

Pollinating insects, including honeybees, bumblebees and many other wild bees are essential for the production of many fruits, vegetables and field crops. Without them, cross-pollination does not take place, resulting in reduced fruit set, lower quality and yield.

Berry crops including blueberry, raspberry and cranberry all depend on the abundance of pollinating insects during blooming season. So are all the tree fruits including apple, pear, peaches, apricots, cherries, etc. Field crops including cucumbers, melons, and pumpkins and squash all depend on insect pollinators. Crops grown for seed production depend even more on the abundance of pollinating insects. **It is in the grower's interest to protect pollinators and other beneficial insects.**

The outbreak of an insect pest may require the use of insecticides. Some of these insecticides may harm the pollinator population. Growers can take simple management steps to reduce the risk of bee poisoning.

The effect of an insecticide on pollinators depends on the type of insecticide used, its formulation, time of application, weather conditions and the percentage of crop bloom available to the bees.

The following are a few steps in preventing bee poisoning:

- Don't spray any flowering crop on which bees are foraging. If insecticides must be applied, spray in the evening, at night or early morning when bees are not foraging. Bees usually do not forage at temperatures under 13°C.
- When an insecticide must be applied during blooming season, notify the beekeeper before the insecticide is applied.
- Don't apply insecticides on windy days. A lot of the insecticide is wasted, and the drift may cause poisoning of nearby colonies.
- Ground applications are generally less hazardous than aircraft applications.
- When there is a choice of product, choose the formulation least hazardous to bees. Dusts are more toxic than sprays. EC formulations are less toxic than WP formulations.

Note: Most organo-phosphate, organo-chlorines and carbamate insecticides are highly toxic to bees. Always read label instructions before use.