

Sample Letter to the Editor - Saving America's Pollinator Act

Dear Editor,

If you aren't concerned by the increasing reports of bee die-offs, you should be. Honeybee hives are failing at a rate of 30-40% each year – record highs – and more than half of North America's bumble bee species are declining. It's true that there are many factors contributing to this, but pesticides are a big one that often get overlooked or marginalized by those reporting on this issue.

Pesticides in general, especially the class of pesticides called neonicotinoids, have become increasingly linked to large-scale bee die-offs in Oregon, as well as across the country. They can both kill bees directly, and harm bees in such a way that they are more vulnerable to diseases, parasites, and predation. In June 2013, researchers found that more than 50,000 bumble bees had died because of exposure to a neonicotinoid pesticide applied to flowering trees.

There's a quote, supposedly attributed to Albert Einstein, that says human civilization would only last four years if all the bees disappeared. Whether or not that is true, these dramatic declines in bee populations are surely wreaking havoc in the environment and the economy. Pollination is an environmental service that many plants depend on bees to provide. Our ecosystem will be altered drastically if bees are suddenly not around to pollinate plants anymore.

Moreover, farmers depend on pollinators for crop production. In the U.S, honeybees are responsible for at least \$15 billion worth of crop pollination annually (Morse R.A. and N. Calderone. The value of honey bees as pollinators of U.S. crops in 2000. Bee Culture. The Magazine of American Beekeeping. 128(3), March 2000, 16 pp.). They are responsible for every third bite of food we eat.

Why don't we get rid of these pesticides that are harming bees? Other countries have done so. Right now there is a federal bill, the Saving America's Pollinators Act (HR 2692), which would suspend use of the worst neonicotinoid pesticides and direct EPA to perform a deeper evaluation of their impacts on pollinators. I for one, am in favor of that bill, and I've called my representative and asked them to support it. I urge you to call your representative too, and ask them to help protect the bees.

Thank You,
