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Bees Get Their Day at the State Capitol

12,000 Oregonians sign petition to ban neonicotinoids

Salem, OR 11/21/2013: During today’s Legislative Days session, the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee will hear testimony from scientists, bee keepers and agriculture businesses about the suspected link between a class of pesticides and the death of bees in Oregon and across the nation. Advocates for effective bee protection policies will be at the State Capitol to present nearly 12,000 signatures from Oregon residents on a petition to ban neonicotinoids, the pesticide considered to be responsible for massive bee die-offs around the world.

Following the deaths of bumble bees in Wilsonville and Hillsboro, the role of pesticides and the health of bees has become a topic of concern to large scale bee keepers who transport bees across the landscape to provide pollination services, as well as to backyard gardeners who keep hives for honey production and urban farming.

The [Oregon Department of Agriculture confirmed](#) that a neonicotinoid application on flowering linden trees was the cause of death for 50,000 bumble bees on June 15, 2013. Its own investigation led the Department to [restrict the use of 18 insecticide products](#) containing the active ingredient dinotefuran effective June 27, 2013 while the investigative process continues. Common product trade names homeowners should be aware of during the temporary ban include Safari, Venom, Scorpion, and Zylam. The European Union has placed a two-year ban on neonicotinoid products, but the United States has not yet taken action to protect bees.

Advocacy groups Beyond Toxics and the Oregon League of Conservation Voters have joined together to work on increasing protections for bees in Oregon. The Oregon Legislature may be called upon to play a role in future restrictions.

Today, Beyond Toxics will deliver 12,000 petition signatures directly to Kata Coba, the director of the state’s agricultural agency, asking for a ban on neonicotinoids.

“Having the massive bee die-off in Oregon signals that our state should take immediate action to prevent this kind of fiasco,” said Lisa Arkin, Executive Director at Beyond Toxics. “The Wilsonville event was not isolated; Oregon bee keepers are consistently reporting tremendous losses of bee colonies.”

Earlier this year, OLCV collected over 2000 signatures from Oregonians urging retail nurseries and garden shops to remove neonicotinoids from their shelves. Similar efforts in Lane County resulted in Jerry’s Home Improvement Centers labeling harmful pesticides and providing fact sheets that consumers can use to make informed choices. Stores from Bandon (101 Plants and More) to Milwaukie (Concentrates) have agreed to remove the products completely.

“Oregonians want to protect bees,” said Christy Splitt, External Affairs Director at OLCV. “They want to be sure that they are not inadvertently buying harmful chemicals themselves, and they want to be sure that licensed pesticide applicators understand the effects of neonicotinoids.”

The [Beauty of the Bee Photography Exhibit](#) will also come to the Capitol on November 21. The traveling exhibit features fifteen close-up photographs of bees and flowers. The exhibit grew from Beyond Toxics’ annual photography contest, *Imagining a World Beyond Toxics*. “The images capture the bee in her everyday world of intense colors and textures,” said Arkin.

Bee pollination is responsible for two-thirds of the world’s food and fiber crops. According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture there has been a steep rise in numbers of commercial honeybee hives that have disappeared in the US due to colony collapse disorder (CCD). This is a significant threat to agricultural production and the food our families depend on.

More information can be found on this Oregon State University resource page:

<http://oregonstate.edu/ua/ncs/archives/2013/oct/osu-updates-resources-protecting-bees-pesticides>

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