

Subscribe to daily
environment news

your email here

Subscribe

Demo version.

Click for info!



[National Tree Day](#)
[Planet Ark Home](#)

Select a topic from this pull-down menu



Your daily
guide to
helping
the planet

Asian Parasite Killing Western Bees - Scientist

[Mail this story to a friend](#) | [Printer friendly version](#)

SPAIN: July 19, 2007

MADRID - A parasite common in Asian bees has spread to Europe and the Americas and is behind the mass disappearance of honeybees in many countries, says a Spanish scientist who has been studying the phenomenon for years.

The culprit is a microscopic parasite called nosema ceranae said Mariano Higes, who leads a team of researchers at a government-funded apiculture centre in Guadalajara, the province east of Madrid that is the heartland of Spain's honey industry.

He and his colleagues have analysed thousands of samples from stricken hives in many countries.

"We started in 2000 with the hypothesis that it was pesticides, but soon ruled it out," he told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday.

Pesticide traces were present only in a tiny proportion of samples and bee colonies were also dying in areas many miles from cultivated land, he said.

They then ruled out the varroa mite, which is easy to see and which was not present in most of the affected hives.

For a long time Higes and his colleagues thought a parasite called nosema apis, common in wet weather, was killing the bees.

"We saw the spores, but the symptoms were very different and it was happening in dry weather too."

Then he decided to sequence the parasite's DNA and discovered it was an Asian variant, nosema ceranae. Asian honeybees are less vulnerable to it, but it can kill European bees in a matter of days in laboratory conditions.

"Nosema ceranae is far more dangerous and lives in heat and cold. A hive can become infected in two months and the whole colony can collapse in six to 18 months," said Higes, whose team has published a number of papers on the subject.

TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT NEWS

AUSTRALIA:
[Australia's Rudd To Bridge China, West Climate Gap](#)

AUSTRALIA:
[Drought to Hit Australia Commodity Export Income](#)

CHINA:
[China Releases Three Gorges Water to Ease Drought](#)

CHINA:
[China Invites Rare Public Debate on Chemical Plant](#)

COSTA RICA:
[Costa Rica, Eye on Climate, Plants 5 Million Trees](#)

ETHIOPIA:
[Ethiopian Airlines Denies Wildlife Allegations](#)

FIJI:
[Cyclone Bears Down on Fiji, Flooding Expected](#)

FRANCE:
[France Suspends Commercial GMO Seed Use, Studies Safety](#)

GERMANY:
[Germany Ends Ban on Monsanto GMO Maize Type](#)

GERMANY:
[World's Oldest Fertile Gorilla, Orang-Utan Turn 50](#)

INDONESIA:
[Scientists Demand Swift Climate Action at Bali Meet](#)

INDONESIA:
[In Bali, UN Hails US Senate Climate Steps](#)

INDONESIA:
["Green Jobs" to Outweigh Losses From Climate](#)

"We've no doubt at all it's nosema ceranae and we think 50 percent of Spanish hives are infected," he said.

Spain, with 2.3 million hives, is home to a quarter of the European Union's bees.

His team have also identified this parasite in bees from Austria, Slovenia and other parts of Eastern Europe and assume it has invaded from Asia over a number of years.

Now it seems to have crossed the Atlantic and is present in Canada and Argentina, he said. The Spanish researchers have not tested samples from the United States, where bees have also gone missing.

Treatment for nosema ceranae is effective and cheap -- 1 euro (US\$1.4) a hive twice a year -- but beekeepers first have to be convinced the parasite is the problem.

Another theory points a finger at mobile phone aerials, but Higes notes bees use the angle of the sun to navigate and not electromagnetic frequencies.

Other elements, such as drought or misapplied treatments, may play a part in lowering bees' resistance, but Higes is convinced the Asian parasite is the chief assassin.

Story by Julia Hayley

REUTERS NEWS SERVICE



ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS SEARCH

Enter your keywords to search our news archive by subject. Type "Greenpeace", for example, into the box below and you will be given a listing of all Planet Ark's news and images relating to Greenpeace.

Sort by relevance Sort by date

Alternatively, why not check out our news archive on an issue by issue basis? Select a topic from the list below to learn everything you need to know about the topics contained within this search engine.

Acid rain
Air pollution
Asbestos
Animal rights
Biodiversity



[Change](#)

INDONESIA:
[Mangroves Help Indonesia Fend Off Climate Change](#)

INDONESIA:
[INTERVIEW - Indonesia's Papua to Protect Forests, Seeks Cash](#)

INDONESIA:
[US Invites Big Economies to Hawaii Climate Talks](#)

IRELAND:
[Ireland Goes Green With Light Bulb Rules, Car Tax](#)

JAPAN:
[Japan Sees CO2 Credit Supply Far Outweighing Demand](#)

ROMANIA:
[Romania Moves to Block Canadian Gold Mine Project](#)

TAIWAN:
[FEATURE - Thin-Film Solar Sheets Seek Time in the Sun](#)

UK:
[Flood Plans Need Overhaul, Review Urges](#)

UK:
[British Climate Impact Report Sets Scene For Future](#)

US:
[Build Up Fish Stocks Now For Big Money Later - Study](#)

US:
[FACTBOX - Key Parts of \\$21.5 Billion US House Energy Tax Package](#)

US:
[US Senator Pushes Toy Reform, Tests Find More Lead](#)

US:
[US Farms Could Earn \\$4 to \\$6 Billion/Year For CO2 - CCX](#)

US:
[Scientists Find What Makes The Solar Wind Howl](#)

US:
[US Military Conserving Fuel to Save Lives, Money](#)

US:

means, is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Reuters.

**TOP
OF
PAGE**

[White House Says Will Veto US House Energy Bill](#)

US:
[Climate Change Bill Heads For Full US Senate](#)

US:
[US House Passes Energy Bill, Bush Set to Veto](#)

US:
[IMF Considers Impact of Climate Change on Economy](#)

[previous day](#)

This site developed by [Frontline](#), and managed by Planet Ark using RPM-NT.

Site designed by Jon Dee @ Planet Ark.

