

# Bees may transmit viruses to offspring

January 19 2006

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Researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture report what may be the first evidence of queen honeybees transmitting viruses to their offspring.

Honeybees contribute greatly to the annual \$15 billion agriculture market by assisting in the pollination of a wide variety of crops. But researchers say the health of honeybee colonies is continuously threatened by various pathogens, with viruses posing the greatest risk due to lack of information concerning transmission and outbreaks.

In the study, feces and tissue of individual queen bees were tested for viral presence. All tissue forms but one, as well as feces, were found to carry viral infections.

Once the viruses in the queen bees were identified, their offspring -- including eggs, larvae and adult workers -- were tested and were found to carry the same viruses.

The USDA scientists say the study demonstrates the vertical transmission of multiple viruses from mother queens to their offspring.

They detail their findings in the January issue of the journal *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*.

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Citation: Bees may transmit viruses to offspring (2006, January 19) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-01-bees-transmit-viruses-offspring.html>

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