

DROWNING GOVERNMENT IN ANTIBIOTIC TAINTED CHINESE HONEY

Marion Nestle describes that the USDA is cutting back on basic research.

This decision, Neuman reports, “reflects a cold-blooded assessment of the economic usefulness”—translation: lack of political clout in the affected industry—of the 500 or so reports issued by the National Agriculture Statistics Service each year.

I was struck, in particular, by this report on the cutting block.

Annual Bee and Honey Report – Eliminate

Which I believe is this report:

This file contains the annual report of the number of colonies producing honey, yield per colony, honey production, average price, price by color class and value; honey stocks by state and U.S.

Why, at a time when people are struggling to understand colony collapse, would the government eliminate a report on how many colonies are producing honey? This is like eliminating a report on how many canaries die in coal mines just to make sure people don't become worried about imminent explosions.

There's another reason they might not want anyone tracking honey: because people are just copping onto the way producers hide the source of honey. (h/t RC)

I've been meaning to link to this story since it came out: it shows how producers are ultra

filtering honey to hide that it comes from China—which also serves to hide possible illegal antibiotics.

More than three-fourths of the honey sold in U.S. grocery stores isn't exactly what the bees produce, according to testing done exclusively for Food Safety News.

The results show that the pollen frequently has been filtered out of products labeled "honey."

The removal of these microscopic particles from deep within a flower would make the nectar flunk the quality standards set by most of the world's food safety agencies.

[snip]

In the U.S., the Food and Drug Administration says that any product that's been ultra-filtered and no longer contains pollen isn't honey. However, the FDA isn't checking honey sold here to see if it contains pollen.

Ultra filtering is a high-tech procedure where honey is heated, sometimes watered down and then forced at high pressure through extremely small filters to remove pollen, which is the only foolproof sign identifying the source of the honey. It is a spin-off of a technique refined by the Chinese, who have illegally dumped tons of their honey – some containing illegal antibiotics – on the U.S. market for years.

A honey industry spokesperson suggests you can assume honey that has been ultra filtered is

Removal of all pollen from honey "makes no sense" and is completely contrary to marketing the highest quality product possible, Mark Jensen, president of the

American Honey Producers Association, told Food Safety News.

"I don't know of any U.S. producer that would want to do that. Elimination of all pollen can only be achieved by ultra-filtering and this filtration process does nothing but cost money and diminish the quality of the honey," Jensen said.

"In my judgment, it is pretty safe to assume that any ultra-filtered honey on store shelves is Chinese honey and it's even safer to assume that it entered the country uninspected and in violation of federal law," he added.

Richard Adey, whose 80,000 hives in multiple states produce 7 million pounds of honey each year, told Food Safety News that "honey has been valued by millions for centuries for its flavor and nutritional value and that is precisely what is completely removed by the ultra-filtration process."

Incidentally, there's a pretty dramatic difference in what kind of honey you get based on where you buy it:

- *76 percent of samples bought at groceries had all the pollen removed, These were stores like TOP Food, Safeway, Giant Eagle, QFC, Kroger, Metro Market, Harris Teeter, A&P, Stop & Shop and King Soopers.*
- *100 percent of the honey sampled from*

drugstores like Walgreens, Rite-Aid and CVS Pharmacy had no pollen.

- *77 percent of the honey sampled from big box stores like Costco, Sam's Club, Walmart, Target and H-E-B had the pollen filtered out.*
- *100 percent of the honey packaged in the small individual service portions from Smucker, McDonald's and KFC had the pollen removed.*
- *Bryant found that every one of the samples Food Safety News bought at farmers markets, co-ops and "natural" stores like PCC and Trader Joe's had the full, anticipated, amount of pollen.*

Support your local farmer's market. They still care about birds—canaries in coal mines—and the bees.