

POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP

MEDIA RELEASE
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Pollinator Partnership Announces 2017 Mite-A-Thon to Test Honey Bee Hives

Testing will gather information from 'Citizen Scientists' on Varroa Mite levels in US and Canada

Pollinator Partnership, the world's largest non-profit organization dedicated to the health of all pollinators, announced that an opportunity to gather data on Varroa mite infestations will take place from September 9 to 16, 2017. The first annual Mite-A-Thon will test honey bee hives for levels of Varroa mites all across North America just before overwintering begins and commercial, sideliner, and hobbyist beekeepers are all encouraged to participate in order to create a rich distribution of sampling sites in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. A common measurement protocol will be used, and data will be uploaded to MiteCheck.

The Varroa mite was introduced into North America 30 years ago from Asia, and is one of the leading stressors to the health of honey bees in North America. The presence of mites in hives is a leading indicator of the health of the hive and the percentage of bees with mites provides a way to measure the cumulative impact of other stressors such as pesticides, poor nutrition, and disease. There are significant data showing that low rates of Varroa mite infestation make overwintering success more probable.

James Sherman of Pollinator Partnership said that the Mite-A-Thon will "raise awareness about the level of Varroa mites across the hives of North America and will also teach consistent and effective methods to measure mite load." Sherman added that "mite management strategies will be made available for those who seek them based on information and outreach materials developed by the partners listed below. We hope to have over 10,000 samplings."

Val Dolcini, President and CEO of Pollinator Partnership encouraged all beekeepers to participate. "We welcome backyard beekeepers and citizen scientists, testing their hives and reporting the data they find during this week in September. We need bee clubs and associations to help lead this effort." More information about the Mite-A-Thon can be found at www.pollinator.org/miteathon.

Participants will test the level of mites present in their hives using a standardized protocol utilizing two common methods of assessment (powdered sugar roll or alcohol wash) and then upload their data (at www.mitecheck.com), including location, total number of hives, number of hives tested, local habitat, and the number of Varroa mites counted from each hive.

The Mite-A-Thon is supported by the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) and Pollinator Partnership. NAPPC has over 160 partner entities from government, industry, academia, and NGO's who work collaboratively across North America to support pollinators. For nearly 2 decades, NAPPC partners have created real and lasting programs that support best management practices and real change for pollinators in all landscapes. The NAPPC website is www.nappc.org. NAPPC's administration is provided by Pollinator Partnership (www.pollinator.org).

