

# COMB Courier

Mid-Michigan—Land of the bee

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## **From across the pond**

### **Allowing UK to break ban on bee-killing pesticide a ‘scandal’**

By Jonathon Owen in *The Independent* Friday 24, July 2015

The decision to allow British farmers to ignore a European ban on pesticides linked to declining bee populations has been branded a scandal by environmentalists.

The use of neonicotinoid pesticides was banned by the European Commission in 2013, due to scientific evidence of the dangers the chemicals present to the insect pollinators.

But the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has now approved an application by the National Farmers Union (NFU) to use neonicotinoids on 5 percent of oilseed rape crops in England over the coming weeks.

The decision means that farmers will be allowed to use the banned pesticides – which attack the nervous systems of insects – on 74,000 acres of land over a period of 120 days. The NFU claims that the neonicotinoids are needed to protect crops from the cabbage stem flea beetle.

It has been reported that the government ignored the advice of its own experts who were opposed to the NFU’s application.

(UK Prime Minister) David Cameron backed the decision to ease the ban. Speaking at the Royal Welsh Show yesterday, he said: “The EU (European Union) put in place the ban on neonicotinoids, but if scientists start telling us that these things are safer than they thought, then perhaps we can license them. My view as someone from a rural constituency is that we should listen to the local experts such as beekeepers and see what they have to say.”

But environmental campaigners condemned the decision. “Government claims to be open-minded and science-based about bee-harming pesticides are in tatters,” said Paul de Zylva, nature campaigner at Friends of the Earth. “It’s scandalous that the government has caved in to NFU pressure.” More than half a million Britons have signed an online petition calling on Liz Truss, the Environmental Secretary, to “keep the ban on bee-killing pesticides.”

Heidi Herrmann, a spokesperson for the Natural Beekeeping Trust, said: “All independent research has clearly shown the immense damage caused by neonicotinoid pesticides. At a time when bees need all the help they can get, this decision is nothing but scandalous.”

Barry Gardiner, Labor’s shadow Defra minister, accused the government of “giving in to short-term pressures at the expense of the future of British farming.”

A Defra spokesperson said, “We have followed the advice of the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides and our Chief Scientist that a limited emergency authorization of two pesticides requested by farmers should be granted in areas where oil rape crops are at greatest risk of damage.”

Editor’s note: Rapeseed is called canola in North America.

## **Billion Bee March on Washington**

Yes, the farmers do have a union in the United Kingdom. The National Farmers Union has clout in Parliament because they are organized. We should take note of this, at a time when unions are being squeezed out of existence in the U.S. We should take advantage of group dynamics to further our noble cause of keeping honeybees from extinction. Before the colonization of America there were natural pollinators that kept the natural world ticking. With the arrival of the “white man’s fly” in the New World, European honeybees took over the heavy lifting required for human food production. Just as the bees swarm for their betterment, so too should we. It’s time for a Billion Bee March on Washington. Just think of the impact the presence of a billion bees on the Washington mall would have on Congress. It would sting them into action. We don’t have to actually release the bees, but just the thought of it would certainly play havoc with the senses of our senators and representatives.

Congress likes to talk about the importance of bees to our economy, but they give lip service to the chemical industry and the corn and soy boys, because the export of these commodities has the color of green attached to it.

Perhaps we need an organized Beekeepers Union rather than just a loose association of interested parties. You may prize your individuality, but it will avail you not at all when the goons of Monsanto come to call.

Editors note: Monsanto have a private investigator corps that trolls the farmlands of America looking for farmers who dare use GM (genetically modified) treated seed without paying for it. Farmers caught using the seed without permission are sued by Monsanto. GM seed is coated with Round-Up Ready insecticide. 98% of corn seed sold in the U.S. is GM.

## Smoking!

Myth: When we smoke the hive, the bees think it is a forest fire and dive into the hive, take a bagful of honey and head for the next bee tree. Now, think about this, if your house is full of smoke do you immediately head for the fridge and stock up just in case you become homeless. Or do you head for the nearest exit? So, what do you think bees do, Rufus?

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## Bee Read

If you have a comment, query, problem, or an interesting story or anecdote concerning bees that you would like to share with your fellow beekeepers, here is your chance. Send it in to [mjbusybee@frontier.com](mailto:mjbusybee@frontier.com) or [debbie.foote@hotmail.com](mailto:debbie.foote@hotmail.com) or hand it in at the meeting. Jane Carhartt may be contacted at [janesbees@yahoo.com](mailto:janesbees@yahoo.com)  
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## Bee Classifieds

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Deadline for next issue is September 4th