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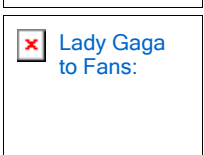
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Jan. 24, 2008

# What's Wrong With The Bees?

## Steve Kroft Reports On The Mysterious Disappearance Of Bees



(CBS)  
"Under  
normal

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Over the past year, some beekeepers have lost up to 90 percent of their hives. The losses could have serious effects because honeybees help produce a third of the foods we eat. Steve Kroft reports.



Beekeeper Dave Hackenberg (CBS)

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circumstances in the dead beehive, other bees would have been coming in, robbing honey out. And the honey wasn't even... there was no bees even bothering. I mean, just, it was like a ghost town," Hackenberg explains.

"Like something had happened to the hive and...the other bees knew it?" Kroft asks.

"That's right," Hackenberg agrees.

Since Hackenberg made his discovery, a third of the honeybees in the country have died off or disappeared; some beekeepers have lost up to 90 percent of their hives. The Department of Agriculture has set up a working group of scientists from six universities, the Department of

Defense, and the Environmental Protection Agency to try and isolate the cause. Jeff Pettis of the Department of Agriculture is leading the effort.

Asked what he thinks the problem is, Pettis tells Kroft, "I think the problem is complicated. I don't think it's going to come down to a single factor. We're not going to be able to pin all of these losses on either one factor, or even maybe one combination of factors."

Autopsies of bees remaining in the collapsed hives have confirmed what scientists have long suspected: that honeybees in general are not in good health and are afflicted with all sorts of ailments. Their systems have been weakened by mites and other parasites, by poor nutrition, and exposure to pesticides. And scientists at Columbia University have detected the presence of a virus that seems to be prevalent in the collapsed hives.

"This virus is associated with colonies that are in poor health. But we don't have any cause and effect yet. What we have is that it seems to be a marker, an indicator that colonies are in trouble," Pettis explains.

"So you don't know whether the virus is causing the problem or is a symptom of the problem," Kroft remarks.

"Exactly," Pettis agrees. "It could be the straw that broke the camel's back. It could also just be an indicator that these bees are under stress. And that's allowing this virus to grow."

"We knew we've had viruses for years. But all of a sudden, something has made everything kind of go haywire," Hackenberg says.

"And you think it was?" Kroft asks.

"I think, basically, I think the insecticides are breakin' down the immune system," Hackenberg theorizes.

He says most beekeepers believe the culprit is a relatively new type of pesticide called "neonicotinoids," a synthetic chemical based on nicotine. They are now used almost everywhere, from cornfields to golf courses, and on anything from the front lawn to the family pet. They are thought to be much safer for humans and animals than other pesticides, yet still toxic enough to kill insects.

"Well, basically, the chemical, the manufacturers of this product say it breaks down their

immune system, causes memory loss, causes nervous system disorders. It causes the insects to quit feeding," Hackenberg says.

Asked if he thinks that this is what has happened to the bees, Hackenberg tells Kroft, "That's exactly what we're seeing happen inside these honeybee colonies."

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Produced By Andy Court and Keith Sharman




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

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