]

Other. Please specify. _____

Newsletter Delivered in electronic pdf via e-mail [] or on paper via Canada Post []

This completed form may be brought to the meeting or mailed with your cheque to :

**John Speer, RRAA Treasurer
Box 16, Group 555, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2C 2Z2.**

Please do not send cash in the mail