



MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

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ONTARIO BEEKEEPERS RECOVER HIVE NUMBERS DESPITE MASSIVE WINTER LOSSES

MILTON, ON. A recent Stats Can report shows honeybee colony numbers are up despite record winter losses. But these numbers don't tell the full story. The recovery of colony numbers came at a cost to beekeepers in weaker hives, poor honey production, record queen replacement and fewer strong colonies needed for pollination.

Ontario beekeepers were able to bring their numbers back up through aggressive management practices, such as splitting surviving hives into multiple hives, as well as replacement of queens from domestic and imported stock. These practices however were costly. Last year, Ontario beekeepers had to import over 33,000 queens and nearly 20,000 packages of bees.

Honey production in Ontario was especially hard hit as new hives are not as populous as overwintered hives and therefore produce less honey. Ontario honey bees produced an average of only 73 pounds per hive compared to the Canadian average of 117 pounds per hive for 2014. Ontario's honey trade deficit now stands at nearly \$15 million when Canada, itself, is a net exporter of honey.

Recovery of lost colonies at this level is difficult but not uncommon. Over the past decade, Ontario beekeepers have routinely used intensive management to recover from losses nearing 40%. Alberta, as well, recovered from 44% losses in 2008 and 2009. "What happened this year is typical of how Ontario beekeepers are paying the cost of widespread exposure to neonicotinoid pesticides," says OBA President and queen breeder, Tibor Szabo. "The heroic measures required to recover from this degree of loss is not sustainable in the long run."

Szabo concludes "It's not just our own bees we are worried about. While honey bee populations can be managed, wild bees suffer the same stresses and may have no way to recover their numbers." ***

Find the Statistics Canada report here:

<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=0010007&pattern=&csid=>

For Interview: Tibor Szabo: 519 836 5617 or 519 221 4077

For background: Julie White, 647-988-5942 or enews@ontariobee.com