

Varroa mites—‘leading culprit’ of honey bee losses—hitchhike to nearby hives to spread disease

As the managed honey bee industry continues to grapple with significant annual colony losses, the *Varroa destructor* mite is emerging as the leading culprit. And, it turns out, the very nature of modern beekeeping may be giving the parasite the exact conditions it needs to spread nearly beyond control.

In an [article published in *Environmental Entomology*](#), researchers argue that the *Varroa* mite has “co-opted” several honey bee behaviors to its own benefit, allowing it to disperse widely even though the mite itself is not a highly mobile insect. The mite’s ability to hitchhike on wandering bees, the infections it transmits to bees, and the density of colonies in managed beekeeping settings make for a deadly combination.

“Beekeepers need to rethink *Varroa* control and treat *Varroa* as a migratory pest,” says Gloria DeGrandi-Hoffman, Ph.D., research leader and location coordinator at the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service’s Carl Hayden Bee Research Center in Tucson, Arizona, and lead author of the research.

In the wild, bee colonies tend to survive despite *Varroa* infestations, and colonies are usually located far enough apart to prevent mites from hitching rides to other colonies on foraging bees. ... In managed honey bee settings, though, these dynamics are disrupted, DeGrandi-Hoffman says.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [How the Varroa Mite Co-Opts Honey Bee Behaviors to Its Own Advantage](#)