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Testimony for HB 4139 – Protecting Oregon’s Pollinators

February 19, 2014

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to express my support for HB 4139, an Act to Protect Oregon’s Pollinators. Saving Oregon’s population of bumble bees and honey bees is a topic deserving our utmost attention. HB 4139 addresses the problem of a highly toxic class of pesticides, known as neonicotinoids, and their impact to all kinds of pollinating species.

Oregon must act now to stave off bee-kills – restricting neonicotinoid insecticides and educating our professional pesticide applicators about pollinator protections are two essential actions that must be taken. There are alternatives to neonicotinoids, but there are no alternatives to natural pollination of dozens of acres of pears, apples, blueberries, strawberries and many other commodity crops in Oregon.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has already recognized that these pesticides have the potential to kill bees outright. They are to be commended for taking some action to restrict neonicotinoids from some blossoming trees commonly used in landscaping.

The risk to bee health from neonicotinoid pesticides is no longer in doubt. Please peruse the attached brochure from the Washington fact sheet: “Ten Ways to Protect Bees from Pesticides.” The brochure mentions the same neonicotinoid products that the original draft of HB 4139 sought to address:

Insecticides containing these[neonicotinoids]should only be used after flower petals have fallen, because they may be highly toxic to bees for several days after application.

So, you might be thinking to yourselves, doesn’t the EPA label and ODA’s extra precautions eliminate the risk to bees from the use of neonicotinoids?

No, it does not. EPA labeling of a pesticides is based on acute toxicity of one active ingredient. It does not take into account the toxicity of the adjuvants that are in the pesticide product, such as petroleum surfactants. The label does not protect against other known hazards such as sub-lethal or the slow accumulation of a pesticide in nectar, pollen, or in the hive. Tissue samples taken in New York after hundreds of thousands of honey bees perished showed significant levels of neonicotinoids, but there is no way to know if the pesticide killed the bees because of an acute exposure, or the cumulative effects of repeated exposures.

HB 4139, as it was originally drafted, had two important outcomes:

2. Four neonicotinoid active ingredients would be restricted to use by only trained and licensed applicators. The reasons for this restriction are two-fold:
 - a. Applications in nurseries, farms and landscaping businesses could continue to be carried out;
 - b. General consumers who are not trained and licensed would not have access to these projects. Research by Xerces Society found that the EPA label allows general consumer use at a rate as much as 120 times over the allowed application rate for commercial users.
 - c. The restricted use status would only take from 4 to 10 pesticide products off the shelves in Oregon store.

2. Experts at OSU and ODA would jointly develop trainings for alternatives to neonicotinoids, and Pesticides and Pollinator Safety Training. The training remains an essential part of the Dash-2 amendments, including the requirement to pass the course to receive an applicators license.

What we have at stake here is the future viability of Oregon's agricultural industry and the reliability of our food systems. If we do not act very soon to protect bees from neonicotinoids, we risk over \$600 million dollars in agricultural economic benefits to this State.

I was part of a diverse group of folks who helped craft the Dash-2 Amendments. I support the proposed task force and its work toward a meaningful outcome that protects native and honey bees.

Thus, I urge you to take immediate action to pass a bill that will protect our pollinating honey bees and native bees, the future of agriculture in this state and of balance and viability in the natural environment.

Sincerely, Lisa Arkin
Executive Director, Beyond Toxics



What are neonicotinoids?

Neonicotinoids are a class of insecticides used to control aphids, weevils and other insects. Some neonicotinoids may be highly toxic to bees for up to several days after an application. The Washington State Department of Agriculture recommends care when applying any pesticide, regardless of the type, to help protect our state's pollinating insects.

10. Educate yourself. Visit some of these sources of information on bees and pesticides:

- www.beeinformed.org – Bee Informed Partnership
- www.entomology.umn.edu/cues/pollinators – Center for Urban Ecology and Sustainability / Pollinator Conservation
- www.npic.orst.edu – National Pesticide Information Center
- www.pesticidestewardship.org – Pesticide Environmental Stewardship (click Pollinator Protection link)
- www.pollinator.org – Pollinator Partnership
- extension.wsu.edu/wsprs/Pages/default.aspx – WSU PICOL
- pep.wsu.edu – WSU Urban Integrated Pest Management and Pesticide Safety Education

Questions?

Contact WSDA at pestreg@agr.wa.gov or Erik Johansen at (360) 902-2078. You can also visit agr.wa.gov for more information.

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Do you need this publication in an alternate format? Contact the WSDA Receptionist at (360) 902-1976 or TTY Relay (800) 833-6388.

Photos courtesy of Erik Johansen.

10 Ways to Protect Bees from Pesticides



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

Pesticide Management Division

We need bees!

Honey bees, bumble bees, mason bees and other pollinating insects pollinate your fruit and vegetable gardens, native plants, and are critical for our environment and our economy.

The proper use of pest control products can help maintain healthy ornamental plants. Some pesticides, including those in the class of neonicotinoids, may pose a potential risk to bees and other insects that benefit us. You can help reduce that risk.



How you can help protect our bees

1. Avoid applying any pesticides, including insecticides and fungicides, during bloom on ornamental plants that attract bees, like heather, lavender, linden, rhododendron and rose. Bees and other insects may be harmed if they consume nectar or pollen containing pesticides.
2. Apply pesticides only after flower petals have fallen, when ornamental plants are less attractive to bees. This will reduce the risk to bees coming in contact with pesticides.
3. If you must spray ornamental plants that are in bloom, WSDA recommends you choose a pesticide that is less toxic to bees. The Oregon State University extension publication ["How to Reduce Bee Poisoning from](#)

4. [Pesticides](#)" has information on the toxicity of pesticides to bees. Visit pubs.wsu.edu for a copy of this publication.
4. Follow any specific requirements to protect bees on the pesticide label. The [WSU Pesticide Information Center Online](#) (PICOL) has a database of pesticides approved for sale in Washington.
5. Read the label to see if the pesticide contains a neonicotinoid insecticide

with these ingredients:

- Clothianidin
- Dinotefuran
- Imidacloprid
- Thiamethoxam

Insecticides containing these ingredients should only be used after flower petals have fallen, because they may be highly toxic to bees for several days after application.

6. Avoid applying these neonicotinoid insecticides by soil drench or tree injection methods to plants known to attract bees. These methods may contaminate nectar and pollen for up to several years after the insecticide is applied.
7. If you must use soil drench or tree injection to apply these neonicotinoid insecticides, do it after flower petals have fallen and use the lowest possible effective dosage to help reduce the risk to bees. Also, try to select an insecticide that offers the shortest persistence in ornamental plants while still controlling the pest.
8. When buying ornamental plants that are known to attract bees, try to buy plants not treated with insecticides containing any of the 4 ingredients listed above.
9. For more advice on pesticide use and protecting bees, consider contacting your local branch of the Washington State University Master Gardener Program by visiting gardening.wsu.edu and look for the Master Gardener link.