



Pollinator Stewardship Council

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Honey Bee Forage and Nutrition Summit: USDA Proposes a “Band-Aid on a Cancer”

The USDA assembled speakers for a Honey Bee Forage and Nutrition Summit October 20-21 to address the food needs of honey bees. The recent Farm Bill approved \$8M for Conservation Land in agricultural areas for pollinators. With the President’s Memorandum in June of this year requiring federal agencies to implement pollinator plans on federal lands (by Sept. 21), and the Highways BEE Act seeking support of pollinator plantings along roadsides and utility rights-of-way, there is a desire to support the food supply of our pollinators, and therefore our food supply. At the USDA Summit not all of the federal agencies were present; and, the general concept was each agency would have to develop their own protocols, policies, and permits for beekeepers to access any pollinator forage growing on federal lands. At the USDA Forage and Nutrition Summit not all of the federal agencies were present. The general concept that the beekeepers went to the summit with was that Federal land agency would develop their own protocols, policies, and permits for beekeepers to access any pollinator forage growing on federal lands and that the Federal land agencies would try and improve bee forage and stop removing bee forage from government controlled land. This Summit clearly showed why the federal agencies and the Presidential Memorandum deadlines have been moved further out, to an undisclosed date.

Many of the federal agencies at The USDA Forage Summit presented why not s than then solutions. The beekeepers commutated to the agencies the need for quick action, and solutions for the immediate and the long term. The beekeepers urged USDA ARS and Land Grants to delovep a agricultural system is not so chemically dependent for the betterment of all.

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Supplemental feeding of honey bees was discussed; the beekeepers pointed out that livestock in feedlots were fed their natural diet of grains and grasses and to expect bees to live on substitutes was not a sustainable practice.

Research was presented concerning the nutritional value of pollen and the improved health of bees. Those bees fed supplements due to poor pollen sources were not as healthy. To spend time and money on research for a pollen substitute is like placing a band-aid on a cancer. What bees and other pollinators need is what only nature can give, clean forage.

Access to federal (non-crop) lands would assist in providing a clean forage area for honey bees, albeit as a stop-gap measure. Hopefully the federal land agencies listened to the concerns and needs of beekeepers and these lands will come available.

In agricultural areas, beekeepers simply seek the best use of the \$8M designated for pollinator forage on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and EQIP enrolled lands. Yellow and white sweet clovers return nitrogen and other nutrients to the soil, and provide a wonderful nectar and pollen source for honey bees. Clover "hitched a ride" to North America soon after honey bees landed. Beekeepers seek the best forage for their bees, the best plantings that support agriculture, and the best regional seed mixes that will have the best results for all.

The Pollinator Stewardship Council believes our native pollinators are just as valuable as our managed pollinators. After more than 400 years, the native and managed pollinators have worked out their places in the ecosystem. After more than 400 years, clover too has a place in the landscape for pollinators.

Beekeepers have watched forage bees need disappear as goldenrod, clover, and wildflowers have been decimated by herbicide use on ditches, fence lines, by government agencies. Beekeepers now await the USDA *Pesticide Summit* as part of the Honey Bee Health strategy to ensure the complete discussion of the factors impacting upon honey bee health. As humans need safe, nutritious food in order to survive, so do honey bees. Their food, pollen and nectar, must be free of bee toxic pesticides. As beekeepers continue to work with agriculture, regulators, land managers, and utilities it is important to understand bees, like humans, need a healthy, safe food supply. Help us help the bees.

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The USDA Forage Summit presented more questions and problems than solutions. To propose taking two years or as long as four years to study, determine, and plan what bee forage to plant and where, will continue to keep the beekeeping industry teetering on the edge of collapse. The agricultural system is broken, and chemically dependent. Agriculture should be able to support the higher organisms, including humans and our food supply.

Research was presented concerning the impact of fungicides and pesticides causing a detrimental impact to the nutritional value of the pollen. Supplemental feeding of honey bees was discussed; but bees are not stockyard livestock. To spend time and money on research for a supplemental feed for bees is like placing a band-aide on a cancer. Research was presented showing bees are healthier with diverse pollen and nectar. Those bees fed supplements due to poor pollen sources were not as healthy. Access to federal (non-crop) lands would assist in providing a clean forage area for honey bees, albeit as a stop-gap measure. Even this “stop-gap measure” was denied beekeepers.

