

OFA encourages growers to be mindful of pollinators

Agriculture relies heavily on pollinators for its success, as pollinators play an essential role in plant reproduction and food production. Bees are the best-known pollinators. However, other pollinators include wasps, beetles, flies, butterflies, and bats to name a few. Factors that affect the health of bees and pollinators are numerous and complex: Pollinators are sensitive to many stressors and changes in their environment, including habitat destruction, chemical use, pathogens, and land management practices. A multi-faceted strategy, including best management practices when using crop protection products, is needed to ensure the health of bees and other pollinators, now and in the future.

Insect pollinators can be exposed to chemicals by flying in or near sprayed or planting areas. Pollinators are also exposed when they consume contaminated nectar, pollen or water. In Canada, pesticides are highly regulated to ensure they do not pose a risk to human or environmental health. However, some crop protection products, if not applied correctly, can have damaging effects on bees and their colonies, including bee deaths and colony losses. It is imperative that growers are mindful of pollinators when applying crop protection products.

To ensure our pollinators are protected, farmers and beekeepers should establish a farmer-beekeeper relationship, and be in close contact with one another when hives are located on or near farmland. Communication and cooperation between beekeepers, farmers, and applicators is critical. It is important that beekeepers understand cropping practices and pest management practices used by farmers in the vicinity of their hives. Equally, farmers and applicators should be aware of the location of hives, and be mindful of chemical products and application practices which may affect bee colonies. It is crucial that a balance is maintained between all parties, to ensure a sustainable food system while protecting pollinator health.

OFA encourages growers to be mindful of pollinators, and follow best management practices to keep them safe when using crop protection products. One of every three bites of food rely on insect pollinators. Bees and other pollinators are essential for fresh fruit and vegetable production, and play a pivotal role in agriculture. By practicing pollinator-friendly management practices, growers can help beekeepers while maintaining a healthy population of insect pollinators.