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# The Register-Guard

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NEWS NEWS

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AGRICULTURE

## State studying bee die-off after tree spraying

A local tree care company is under investigation in the bumblebee deaths

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MULTIMEDIA PHOTO



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*Hundreds of bumblebees are keeling over in Eugene and a long-time tree spray company is facing investigation by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. (Beyond Toxics)*

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**BY DIANE DIETZ**

*The Register-Guard*

JUNE 20, 2014

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Hundreds of bumblebees are dying in Eugene, and a longtime tree spray company faces investigation by the state Department of Agriculture.

The ongoing occurrence of bee fatalities began Tuesday at the Jacobs Lane Apartments, off Highway 99 in northwest Eugene.

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Agriculture investigators took samples of bees, leaves and flowers and are analyzing the die-off; Oregon State University entomologists are on the case.

Glass Tree Care and Spray Service, which sprayed chemicals on 17 linden trees around the Jacobs Lane complex, is cooperating.

“We hold ourselves to the highest business and applicator standards, and take this matter very seriously,” company President J.P. Mischkot said in an e-mail.

Such incidents are of concern to state and federal governments because of a troubling decline in honeybee colonies. Such pollinators are crucial to the food chain, responsible for one out of three bites of food that Americans eat, according to the USDA.

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In Oregon, blueberries, apples, plums and peaches are among the crops that need a pollinator to produce fruit.

The state Department of Agriculture arrived at the scene late Wednesday after seeing a television report on the bee die-off. The investigator found 200 to 300 dead or dying bees on sidewalks near the linden trees.

“Most of them were bumblebees, but there were a few honeybees as well,” agency spokesman Bruce Pokarney said.

By Thursday morning, the sidewalks around the trees were littered with bumblebees, honeybees and some ladybugs, arborist and beekeeper Doug Hornaday said.

“You see dead bees all over the place,” he said. “There’s probably 1,000 at least.”

The linden trees are heavy with yellow blossoms. Bees — which remember where the nectar is — can be expected to continue returning to those trees, Hornaday said.

Seeing all the dead bees was bad enough, said Lisa Arkin, executive director of the Eugene-based Beyond Toxics.

“Some of them were quivering and in convulsions,” she said. “It was awful to behold.

We didn't know whether to put them out of their misery or just walk on."

Arkin said the bee death toll is probably higher than investigators can see.

"We don't see the ones that flew off 50 feet and then died or managed to get back to their hive and then died," she said.

The Eugene die-off appears to be a repeat of an incident in a Wilsonville store parking lot this time last June, where about 50,000 bees were killed by chemical sprays.

Managers order the application of insecticides to linden trees to combat aphid infestations, Pokarney said.

"People park underneath the trees and aphids will fall on the car — or their (sticky waste) will fall on the car. It's really kind of an unsightly thing," he said.

Until last year, tree spray companies liked to use dinotefuran and imidacloprid, which are a class of insecticides called neonicotinoids.

When the companies sprayed the compounds on blooming linden trees, the result was bee death. Besides Wilsonville, it also happened at Hillsboro and Oregon City last year.

Neonicotinoids proved fatal on contact to bees, but they also may be killing additional bees more slowly.

A study out of Harvard this month suggested that bees surviving exposure to neonicotinoids may be more likely to freeze to death in the winter.

After the Wilsonville incident, the state banned the use of two neonicotinoids — dinotefuran and imidacloprid — on linden trees, and others trees in the Tilia family.

In February, the Eugene City Council banned their use on city property, winning the city the "America's most bee-friendly city" honor.

The ban, however, doesn't apply to private property, where homeowners or commercial applicators can use them.

The Eugene tree spray company most likely erred in its treatment of the Jacob Lane

linden trees, Pokarney said.

“We know they used imidacloprid,” he said. “There are restrictions on its use, and using it under those conditions when pollinators are present is a violation.

“We have in the last year gone through extensive outreach and education of all of our licensed applicators — anybody who has a pesticide license with us — talking about this whole issue of using these two neonicotinoids on linden trees, period.

“There is every reason for us to believe that they should have been aware that they shouldn’t use this when there’s blooms, when there’s bees and on linden trees.

“As we pursue enforcement, we would look towards whether there was negligence involved, whether an application was done in a faulty or negligent manner.”

Fines the state levied in the wake of the Wilsonville incident totaled \$2,886.

During the Wilsonville incident, crews covered the trees with netting to prevent further bee exposure.

