



Key insects are at risk

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PESTICIDES used on crops could be putting bee colonies at risk.

And this could jeopardise the multi-billion-dollar contribution these flying insects make to the agricultural industry.

Research from Britain's Nature journal suggested bees could be exposed to a number of pesticides while they foraged.

The study found the exposure of bumblebees to two pesticides at real-world levels impaired behaviour and increased the likelihood of death.

This, in turn, hurt the entire colony. Although bees in Britain faced a

greater threat of encountering the chemicals as farming intensified, Australian pollinating bees were not immune.

Professor Boris Baer, of the University of Western Australia's Centre for Integrative Bee Research, said the loss of Australia's bee population would cost national primary industries between \$4 billion and \$6 billion.

"About 80 different crops depend on honeybee pollination," Prof Baer said.

"Without bees, you have lower yields or no yields at all."

Even beef production relied on

pollination to ensure livestock had enough fodder.

He said because Australian farming had a lower density compared to the UK, the implications were milder.

But he warned pesticides should go through further testing, to ensure little or no effect on the bee population.

"The bees are a very complex system," he said.

"It's a super organism.

"The only solution is to use chemicals in agriculture that do not harm them at all."

How much do your crops rely on bees?

- **ESSENTIAL:** kiwifruit, passionfruit, macadamia, watermelon, rockmelon, pumpkin, squash and zucchini
- **GREATLY:** apple, mango, blackberries and related berries, cherries, plums, avocado, almonds, canola, cucumber
- **MODERATELY:** cotton, coffee, faba bean, soya bean, sunflower, chestnut

Pesticide use could be a catastrophe



BEE-HAVE WITH SPRAYS: A new report highlights the risk to bee populations from pesticides.

Without bees you have lower yields or no yields at all.

Boris Baer