Neonicotinoid insecticide may reduce wild bumblebee queens' egg development, lab study finds

Use of a common pesticide in spring could have an impact on wild bumblebees by interfering with their life cycle, a UK study suggests.

The team, who looked at wild bumblebees caught in the English countryside, say the insecticide, thiamethoxam, reduces egg development in queen bees.

They say this is likely to reduce bee populations later in the year.

Thiamethoxam is one of three neonicotinoid insecticides currently restricted for use by the EU.

They have been restricted amid concerns about their impact on wild bees.

The study, published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B, investigated the impact of thiamethoxam on four species of bumblebee queen which had been captured in the wild in spring.

The effects of the insecticide at levels deemed similar to those encountered in the wild were investigated in the laboratory.

After two weeks of exposure, two of the four species of bumblebee took in less food.

And there were effects on egg development in all four species.

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The scientists say the work provides "a major step forward" in understanding the impact of neonicotinoids on wild bees – both generally and in specific species.

They say bumblebee queens are not currently considered in pesticide risk assessments for pollinating insects.

[Read the full study here.]

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: Bumblebees: Pesticide 'reduces queen egg development'

For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read GLP on Wikipedia