“We’re going to see if there are additional bee deaths, and if there are, what more can we do?” Pokarney said.

*Follow Diane on Twitter [@diane\\_dietz](#). Or email her at [diane.dietz@registerguard.com](mailto:diane.dietz@registerguard.com).*

## **BEELINE**

How bees are getting protection in Oregon

2006: Reports of large-scale honeybee losses emerge; called colony collapse disorder

February 2013: Eugene City Council votes to allow homeowners to keep up to three honeybee hives on small lots

June 2013: 50,000 bumblebees die in a Wilsonville Target store parking lot after trees are sprayed with pesticide containing neonicotinoids

June 2013: Hundreds of bees die in Hillsboro

June 2013: Department of Agriculture restricts use of 18 pesticides related to bee kills

December 2013: Ag department restrictions expire

February 2014: Oregon Legislature passes a bill that requires a) licensed pesticide

applicators to learn about pollinator health and b) the creation of a task force on protecting bees

February 2014: Eugene City Council bans the use in city parks of pesticides implicated in bee kills

April 2014: Thousands of dead honeybees found on Highway 99W at Sherwood. Ag officials suspect the bees, in a swarm, were struck by cars.

May 2014: USDA reports honey bee colony loss of 23 percent over the 2013-14 winter; follows a 31 percent loss the previous winter; a 19 percent annual loss is considered normal

May 2014: Gov. John Kitzhaber appoints a 10-member Task Force on Pollinator Health

June 17: Mass bumblebee die off reported at a north Eugene apartment complex; trees were sprayed with insecticide the day before

June 30: A legislative task force on Pollinator Health will hold its first meeting at 10:30 a.m. at the Capitol.

Oct. 1: Task force report on pollinator health due

## BEE CHAT

This morning: 9 a.m. USDA beekeeping experts talk pollination and answer questions via Twitter. To participate, send a tweet to @USDA with the #USDABeeWatch  
USDA on pollinators: [1.usa.gov/1fppLDH](http://1.usa.gov/1fppLDH)

## Comments

The Register-Guard doesn't necessarily condone the comments here, nor does it review every post. **Not seeing your comment?** Disqus users, **have you verified your account?**

Comments for this thread are now closed.



9 Comments

The Register-Guard

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**mikewrites** · 2 months ago

“If the bees disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would have only four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man.”

– Albert "it's not rocket science" Einstein

2 ^ | ▾ · Share ›



**Tank Commander** · 2 months ago



**tank\_commander** · 2 months ago

Ok, so you're worried about aphid dung on your car. 1. Park somewhere else, or 2. Wash your car! If this spray kills bees, then it should be banned.

17 ^ | v · Share ›



**Dan Wilcox** · 2 months ago

“We’re going to see if there are additional bee deaths, and if there are, what more can we do?” -- 1. Fine the company so there are negative consequences, 2. Do investigation on this company and others to make sure they are using licensed people to spray pesticides and not just having one guy who passed his test and then hiring a minimum wage yard crew with no training to do the spraying, 3. Realize that if neonicotinoids are legal that most people will continue to buy and use it however they want whenever they want. The big problem here is that there is little doubt about neonicotinoids heavy impact on bees and other wildlife and America needs to join the rest of the civilized world in banning this class of chemical. Besides, concentrations of aphids are cheap and easy to handle with ladybugs. \$15 will get you 1,500 ladybugs on the retail market, each one will eat 50 aphids a day for 100 days and they will increase in numbers until their food supply of aphids or mites is exhausted.

16 ^ | v · Share ›



**DougN** → Dan Wilcox · 2 months ago

If only we could find a predator that so voraciously consumes obnoxious progressives humanity could achieve an ecological balance through intellectual Darwinism ;-)

3 ^ | v · Share ›



**C. Howell** → DougN · 2 months ago

I find it funny that so many conservatives attempt to use intelligence against progressives when YOUR ENTIRE POLITICAL philosophy is based on ignorance and downright stupidity. As a matter of fact, the corporate entities that feed you your misinformation count on your stupidity and gullibility. Seriously, kid, my dogs are smarter than most of you because, unlike you, they will actually learn when shown.

4 ^ | v · Share ›



**disavour** → DougN · 2 months ago

Real funny Doug. Bees and untold amounts of other beneficial insects are dead or dying from criminal behavior and you spitefully descend to a new low with an empty fantasy? Every third bite of food you eat is directly attributable to endangered pollinators near and far. That includes your vanilla wafers, jello, and doritos. No ducking this one fella.

