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Ministry of Agriculture

Funding for bee health supports innovation for Ethical Bees in B.C.

COMOX – Beekeepers on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, with support from the Government of British Columbia, are working together to develop an innovative approach to help ensure the health of honey bees.

“Bee health and population have been slowly declining over the last few years in B.C.,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture. “The funding from Bee BC is giving beekeepers the opportunity to help find ways to improve and grow the bee population so that British Columbians can depend on B.C. food for years to come.”

The beekeepers receiving funds are participating in a project called Ethical Bees. The Ethical Bees project has grown to include hundreds of hives, including many substantial commercial apiaries. The scope of the project will allow selection from the best local traits while introducing highly desirable traits, such as Varroa sensitive hygiene where the bees effectively prevent mites from reproducing.

The Varroa mite infests the eggs, larvae and pupae of honey bees, as well as adult bees, and has proven to be one of the most destructive honey bee pests. Development of a mite-resistant honey bee will help reduce colony losses and eliminate the need for mite-control products.

“We’re developing stronger bees that have an increased resistance to viruses and parasites,” said Iain Glass, beekeeper. “We all want healthy bees, and thanks to this funding, we can continue this grassroots movement with our group of dedicated beekeepers.”

This is a multi-year grassroots project in its second year. The beekeepers have banded together, providing education and a plan to develop their “better bee.”

This project has been given equipment in five different communities to support its activities throughout South and Central Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, with \$3,000 of provincial funding going to each region.

Quick Facts:

- The objective of the Bee BC Program is to enhance bee health throughout the province.
- The Bee BC program provides up to \$100,000 over the next two years to support small-scale regional or community-based projects to research, explore, field-test and share information about best management practices associated with bee health.
- Honey bees play an important part of B.C.’s agriculture sector as pollinators of crops, contributing an estimated \$538 million to the economy in the province.
- Across Canada, honey bees have an economic contribution estimated at over \$3.2 billion.

Learn More:

To learn more about the Bee BC funding program, check out:

<http://iafbc.ca/funding-opportunities/bee-bc/>

For information about the Ministry of Agriculture's Apiary program, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/animal-production/bees>

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