

Varroa mite parasite, viruses linked more closely to honey bee health, multi-year survey finds

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Honey bee colonies in the United States are in decline, due in part to the ill effects of voracious mites, fungal gut parasites and a wide variety of debilitating viruses. Researchers from the University of Maryland and the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently completed the first comprehensive, multi-year study of honey bee parasites and disease. . . .

The results, published online in the journal *Apidologie* on April 20, 2016, provide an important five-year baseline against which to track future trends. Key findings show that the varroa mite, a major honey bee pest, is far more abundant than previous estimates indicated and is closely linked to several damaging viruses. Also, the results show that the previously rare Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus has skyrocketed in prevalence since it was first detected by the survey in 2010.

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“. . . [O]ur study is the first systematic survey to establish disease baselines, so that we can track changes in disease prevalence over time,” said Kirsten Traynor, a postdoctoral researcher in entomology at UMD and lead author on the study. . . .

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While parasites and disease are huge factors in declining honey bee health, there are other contributors as well. Pesticides, for example, have been implicated in the decline of bee colonies across the country.

“Our next step is to provide a similar baseline assessment for the effects of pesticides,” vanEngelsdorp said. “We have multiple years of data and as soon as we’ve finished the analyses, we’ll be ready to tell that part of the story as well.”

Read full, original post: [First multi-year study of honey bee parasites and disease reveals troubling trends](#)