

ARE NEONICOTINOIDS KILLING BEES?

<http://IndoCropCircles.wordpress.com>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 26, 2012

CONTACTS:

Mace Vaughan, Pollinator Program Director, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation; (503) 753-6000, mace@xerces.org

Scott Black, Executive Director, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation; (503) 449-3792, sblack@xerces.org

ARE NEONICOTINOIDS KILLING BEES?

Report looks at the facts behind pesticide controversy

PORTLAND, Ore.--- A report released today by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation details potential negative impacts of neonicotinoid insecticides to honey bees and other important agricultural pollinators.

Beekeepers and environmentalists have expressed growing concern about the impact of this class of insecticides. Those concerns are based on the fact that neonicotinoids are absorbed into plant tissue and can be present in pollen and nectar, making them toxic to pollinators.

A possible link between neonicotinoids and honey bee die-offs has led to controversy across the United States and Europe. Several European countries have reexamined the use of neonicotinoids in crops such as corn, canola and sunflower.

"This comprehensive report summarizes all of the peer reviewed research on the impact of these pesticides on bees", said Jennifer Hopwood, Xerces Society Pollinator Specialist and co-author of the report. "We hope this information will allow for better informed decision making by those who regulate and use these insecticides."

Some of the major findings of the report include:

- Several of these insecticides are highly toxic to honey bees and bumblebees.
- Neonicotinoid residues are found in pollen and nectar consumed by pollinators such as bees and butterflies. The residues can reach lethal concentrations in some situations.
- Neonicotinoids can persist in soil for months or years after a single application. Measurable amounts of residues were found in woody plants up to six years after application.
- Untreated plants may absorb chemical residues left over in the soil from the previous year.
- Products approved for homeowners to use in gardens, lawns, and on ornamental trees have manufacturer-recommended application rates up to 120 times higher than rates approved for agricultural crops.
- There is no direct link demonstrated between neonicotinoids and the honey bee syndrome known as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). However, recent

research suggests that neonicotinoids may make honey bees more susceptible to parasites and pathogens, including the intestinal parasite *Nosema*, which has been implicated as one causative factor in CCD.

- Many neonicotinoid pesticides that are sold to homeowners for use on lawns and gardens do not have any mention of the risks of these products to bees, and the label guidance for products used in agriculture is not always clear or consistent.

"The report shows that these insecticides are likely having a negative impact on honey bees, bumble bees and other agriculturally important pollinators," said Scott Hoffman Black, Executive Director of the Xerces Society and co-author of the report. "It is vital that regulators reassess the bee-safety of all neonicotinoid pesticide products, reexamine or suspend all conditional registrations until we understand how to manage risks, and require clear labels so that consumers know that these products kill bees and other pollinators.

The report also recommends that the US Environmental Protection Agency adopt a more cautious approach to approving all new pesticides, using a comprehensive assessment process that adequately addresses the risks to honey bees, bumble bees and solitary bees in all life stages.

"We recommend a variety of risk assessment measures that will help us understand the real risk that bees and other pollinators face from new pesticides," said Mace Vaughan, Xerces Pollinator Program Director and report co-author. "We need better methods to assess risk for honey bees and new methods to include other important pollinator groups to ensure we do not negatively impact populations of these important animals."

Please visit www.xerces.org for a full copy of this report.

ABOUT THE XERCES SOCIETY

The Xerces Society is a nonprofit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitat. Since 1971, the Society has been at the forefront of invertebrate protection worldwide, harnessing the knowledge of scientists and the enthusiasm of citizens to implement conservation programs. To learn more about our work or to donate to the Society, please visit www.xerces.org.

<http://IndoCropCircles.wordpress.com>