

Resolution Concerning Use of Neonicotinoids on State Wildlife Management Areas

Background:

Neonicotinoids are systemic pesticides that are absorbed into a plant's vascular system which makes the entire plant, including its pollen and nectar, toxic to both target and non-target insects. These insects are killed when they eat the pesticide-infused plants, as their nerve cells are targeted by the poison.

Neonicotinoids are used for pest management in agriculture, forestry and horticulture. These pesticides are used as seed coatings on a majority of corn and sugar beet seeds, and about one-third of soybean seeds. They are also used on many fruit and vegetable crops.

Neonicotinoids are persistent in the environment and are particularly harmful to bees and other pollinators, as well as aquatic invertebrates. They have been found in soil, dust, wetlands, ground water, non-target plants, vertebrate prey and foods common in the American diet. These pesticides cannot be washed off food prior to consumption.

Because of their widespread use on food crops and their known persistence in the environment, there is concern that Neonicotinoids could also be a danger to mammals, including human health.

The European Union and Canada have moved to ban the outdoor use of the most common forms of these pesticides. Some US states have restricted the use of Neonicotinoids out of concern for their impacts upon pollinators and bees. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been studying the impacts of Neonicotinoids, but is moving very slowly with any regulation of their use.

The use of Neonicotinoids is widespread on corn and soybeans, and these crops account for a large proportion of their use in the outdoors. However, studies done by the EPA and other research suggests that the cost effectiveness and need for these pesticides to successfully grow these crops is limited.

In the intensively farmed portions of Minnesota, the grasslands and wetlands on our state wildlife management areas (WMAs) provide some of the best remaining habitat for pollinators and wildlife. The WMAs are islands of green biodiversity in a "sea" of monoculture corn and soybeans. Only about 2 percent of the land in these parts of Minnesota are public land. The insects living on these islands of public land are a critical food source for pheasant chicks, ducklings, shorebirds and songbirds.

Many of these WMAs also have small food plots of corn and other crops that are planted to provide food and cover, mostly for wintering wildlife. These food plots are established using cooperative farming agreements with local farmers. The farmers plant and manage these food plots using their normal farming practices, including Neonicotinoid treated seed. In the fall, they harvest one-third of the crop for their share, and leave the remainder standing for wildlife, especially deer and pheasants.

The state of Minnesota should be managing these lands in ways that make them as healthy as possible for insects and all the wildlife that lives there. Eliminating the use of Neonicotinoids on WMAs would benefit our wildlife populations and would set an example of good land stewardship for other landowners to consider.

Minnesota Division IWLA Resolves:

Given the significant danger that Neonicotinoid pesticides present to bees, pollinating insects and the wildlife that feeds on insects – the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America on April 27th, 2019 resolves:

- That legislation be passed such as HF 721 that would prohibit the use of Neonicotinoid pesticides on state wildlife management areas.
- Or that the Minnesota DNR implement policy that would prohibit the use of Neonicotinoid pesticides on state wildlife management area.

Resolution approved by the W. J. McCabe Chapter IWLA Board of Directors and Conservation Issues Committee on Wednesday, March 20, 2019

This resolution is intended to be sent to:

MN IWLA for action at its April 2019 meeting

MN DNR

Media outlets with a cover letter

National IWLA Resolutions Chair and IWLA Conservation Director

Submitted by Rich Staffon

President of W. J. McCabe Chapter and Conservation Issues Committee member