Drought is bad news for honey bees

By Melissa Breyer, Mother Nature Network

Honeybees have been having a rough go of it lately; between tragic insecticide mishaps, truck crashes and especially colony collapse disorder, the poor things can't get a break.

And now to add to their troubles, honeybees in California are suffering from the drought, which is leaving them with very little natural forage to make honey with. Bees need flower nectar to make honey; less water means less nectar and ultimately, a honey shortage.

Typically, the Golden State is a gold mine for honeybees. Its abundant agriculture and variety of wildflowers provide an enticing array of nectars for the bees – and with that comes honey. In addition to the popular crops, with sufficient rain the state produces exotic (and sought after) honeys, like sage, buckwheat, blue curl, tarweed and Manzanita.

"In years when California receives adequate rainfall and especially in years when California receives above-normal rainfall, like the El Nino years, California is the number one honey-producing state in the nation," Gene Brandi, vice president of the American Beekeeping Federation told NPR. "We've done that many times in the past."

But in a year with little rain, honey production can cut in half; this year Brandi says it might be even worse.

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