

The Health of Honey Bees

Frequently Asked Questions



What is the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) doing to help bees?

Pollinators are important to Nevada agriculture industries like alfalfa seed, melons, fruits and vegetables, and of course, honey production.

Some of our activities and responsibilities:

- The NDA participates in USDA's national honey bee survey and supports USDA efforts to protect pollinators.
- In July 2016, the NDA released its Nevada Managed Pollinator Protection Plan (MP3), to increase communication between beekeepers and pesticide applicators, for the protection of managed colonies.
- In Nevada, beekeepers are required to notify pest control companies of the location of their bee colonies. When applying pesticides, pest control companies are required to avoid the colonies in order to protect the bees.
- The NDA has the authority to investigate reports of bee kills and to levy fines or take other legal action, if pesticide misuse occurs.



An adult worker honey bee collecting pollen. *Photo courtesy of Jeff Knight, state entomologist.*

Are honey bees and other pollinators threatened in Nevada?

The NDA has received no reports of extraordinary bee colony losses in Nevada. Anecdotal evidence supports there are more colonies of honey bees in Nevada now than there have ever been. However, there are reports that identify climate change and habitat loss as primary threats to pollinator health, especially bumble bees.

The biggest threat to beekeeping in Nevada is the Africanized honey bee in southern Nevada. The state has a quarantine program in place to keep Africanized honey bees from moving north of Clark County. The NDA recommends regular re-queening of honey bee colonies in Clark County to control Africanization.

Are pesticides hurting bees in Nevada?

The NDA has not seen any significant pollinator or bee kills in Nevada from commercially applied pesticides. Both urban and agricultural pesticide applicators should follow pesticide label directions, and use integrated pest management (IPM). IPM is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach that uses a variety of pest control strategies, focusing on preventative methods and only using pesticides when absolutely necessary.

Is having my own backyard colony going to help the honey bee situation?

Having a honey bee colony is a great way to produce your own honey. If you do want to have a backyard colony of honey bees, be sure to inform your neighbors, as some people have allergies to bee stings. Be sure to also follow all county and/or city regulations and follow good bee keeping practices, including providing adequate food and water for the bees.

Are there other pollinators in Nevada besides honey bees?

There are more than 1,000 species of native bees in Nevada. Many of these native bees can be encouraged to help with pollination on small farms and in urban setting as an alternative to honey bees.

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What is Colony Collapse Disorder?

Colony Collapse Disorder is the sudden mass disappearance of the majority of worker bees in a colony. Since 2006, USDA and international research has shown Colony Collapse Disorder does not have a single cause. It is primarily related to stressed colonies and associated with large migratory beekeepers hauling honey bees over large distances. Contributing causes of Colony Collapse Disorder are the Varroa mite, other parasites and pathogens, migratory stress, and poor nutrition. The Varroa mite is a major bee parasite that was introduced into the U.S. in 1987 and spread across the U.S. during the 1990s and 2000s.

Research suggests that the use of neonicotinoid insecticides are a potential contributing factor, and the NDA supports the EPA risk assessment process in evaluating these claims. NDA also supports the USDA-led Colony Collapse Disorder Steering Committee and Colony Collapse Disorder Action Plan.

Where can I get more information?

- **The NDA website:** agri.nv.gov/environmental_services
- **State Entomologist** (*find the Managed Pollinator Protection Plan here*): agri.nv.gov/entomology
- **Northern Nevada Beekeepers Association:** northernnevadabeekeepersassociation.org
- **USDA Carl Hayden Bee Research Center in Tucson, Arizona:** ars.usda.gov/pacific-west-area/tucson-az/honey-bee-research/
- **The USDA Agricultural Research Service website:** ars.usda.gov
- **The EPA website:** epa.gov/pollinator-protection
epa.gov/pesticides
- **Bee Informed:** beeinformed.org
- **Project Apis m.:** projectapism.org
- **Pollinator Partnership:** pollinator.org



Bumble bees are an important native pollinator in Nevada and are much more efficient pollinators than honey bees. *Photo courtesy of Jeff Knight, state entomologist.*