7 ^ | v · Share ›



**Look787** · 2 months ago

Is there a reason they are unable to spray after the blooms fall off the tree or before?

1 ^ | v · Share ›



**B\_Carfree** → Look787 · 2 months ago

Even that would not remove the problem. Neonicotinoids are absorbed systemically in plants and show up in nectar in subsequent years. We really need to ban this class of chemicals. The scientists who were involved in the initial review recommended against approval. They were right on.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



**Look787** → B\_Carfree · 2 months ago

But this still begs the question why do they spray the blossoms? Why not spray for pests after blossoms drop off or before the blossoms bloom.

1 ^ | v · Share ›

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50 comments · 16 hours ago



Notapenny — Uh-oh the troll known as "the beard" just got a bunch of yesterday's posts deleted and the ...

### Letters in the editor's mailbag | The Register-Guard

81 comments · 3 days ago



DoNotImpeachThatBozo — IRS chief resigns and pleads the fifth in front of Congress. Deleted emails. FIFTY ...

### A clean but costly break | The Register-Guard

30 comments · 2 days ago



Outsider77 — The independent board of rich dudes runs the o as its play thing. Does anyone seriously think they are ...

### Starbucks plans to close Pearl Street location | The Register-Guard

1 comment · 16 hours ago



DoNotImpeachThatBozo — Great! An uber busy, two driveway, drive-thru Starbucks on South Willamette just ...

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## Today's News stories

**SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT**

3:26 p.m.

### Schools train for the nightmare of an armed intruder

**LOCAL NEWS**

2:08 p.m.

### Crews making progress on east Lane forest fires

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**

12:46 p.m.

**Missing Sutherlin man found dead at crash scene**

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**BUSINESS**

10:19 a.m.

**C&K Market emerges from bankruptcy, announces changes**

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**CRIME**

9:40 a.m.

**Police: Woman hit by car; boyfriend arrested**

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**WEST**

**Mother drugged, drowned infant, authorities say**

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**VIEW OF THE NEWS**

**Moved by the music**

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**LOCAL NEWS**

**Lightning touches off more fires, moves on**

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**COURTS**

**Teen pleads guilty in child porn case**

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**EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD**

**EWEB riverfront abstention adds twist**

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**NONPROFITS**

**Park eyed in Festival of Eugene saga**

8  
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**EUGENE POLICE**

**Burglar hits pipe shop in Eugene**

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**CRIME**

**Man charged with abusing pitbull mix**

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**BUSINESS**

**Starbucks plans to close Pearl Street location**

1 COMMENT

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**VIEW OF THE NEWS**

**Circle du soleil**

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**BUSINESS**

**Oregon jobless rate ticks up**

1 COMMENT

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**WEST**

**Company fined over herbicide drops**

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**WEST**

**Dust storm hits near Spokane**

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**LOCAL NEWS**

**Around the Region**

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**LOCAL NEWS**

**Briefly Northwest**

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**FOR THE RECORD**

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**Calendar**

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**WEST**

**Northern California blazes prompt further evacuations**

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**Sports**

**DUCKS FOOTBALL**

## A lock at linebacker

Joe Walker hopes to give the Ducks some new looks this year

It's a new look for Joe Walker, whose long locks of hair no longer crawling out of his helmet, making it obvious that No. 35 ...



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COMMENTS

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- Johnstone accentuates the positives
- Beavers DTs bigger, better
- Ems return home with a chance to make playoff push

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## Food

### COOKING

## Infusing character

Local creators take olive oil up a notch, adding flavors from herbs, spices, fruits and vegetables

Olive oil is hot right now. Really hot, which is odd considering it's been around for more than 5,000 years and is considered a staple ...



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COMMENTS

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- Restaurant embraces two cuisines
- Grill on-the-vine tomatoes for stunning starter
- Fresh ways to dress corn on the cob

*More* **FOOD** »

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## Tastings

### WINE

## The Oregon wine experience, reshaped

Pioneering Oregon wineries build new-wave visitor centers with impressive, intimate, immersive tasting and learning opportunities.

There's a certain sameness to the typical Oregon winery tasting room experience. You can reliably expect a friendly greeting as you wedge up to the ...



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COMMENTS

- A growing vision for Iris Vineyards
- Summer starters
- Local beer's time to shine

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