

Understanding honeybee deaths: Close to 100% of Massachusetts' hives infected by viruses

The honey bee population is on the decline, and bee experts want to know why, so the State Department of Agricultural Resources is doing their part, funding testing in [labs] at UMass Amherst.

The state travels to different hives statewide and collects hundreds of sick, dying, or already dead bees. These bees are brought there to the medical zoology lab.

“What I do is I’ll immediately throw them in this negative 80-degree freezer. This helps preserve the RNA, which is what we’re actually testing.”

They will dissect, tube, crush up, and extract.

They test for 8 different viruses, anything from infected larvae to deformed wings, and after testing nearly 700 honey bees so far, often 4 hives at a time, the results were a little unexpected.

“We found that 3 of those viruses are extremely common, with close to 100% of those hives being infected,” said UMass Lab Tech Timothy Daly.

Thankfully, the other 5 viruses are extremely rare, but it has posed some concerns for the honey bee population.

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So how are these viruses getting into these hives? And why?

Right now there is no definitive answer. One professor believes some of these viruses could have come from overseas, or they say it could be that certain viruses also adapt better in certain climates.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: UMass Amherst testing for declining honey bee population