

Bees and Canola: Thriving Together

The link between canola and bees is strong and growing. Simply put, canola is good for bees, and bees are good for canola. Together, they are good for the health of our ecosystem and our economy.

The Canola Council of Canada (CCC) and the Canadian Honey Council are working together to maintain this mutually beneficial relationship. As we foster communication and co-operation, both the canola and honey industries will continue to grow and thrive in Western Canada.

Honeybees and canola co-exist very well

- **In the past decade, the number of honeybees in Canada has reached near-record levels** (more than 722,000 colonies Canada-wide in 2015, up from 600,000 in 2000)¹. More than 70 per cent of these colonies are in Western Canada, where canola has become one of the most important crops.
- **The health of hives in Western Canada remains high as these two industries grow in close proximity.** The overwhelming majority of beekeepers have reported no problems with canola production practices. Beekeepers seek out canola fields because they are such a good nectar/pollen source, and canola growers know it is in their own best interest to protect this mutually beneficial relationship.
- **Bees are not affected by treated canola seed.** There has been no evidence that planting canola seed treated with neonicotinoid insecticides place pollinators at risk. Seed treatments used for canola remain on the seed and are not released as dust into the air, and field studies show no chronic or acute poisonings from seed treatments when analyzed at field scale rates.²

Why the canola industry cares about protecting bees

Bees can have a positive impact on canola production. Pollinators are needed for production of quality hybrid seed – a vital component of the industry.

Research suggests pollination by bees may also:

- Encourage higher yields;
- Promote more uniform ripening and earlier pod setting;³ and
- Increase the number of pods per plant and seeds per pod, as well as the seed weight.⁴

Canola is the ideal habitat and food source for honeybees

- Canola flowers produce a lot of nectar and this nectar has a good sugar profile for honey production.⁵ Canola pollen offers bees a good nutritional balance of amino acids and protein.⁶
- Plentiful canola blooms allow bees to feed efficiently, without covering large distances. Canola fields bloom for relatively long periods, so one field can provide bees with a good source of nectar for up to a month.

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- Canola honey is preferred by consumers. The light colour and mild flavour make canola honey a top choice in the marketplace.⁷

How the Canola Council promotes bee-friendly and canola-friendly practices

In consultation with the Canadian Honey Council, the Canola Council is ensuring that canola production practices are compatible with pollinator health.

The Canola Council encourages farmers and aerial applicators to talk to nearby honey producers about pest management plans, and to avoid spraying insecticides when canola fields are in bloom and during peak foraging hours. Our agronomists are spreading the word through informative presentations, which have been well-attended by canola growers.

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