



**SWEET RELATIONSHIP:** Honeybees take to salvia like people take to ice cream. Now ice cream is helping save honeybees, thanks to a national campaign launched by Häagen-Dazs.

# Ice cream company helps the honeybees

By KATHY KEATLEY GARVEY

**T**HE “honey-do” list at the newly revitalized Harry H. Laidlaw Jr. Honey Bee Research Facility at the Department of Entomology, UC Davis, is now shorter, thanks to a \$100,000 research donation from Häagen-Dazs to address the bee population decline.

The funds will benefit sustainable pollination research, target colony collapse disorder, and support a postdoctoral researcher, says Walter Leal, professor and chairman of the University of California Davis Department of Entomology.

“Honeybees are in trouble,” Leal says. “One-third of our nation’s food supply depends on bee pollination, but bees are vanishing in massive numbers. This gift will help us to rebuild and revitalize our honeybee program.”

## Häagen-Dazs to the rescue

Häagen-Dazs officials launched a national campaign to create awareness for the plight of the honeybee. Nearly 40% of Häagen-Dazs-brand ice cream flavors are linked to fruits and nuts pollinated by bees.

As part of the “Häagen-Dazs Loves Honey Bees” campaign, the company created a new ice cream flavor, Vanilla Honey Bee, already available; committed a total of \$250,000 for bee research to UC Davis and Pennsylvania State University;

### Key Points

- UC Davis bee research gets \$100,000 Häagen-Dazs gift.
- Gift funds postdoctoral fellow in honeybee biology.
- Häagen-Dazs creates new ice cream flavor, Vanilla Honey Bee.

formed a seven-member scientific advisory board; and launched a Web site, [www.helpthehoneybees.com](http://www.helpthehoneybees.com), to offer more information on the “unsung heroes.”

The Vanilla Honey Bee flavor

will include a trademarked “Häagen-Dazs Loves Honey Bees” icon, as will all other flavors linked to bee pollination. A portion of the sales will be used to help honeybees through university research.

California State Beekeepers’ Association President Jackie Park-Burris of Palo Cedro, Shasta County, describes the Häagen-Dazs gift as “just awesome.”

“We’re so happy that industry is recognizing the issues that the bees and beekeepers face,” Park-Burris says. “This is



**HÄAGEN-DAZS LOVES HONEY BEES:** Häagen-Dazs is bolstering honeybee awareness. Nearly 40% of the brand’s ice cream flavors are linked to fruits and nuts pollinated by bees.

an example of what a business can do, and maybe more businesses will get involved.”

Dori Bailey, director of consumer communications for Häagen-Dazs, received a standing ovation at a UC Davis dinner when she outlined her company’s support for honeybees to the American Honey Producers’ Association, American Beekeeping Federation, American Association of Professional Apiculturists and the Apiary Inspectors of America.

“It was a great presentation,” says Park-Burris, who notes that the beekeepers were the first (outside the company) to sample the new Vanilla Honey Bee ice cream. “You could really taste the honey. It’s excellent.”

## Gift funds research

Leal says half of the Häagen-Dazs gift will be used to hire a postdoctoral research fellow in honeybee biology.

“We will immediately conduct a high-profile international search, and the successful candidate will work at the Laidlaw facility for one year conducting problem-solving research in honeybee biology, health and

pollination issues,” he says.

Häagen-Dazs will fund the salary, while the Department of Entomology will provide partial matching funds to support other expenses.

Häagen-Dazs brand manager Josh Gellert says without honeybees, it would be “tough to source and produce” ice cream. By working with UC Davis and Penn State, “we hope to take steps toward finding ways to increase the honeybee population and educate consumers on how they can take part in helping save the honeybees.”

The Harry H. Laidlaw Jr. Honey Bee Research Facility team is growing, Leal says. “We just finished conducting interviews for a bee pollination biologist.” The new hire will join Eric Mussen, Extension apiculturist; Susan Cobey, bee breeder-geneticist and Laidlaw facility manager; and Robbin Thorp, native-pollinator researcher and emeritus professor.

## UC Davis bee history

Active bee research began at UC Davis in 1925. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* ranks the UC Davis Department of Entomology No. 1 in the nation.

The 8,200-square-foot honeybee research facility is named for UC Davis entomologist Harry Hyde Laidlaw Jr. (1907–2003), recognized as the “father of honeybee genetics” for perfecting artificial bee insemination technology.

Honeybee geneticist Robert Page, former chairman of UC’s entomology department and founding director of the School of Life Sciences, Arizona State University, worked with Laidlaw. “All of us who have made our careers studying the genetics of honeybees stand on the shoulders of Harry Laidlaw,” he says.

Beekeepers say the general public can help save the honeybees by planting a bee-friendly garden, educating others about the honeybee decline, buying U.S. honey and supporting research to help preserve the nation’s food supply.

Keatley Garvey writes for UC Davis.



**SAVE BEES:** The Harry H. Laidlaw Jr. Honey Bee Research Facility at UC Davis has received a honey of a donation from Häagen-Dazs to address the declining honeybee population.

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