

The Buzz on Vanishing Bees May Be Due To Pesticides

What would life be like without the amazing tastes and healthful phytonutrients of apples, oranges, blueberries, cherries, pumpkins and peppers? Thanks to the honeybee, these fruits and vegetables are available to us. Despite the name, honey isn't the only thing this creature gives us. We rely on bees for pollination all over the nation. Without them, we wouldn't be able to produce crops at the quantity and variety that we do. Now many plants are faced with danger as huge numbers of honeybees are vanishing, and no one knows the cause. It is called the Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), putting a name to the mysterious, heavy losses of bees that occurred during the winter of 2006-2007. It was estimated that between 651,000 and 875,000 of the nation's estimated 2.4 million colonies in 35 states were lost.

An experiment by a man in Pennsylvania took all of his beehives to Florida and left them to gather Brazilian pepper pollen for month. Upon returning to collect the hives he found that something was seriously wrong. There were no dead bees on the ground and plenty of honey was in the boxes, but the wax months and other predators were not there. The amazing thing was that the young bees were left behind, which is not a normal occurrence for bees. Two thousand of these hives had been abandoned that autumn. This man called around to other beekeepers to discover if he was the only one, learning that others had lost up to 99% of their hives.

This was far more than annual 30% average loss that occurs due to mites and viruses. Although many hypotheses as to the cause developed, the newest suspect is that a virus has developed that has not yet been seen in the U.S. It is believed that the new culprit is a recently developed class of insecticides called neonicotinoids, which are sprayed on practically anything that grows. The use of this insecticide has skyrocketed throughout the country in recent years because of its positive results. It breaks down insects' immune systems and causes memory loss and nervous system disorders that make insects stop feeding. Some of those insects happen to be bees.

After meeting pollination needs, some beekeepers have been able to replace most of their colonies. But reports from a lot of beekeepers claim that the adult-bee populations are continuing to decline, a sign the CCD is likely to hit again. An immediate recurrence of CCD means a major economic blow to beekeepers. The effects will first be seen in the California almond industry because this crop is the first to flower in February and is the largest user of honeybee pollination. Beekeepers in this industry claim that by 2012, they'll need 2 million commercial hives.

If enough bees are not alive, farmers who have relied on those beekeepers are going to have to import bees from Canada and Mexico, meaning higher prices for pollination, translating into higher grocery prices for those fruits and vegetables that we adore. Honey and other bee products, including bee venom, bee pollen, royal jelly, and propolis all will increase in price as well.

There is an ability to solve this CCD problem by addressing the issue of colony health in a comprehensive manner and working collaboratively with scientists and beekeepers. By planting crops that attract bees for pollination, year-round food can be assured for the bees. Other studies are being done on the environmental stress of bees and the role of genetics.

Talk of alternative pollinators, such as other bee species and moths or thrips is also being discussed. You can also do something by supporting your local beekeepers and buying local honey and other bee products. You can also write your congress person and senators to urge CCD research funding. Most of all, be grateful for the millions of honeybees that make your meals so delicious.

About the Author

More information is available on premier local [bee products](#) is available at VitaNet ®, LLC Health Food Store. <http://vitanetonline.com/>

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