

What's the BUZZ?

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There has been a resurgence of concern this past year on the health and well being of the honey bee. The European honeybee has had a rough time for the past 30 years. The current situation has been labeled Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) and the media has been abuzz with people speculating on its cause and significance.



Colony Collapse Disorder is a little understood phenomenon in which worker bees in a beehive or Western honey bee colony abruptly disappear. There have been conflicting reports as to how widespread CCD is and also if it even exists at all. Hive death can occur for many reasons, including disease, lack of nectar, poor weather conditions, insect pests like varroa mites or hive beetles and inexperienced or poor beekeeping.

There are many theories as to the cause of CCD and as yet, there has been nothing definitive. It is more likely a series of reasons that are leading to hive collapse. Most notably, organic beekeepers have not reported any hive deaths due to CCD, which seems mostly concentrated among the bees of migratory beekeepers. Transporting hives from place to place exposes the bees to more pesticides and disease and the stress of constant relocation. Mono-cultures may also have an affect on the bees, limiting nectar sources as we eliminate flowering weeds.

Many Ohio beekeepers lost hives this past winter, but not necessarily due to CCD. The weather pattern in 2006 was a tough one for bees. In the fall, the lack of rain led to a dearth of nectar and colonies went into the winter small and weak. Bees were forced to consume more of their honey stores during the long warm fall and warm early winter. In late winter, we were hit with a deep cold spell with heavy snow. That was a deadly blow to many hives.

In winter, worker bees form a ball around the queen and brood, shivering to keep the brood warm. As the bees feed off of the stored honey, the stores closest to the bee ball are used up. When the temperature drops, the bees on the outer edge of the ball freeze and die, shrinking the ball in size and making it hard to get the stores of food in the outer edges of the comb. The bees starve because they can't get to the food stores. Eventually, the ball gets too small to keep the core warm and the core freezes.

Like many others in Ohio, Farmpark's outside hives succumbed to the bad weather. New bees were acquired this spring and are well established and producing honey for the fall harvest. Let's hope the

weatherman cooperates with us and predicts the right amount of sun and rain for an abundance of summer and fall flowers and nectar. You can come view our hives and see how they are doing at our new Apiary Information Kiosk south of the Plant Science Center. If you want to see them up close, check out the Observation Hive inside the Plant Science Center. If you have questions on how Ohio's bees are doing or what new information is out on CCD, our staff will be happy to find the answer for you.



SYMPTOMS

A colony collapse resulting from CCD is generally characterized by all of these conditions occurring simultaneously:

- Complete absence of adult bees in colonies, with little or no build-up of dead bees in or around the colonies
- Presence of capped brood in colonies. Bees normally will not abandon a hive until the capped brood has all hatched
- Presence of food stores, both honey and bee pollen:
 - which are not immediately robbed by other bees
 - which, when attacked by hive pests such as wax moths and small hive beetles, the attack is noticeably delayed.

Precursor symptoms that may arise before the final colony collapse are:

- Insufficient workforce to maintain the brood that is present
- Workforce seems to be made up of young adult bees
- Queen is uncharacteristically evident outside the hive
- The colony members are reluctant to consume provided feed, such as sugar syrup and protein supplement

Source: www.wikipedia.com

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