



Minnesota Honey Producer Association

2016 Policy Statement

The problems vexing the nation's and Minnesota's honey bee industry haven't changed much or gone away in recent years. Ranked in order of least importance, are honey bee diseases and parasites, chemicals and pollution, and most importantly; limited honey bee habitat (lack of nectar and pollen producing plants). Below is a very brief overview on these issues and the Minnesota Honey Producers Association's position on them.

Parasites and Disease

The MHPA has enjoyed a close relationship with the University of Minnesota's honey bee program for decades. We support the University on all matters concerning honey bee and colony health. The controlling of disease and parasites is an ongoing and ever changing battle. MHPA always supports legislation that involves research pertaining to colony health.

Agrichemicals and Pollution

Agrichemicals and pollution are areas of growing concern. MHPA recognizes that farmers need and have the right to protect their crops and investments. Yet at the same time, there is mounting research that shows that systemic pesticides, especially those in the neonicotinoid class, have deleterious effects on honey bees. MHPA would like to see a reduction in the use of neonicotinoids on the landscape. Minnesota's beekeepers prefer the good neighbor approach to this issue. It is our desire to work cooperatively with our neighbors and Minnesota's agriculture industry to figure out how best to share the land. MHPA supports efforts to this end.

Honey Bee Habitat

Lack of honey bee and pollinator forage is the largest factor in the decline of honey bee health. With adequate nutrition, honey bees can withstand higher disease and parasite loads. They also have an improved chance of coping with pesticides. Urban sprawl, changes in land use, and farming practices have dramatically reduced the acreage of flowering plants available for pollinators. Furthermore, not all flowers are equal in terms of nectar and pollen production. There are political/bureaucratic reasons for lack of suitable bee forage as well. Since 1995 legumes have not been included in MN's CRP seed mixes because, they are "introduced" species. MHPA feels that improving honey bee habitat should be the simplest remedy to improving our state's honey bee industry. MHPA would like to see a reduction in roadside mowing and a delay in mowing until Aug. 15. We would like to see the elimination of roadside spraying. There have been laws in the books about roadside spraying for years, but they are not enforced. The accumulated acreage alongside the state's roadways would have a big impact on bee and pollinator health if managed properly. Since the laws are not enforced, MHPA is seeking out 2 pilot projects to study the feasibility of a roadside wildflower program along state highways, and a second project involving the planting of legumes (ie., alfalfa) on state/DNR owned land in a cooperative effort with local farmers.