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Letter to the Editor: Pollinator Health

(December 15, 2014) As a farmer, I am concerned about bee health for many reasons. I rely on them to pollinate my crops and our food. Reducing honey bee deaths is a goal all farmers can support.

But how many bees are dying? The Globe referenced the often quoted “over wintering bee losses of 58%” in Ontario. Stats Canada just released their report that Ontario honey production increased by 22% over 2013. How is that possible with only 42% of bees?

Health Canada (PMRA) recently released its review of the use of “Neonicotinoid Pesticides and Bee Health” noting that seeding-time bee mortalities were down 70% in 2014. Although this doesn’t make the news, the agency says this may be credited to farmers’ efforts to reduce emissions and dust and modifying seeding equipment.

As farmers, we take ecosystem and bee health very seriously. This is complicated science and not a “cause” for us; it’s our livelihood and our way of life.

Les Nichols, Chair of Farm & Food Care’s Environment Council