In agricultural areas, beekeepers simply seek the best use of the \$8M designated for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for pollinator habitat. Yellow and white sweet clovers return nitrogen and other nutrients to the soil, and provide a wonderful nectar and pollen source for honey bees. Clover “hitched a ride” to North America soon after honey bees landed. Beekeepers seek the best forage for their bees, the best plantings that support agriculture, and the best regional seed mixes that will have the best results for all.

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Beekeepers have watched the food supply for their bees change to thousands of acres of one crop. Beekeepers have watched forage disappear as goldenrod, clover, and wildflowers have been decimated by herbicide use on ditches, fence lines, hedgerows, and tree lines. Beekeepers now await the USDA *Pesticide Summit* as part of the Honey Bee Health strategy to ensure the complete discussion of the factors impacting upon honey bee health. As humans need safe, nutritious food in order to survive, so do honey bees. Their food, pollen and nectar, must be free of bee toxic pesticides. As beekeepers

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Sweetclover- Animal and Range Sciences, Extension Service, Montana State Univ.

<http://animalrangeextension.montana.edu/articles/forage/Species/Legumes/Sweetclover.htm>

Penn State Extension—Bees and cover crops

<http://ento.psu.edu/extension/factsheets/bees-and-cover-crops>

Glyphosate and Its Degradation Product AMPA Occur Frequently and Widely in U.S. Soils, Surface Water, Groundwater, and Precipitation

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jawr.12159/abstract>

Common weed killer is widespread in the environment

http://toxics.usgs.gov/highlights/2014-04-23-glyphosate_2014.html

Insecticides Similar to Nicotine Widespread in Midwest

<http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3941#.VDwgWxawQ9I>

Detections of the Neonicotinoid Insecticide Imidacloprid in Surface Waters of Three Agricultural Regions of California, USA, 2010-2011

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22228315>

Bees, birds may suffer long-term consequences from common pesticides

By Alanna Mitchell, CBC News Posted: Oct 04, 2014

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/bees-birds-may-suffer-long-term-consequences-from-common-pesticides-1.2786859>

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The USDA assembled speakers for a Honey Bee Forage and Nutrition Summit October 20-21 to discuss the food needs of honey bees. The recent Farm Bill approved \$8M for Conservation Land in agricultural areas for pollinators. There is an obvious national desire to support the food supply of our pollinators with the release of the President’s Memorandum in June, and the introduction of the Highways BEE Act, and the Saving America's Pollinators Act. Beekeepers went to the summit with the understanding the Federal Land Agencies would develop their own protocols, policies, and permits for beekeepers to access any pollinator forage growing on federal lands. The Federal land agencies would then try to improve bee forage and stop removing bee forage from government controlled land. This Summit clearly showed why the federal agencies and the Presidential Memorandum deadlines have now been moved further out, to an undisclosed date.

Many of the federal agencies at the USDA Forage Summit presented obstacles and not solutions. Soil contamination levels in farm ground from pesticide residuals was raised as a concern, and CRP ground needs to be kept pesticide free.

The beekeepers communicated to the agencies while pollinator safe additional forage areas are definitely needed, we cannot plant our way out of this pollinator mortality crisis. The gorilla in the room is poisons applied to pollinators’ food supply. The beekeepers urged USDA-ARS and Land Grant academic institutions to develop an agricultural system not so chemically dependent. We need quick action, and solutions for the immediate and the long-term for the betterment of all.

X, Y, and X suggested that feed supplements be created so that bees needed for pollination of specialty crops could be shuttled into “feedlots” for most of the year which would then allow farmers to continue to indiscriminately poison the land without killing indicator species. Feeds utilized by the animal industry are natural feeds: grains and dried "forage" (not grasses). Those feeds are complete, natural and, concentrated. Present honeybee supplements are not concentrated pollen, but alternative incomplete unnatural feeds. They will not sustain a colony, much less grow a colony.

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