
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2018AGRI0080-002061
Oct. 24, 2018

Ministry of Agriculture

Funding for research and engagement helps local honey bees

VANCOUVER – Five new projects around the province are helping local honey bees and other native pollinators through research and engagement, with support from the Government of British Columbia.

“The innovative techniques local beekeepers are using to improve the health of our bee population are truly amazing,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture. “Research and education are taking us to new places in the effort to help protect B.C.’s bees and secure their vital role as pollinators and honey producers for generations of British Columbians to come.”

In the Fraser Valley, local beekeeper Michael Campbell is focusing on bee diet as an integrated disease management tool for beekeepers. Multiple test hives are being supplemented with a diet of different treatments. After the test period is over, the results will be submitted to local beekeeping associations with the goal of discovering a natural solution to reduce disease among honey bees and other pollinators, and improve overall health.

The Environmental Youth Alliance Society is delivering an 8-week educational program to youth in Metro Vancouver to raise awareness. The project is testing a new best-management practice that hopes to attract more native bees to urban farms and food-producing community gardens. The group is planting native wildflower strips in and around crops to help pollination and potentially increase crop yield.

Prince George beekeeper Roselyne Lambert is monitoring hives with different queens and watching the effect the queens have on their colony’s health and survival. The project studies the development of locally raised bees that have successfully survived four winters without chemical treatment, along with two other breeds from outside the region. All breeds have demonstrated resistance to the parasitic mite, Varroa destructor, which has been proven to be one of the most destructive honey bee pests.

This project focuses on developing a natural alternative to the chemical treatments used for mite control in hives by breeding bees with different traits to help improve hive resilience to mites and reduce colony losses.

Morgan Creek Farm has engaged with over 200 youth through local schools and summer camps to show students how they can do their part to encourage bee-friendly spaces. While on the farm in Nanaimo, students visited the hives in the apiary and toured the farm to learn which plants are bee friendly and promote pollination.

Pollinator Partnership Canada, along with Peninsula Streams Society and Saanich Native Plants, is engaging with schools, communities and First Nations groups to create a pollinator Garry Oak meadow. The program includes bee-awareness activities, assessment of plant

establishment and pollinator value, and guideline creation to help create habitat for wild bees to increase pollination services for surrounding agricultural, urban gardens and ecological systems.

These projects include an educational component paired with hands-on experience to help teach British Columbians about bee habitat in an urban agricultural setting.

These projects have received a total of \$20,845 of provincial funding. The BeeBC program is delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia. It will provide up to \$100,000 over the next two years to support small-scale regional or community-based projects to research, explore, field test and share information about best-management practices associated with bee health.

Quotes:

Michael Campbell, general manager, Campbell's Gold Honey Farm and Meadery –

"We are working in collaboration with Dr. Cameron Lait of Kwantlen Polytechnical University to identify solutions for a new variant of a devastating pathogen (disease) that causes major problems for overwintering bees. We are testing various treatments, including augmenting diets, on multiple hives to see if there are any natural solutions to the disease. We will be reporting our findings to various local bee clubs over the next few months."

Roselyne Lambert, beekeeper –

"Inspired by Dr. Thomas Seeley's research on feral honey bees and Kirk Webster's practices as a commercial treatment-free beekeeper, I am allowing bees to teach me how to better support their own coping strategies and evolution. Most of us local beekeepers end up importing queens from outside our region. I am excited at the possibility that my humble experiments may contribute to offering new locally adapted options to local beekeepers."

Aaron Grant, owner-operator, Morgan Creek Farm –

"I was thrilled to be part of a project that allowed me to utilize my love of teaching paired with my beekeeping activities. The students loved to be out in nature getting involved in a hands-on activity that made them feel empowered. They said they wanted to stay all day and many exclaimed they wanted to work on the farm. I acknowledge and appreciate that the BeeBC project allowed me to implement a bee focused habitat enhancement project on the farm that was not otherwise financially feasible."

Quick Facts:

- The objective of the BeeBC Program is to enhance bee health throughout the province.
- Honey bees play an important part of B.C.'s agriculture sector as pollinators of crops, contributing an estimated \$538 million to the provincial economy.
- Across Canada, honey bees have an economic contribution estimated at over \$3.2 billion.

Learn More:

To learn more about the BeeBC funding program, visit: <http://iafbc.ca/funding-opportunities/bee-bc/>

For information about the Ministry of Agriculture's apiary program, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/animal-production/bees>

Contact:

Jill Milne
Government Communications and Public
Engagement
Ministry of Agriculture
778 676-4460

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect