



# Resolution 2015.03 Banning the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides

Education and Health  
Ontario Provincial Council

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**Whereas**, Neonicotinoid pesticides are increasingly found in the ecosystem, posing a risk to pollinators, birds and aquatic invertebrates; and

**Whereas**, Neonicotinoid pesticides, widely used in Canadian agriculture and horticulture, are a class of neuro-active, nicotine-based insecticides; therefore, be it

**Resolved**, That national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, in 95th annual national convention assembled, urge the federal government to ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides; and be it further

**Resolved**, That this resolution be forwarded through the national executive to the other ten provincial councils, encouraging them to become aware of this issue as it pertains to their province/territory, and to act on it, as deemed necessary/prudent.

**BRIEF: Banning the Use Of Neonicotinoid Pesticides**

In recent years, there have been sharp declines in pollinators in Canada. Pollinators include honey bees, bumble bees, wild bees, moths, flies, wasps, beetles, bats and birds. Without them, the production of numerous fruit, berry and vegetable crops, as well as forages and oilseeds, would not be possible. Parts of Canada have seen large-scale honey bee deaths, as well as declines in other pollinators, which research has linked to exposure to neonicotinoid pesticides (Miller).

In Canada, a pesticide must be evaluated and approved by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency. The product is registered federally under the Pest Control Products Act. Each province can regulate the sale, use, storage, transportation and disposal of the pesticide under its own legislation (Health Canada Consumer Product Safety Report).

Neonicotinoid pesticides were originally introduced in 1995 to control the Colorado potato beetle. They are widely used as seed treatments on most corn, canola, soya beans and wheat, as foliar spray on fruit, berry and vegetable crops, on greenhouse seedlings and plants, and can be an active ingredient in pet protection against fleas and ticks. These pesticides act systemically, being taken up into the plant and transported throughout all its leaves, flowers, pollen and nectar. The soil around the treated seed is toxic and the toxicity can persist for years. Since the chemicals are water soluble, field puddles and run-off to waterways often contain pesticide residue. Neonicotinoid pesticides are at least 5,000 to 10,000 times more toxic than DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), which was banned in 1970 for agricultural use in Canada (Leahy). Exposure to pollinators occurs when they come in contact with contaminated dust that is generated during the planting of treated seeds. The dust can cover the cultivated field and be deposited on wild plants and grasses growing in the area. Since planting season is primarily in May and June, there is often a wide array of foraging plants available to the pollinators. Pollinators are also exposed to neonicotinoid pesticides through the pollen, nectar and the liquid droplets exuded by some plants. For honey bees and other pollinators, this dosage of the pesticide can cause interference with foraging, reduced reproduction and queen production, and impaired immune function, making them susceptible to deadly viruses.

A Health Canada report concluded that the 2012 and 2013 planting of neonicotinoid-treated corn seeds contributed to the majority of the bee mortalities that occurred in the corn-growing regions of Ontario and Quebec. In Ontario, over the past eight years, the average overwintering loss of bee colonies has been 34%, more than double the 15% loss rate that apiculturists consider acceptable (Health Canada Consumer Product Safety Report, 2013). The rusty-patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*), which was once the fourth most common bumble bee species in southern Ontario and southwestern Quebec, is now on the endangered species list. The most pressing threats to the species include pesticide use, disease and habitat loss (Miller).

A study conducted by Friends of the Earth shows many of the nurseries that provide bee and butterfly attractive plants continue to use persistent, systemic neonicotinoid

insecticides, which have been shown to impair the health and survival of the very pollinators they wish to attract (Friends of the Earth).

The Worldwide Integrated Assessment of the Impact of Systemic Pesticides on Biodiversity and Ecosystems created the Task Force on Systemic Pesticides, consisting of 50 independent global scientists who examined over 800 published articles on these insecticides. They concluded the combination of precautionary use, persistence, mobility, systemic properties and chronic toxicity is predicted to result in substantial impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning (Van Der Sluijs).

The evidence is steadily mounting that neonicotinoid pesticides can cause serious harm to pollinators. Health Canada is urged to ban this pesticide to avoid an environmental and ecological catastrophe.

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8. Health Canada. Consumer Product Safety. *Update on Neonicotinoid Pesticides and Bee Health*. Ottawa, Canada: Government of Canada. November 2014.  
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### **Action Plan**

1. Purchase organic plant seedlings or grow plants from untreated seeds in organic potting soil for home gardens.
2. Advise local nursery managers you will only purchase plants free of neonicotinoids and ask managers to communicate your request to their suppliers.
3. Avoid the use of systemic bee-toxic pesticides in your garden. These products may contain acetamiprid, clothianidin, imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, thiacloprid and dinotefuran as active ingredients. Use insecticidal soaps or oils and other eco-friendly pest control methods.
4. If you have these products at home, dispose of them as municipal hazardous waste or take them back to the store where you bought them.
5. Provide habitat for pollinators by planting pollinator-friendly trees and flowers.
6. Contact your local members of parliament and members of the legislative assembly requesting a ban on the widespread use of these pesticides.