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## New endowed lectureship in wild bee health

**The University of Bern has established an endowed lectureship for wild bee health, which has been made possible thanks to support from the Vinetum Foundation. With it, the University and the Foundation intend to help combat the worldwide decline of wild bee populations.**

As pollinators, wild bees play a decisive role in human nutrition and environmental protection. However, their populations are in massive decline. "Research on the health of wild bees is still in its infancy", says Peter Neumann, Vinetum Endowed Professor of Bee Health at the Institute of Bee Health at the University of Bern. "To counteract the decline of wild pollinators, it is essential to gain a better understanding of the underlying factors." These key factors in wild bee health include disease, pollution, nutrition, and genetics.

### Expansion of the commitment of the Vinetum Foundation

The Vinetum Foundation, which is already committed to honey bee health and infectious disease research at the University of Bern with an endowed professorship, has now made possible a tenure-track assistant lectureship in wild bee health. This will fund the salary of an assistant lecturer and subsequently a lecturer over eight years for a total amount of 3 million Swiss francs. The endowed lectureship will be part of the Institute of Bee Health.

"Society benefits when pollination continues and is sustainable, especially because it is crucial for us to have a healthy diet of pollinator-dependent fruits and vegetables," says Franziska Borer Winzenried, president of the Vinetum Foundation and honorary doctor of the University of Bern.

### Strategically important topic

"The endowed lectureship takes into account the University of Bern's objectives in the areas of sustainability and health - the "One Health" initiative, which examines the interactions between human, animal and environmental health," says Christian Leumann, Rector of the University of Bern. In addition, he said, it meets the canton of Bern's goals in terms of strengthening bee health.

At the Vetsuisse Faculty of the University of Bern, the endowed lectureship signifies an important addition: "The Institute for Bee Health has so far focused on domestic honey bees. The new lectureship on wild bees thus strategically and crucially strengthens research and teaching on bee health." The endowed lectureship will work closely with the Bee Research Centre of Agroscope, the federal center for expertise in Agricultural Research, and will build an international network in this field. It will also offer cross-faculty courses and lectures on environmental and evolutionary medicine

to interested students at the University of Bern. "In this context, I see great potential here to link the faculties of our university in a meaningful way, far beyond veterinary medicine and biology," says Peter Neumann. In the longer term, the aim is also to establish a dedicated academic faculty in the field of wild bee research.

The endowed lectureship will be advertised nationally and internationally, and an appointment is expected in mid-2021.

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**Institute of Bee Health**

The Institute was founded in 2013 and consists of an international, highly motivated team that cares deeply about bees and their health. The Institute's priority is to understand and improve bee health by conducting basic and applied research and sharing knowledge with students, beekeepers and other stakeholders. The institute promotes international cooperation and is the headquarters of the global association COLOSS Prevention of honey bee COlony LOSSes, [www.coloss.org](http://www.coloss.org)).

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