

National Honey Bee Advisory Board



Promoting Honey Bee Sustainability

Balanced Pesticide Policy Evidence-Based Decisions Proactive Education



April 20, 2010

NHBAB represents the two National Beekeeper Trade Associations in the U.S.: the American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) and the American Honey Producers Association (AHPA)

NHBAB believes that certain pesticides deleteriously impact the health of honey bee colonies; threaten the sustainability of the U.S. beekeeping industry; and significantly imperil our national food supply.

All Members of NHBAB are Professional Beekeepers. As such, each has experience with pesticide related mortality in their respective honey bee operations. They were chosen to serve this industry-wide capacity because of their personal and professional qualifications.

Please contact any board member with your questions, comments, or concerns:

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Dear Senator – Congressman,

The enclosed video, *Nicotine Bees*, vividly describes a very real threat to the pollinators of our country today: systemic pesticides. Many people are unaware of the recent and profound shift in chemical pesticide application occurring in agriculture. Chemical pesticides used to be applied to a crop to control pests. With the recent advent of systemic pesticides and GMO technologies (genetically modified organisms), pests are controlled by putting the chemical control “into the crop plant tissues.”

Systemically applied pesticides and GMOs both share a common trait: chemical pest control is achieved by delivering the chemical “into” the plant, not “onto” the plant. With this style of delivery, the chemical moves from root tip to leaf tip throughout the plant including the blossoms and the nectar and pollen. Control is achieved when any organism attempts to feed on any part of the plant and is made sick or killed.

This new technology for plant protection is very efficient for agriculture, saving both time and money in the field. As with most new technologies, however, there are unintended consequences *which may become manifest insidiously over extended periods of time*. Such is the case with Imidacloprid, a systemic insecticide being used on an expanding number of field and crop applications. Many European countries have banned the use of this nicotine-based chemical, on sunflowers, corn, and other blooming crops. Research has shown that in woody plants, such as trees and bushes, a lethal dose to bees can be expressed in the nectar at label rate of application. The State of California is currently engaged in an additional research data call in of this chemical due to pollinator concerns.

EPA and USDA are working on this important issue. Their efforts need to be increased greatly if we are to better understand the hazards and indirect costs associated with these new technologies. Pollinator protection must become a higher priority. Specific areas of concern include: use of ‘conditional’ registration and heavy reliance on industry research data.

In our efforts to control pests, we may have crossed a threshold, and become too good at it, imperiling pollinators in the process. Managed honey bees numbered over six million hives in 1950; today they down to just over two million and falling. As you watch this video, please keep in mind the essential role that pollinators play in the botanical world. Flowers are the sexual expression of plants. Fertilization must occur to provide the essential foods fruits, nuts and vegetables we have come to rely on for one-third of our diet.

The National Honey Bee Advisory Board and other organizations looks forward to working together with you in Congress to address National Pesticide policy deficiencies.

Sincerely,

Darren Cox, Co-Chair

David Hackenberg, Co-Chair