



**Pollinator Health**

BEE AWARE. BE SAFE.

## **PLAYBOOK TO RESPOND TO LOCAL LEGISLATION BANNING NEONICOTINOIDS**

In response to several localities that considered, approved and enacted legislation in 2014 banning the use of neonicotinoids on government property, NPMA's Public Policy Staff has developed a "playbook" to help PMPs better respond to local neonicotinoid bills. In a nutshell, the playbook outlines the legislative process at the local level and provides turnkey advocacy tools for PMPs to use including:

- An sample email requesting to meet with Councilmembers
- An sample email opposing legislation banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on government property
- Talking points opposing legislation banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on government property
- A sample Letter to the Editor providing accurate facts about neonicotinoid usage

## **BACKGROUND/STATE OF PLAY**

An increasing number of local governments are considering legislation banning or severely restricting the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on government property. Since February of 2014 legislative bodies in Eugene, OR; Spokane, WA; Shorewood, MN; Skagway, AK; Seattle, WA; Olympia, WA; Cannon Beach, OR; and Thurston County, WA have all approved ordinances or resolutions banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on government property. Although these measures were passed under the guise of protecting pollinator health, they also ban indoor uses and termiticide applications - treatments that pose no risk of exposure or harm to pollinators. That illustrates perfectly how politicized the issue of the alleged association between neonicotinoids and the decline in bee health has become. It also shows industry needs to better educate local lawmakers about the issue.

Unless the industry more aggressively engages at the local level, we will see many more local governments banning the use of neonicotinoids on government property.

One of the biggest challenges in fighting local neonicotinoid legislation is knowing that a local government is even considering such a measure in the first place. It is relatively easy to track legislation in Congress and at the state level, however, monitoring the activities of 89,000 local governments in a timely manner is virtually impossible.

Furthermore, local legislation can move quickly if no one expresses opposition. For example, in Cannon Beach, OR, a resident first raised the issue of the Council banning neonicotinoids on city property in early September. By early-November, the City Council had passed a resolution in response to the resident's concerns.

If we are to have any chance in warding off future local neonicotinoid bans, we need the industry's collective eyes and ears.

## **PRO-ACTIVE STEPS TO HELP RESPOND TO LEGISLATION BANNING NEONICOTINOIDS**

Getting to know your locally elected officials is one of the best pro-active steps you can take in preparing for local neonicotinoid legislation. By establishing relationships with local legislators, you can more easily meet with them when an issue pops up. You are also likely to have more creditability.

Serving on relevant advisory committees like pest management or small business panels is another great way to get engaged in the civic process



## COMMUNICATING WITH LOCAL LEGISLATORS

Although it is extremely helpful to take pro-active steps to prepare to fight neonicotinoid legislation, once such a measure is introduced PMPs must be familiar with the legislative process.

Legislation is almost always formally submitted at regular council meetings. Depending on the council, regular meetings are held once or twice a month. Once introduced, the bill is normally referred to a committee for further consideration. Typically, the committee holds a public hearing on the legislation and may even hold informal work sessions, during which members of the public may be able to provide input and answer questions.

While it is important for PMPs to attend and speak at various public forums, it is even more vital that industry members meet personally with as many councilmembers as possible. Such informal one-on-one sessions allow for the most robust and worthwhile exchanges. It is during these get-togethers that PMPs must underscore that the use of neonicotinoids to treat bed bugs indoors or in a trench to control termites poses zero risk to honey bees and other pollinators.

To set up such a visit, send councilmembers a short email requesting a meeting. Virtually all local legislators' emails are available online. Simply do an online search of the local government and the legislative body's website should pop up. For instance, if the Philadelphia City Council were to consider neonicotinoid legislation, you would simply search "Philadelphia City Council" and a website containing emails for all the councilmembers will come up immediately.

The subject line of the email must make clear the purpose of the meeting and the body of the email should be no more than a short paragraph or two. If only staffers are available to meet, it is still worthwhile to visit. [Click here for a sample email to councilmembers requesting a meeting to discuss the neonicotinoid legislation.](#)

While PMPs should urge councilmembers to oppose outright legislation banning the use of neonicotinoids, the reality is that may not be feasible in some circumstances. If persuading the councilmember to oppose outright legislation banning the use of neonicotinoids on government property is not realistic, PMPs must seek to exempt bed bug, termite and other structural uses. Banning structural uses is completely unwarranted and unjustified.

In cases where meeting with councilmembers or staffers may not be possible, it is important to convey some key messages to legislators. [Click here for a sample email to use to send to councilmembers opposing legislation banning the use of neonicotinoids.](#)

We've also provided sample talking points and a suggested Letter to the Editor for you to use.



## **SAMPLE EMAIL REQUESTING MEETING WITH COUNCILMEMBER**

Subject: Meeting Request/Pending Neonicotinoid Legislation

Councilmember (Last Name),

I'm writing to request a meeting with you to discuss pending legislation banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on public property.

I appreciate your time and consideration of my request and look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

## **SAMPLE EMAIL OPPOSING LEGISLATION BANNING NEONICOTINOID PESTICIDES ON GOVERNMENT PROPERTY**

Subject: Vote 'No' on Neonicotinoid Legislation

Councilmember (Last Name)

I write to urge you to oppose legislation banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides when the measure comes up for consideration.

This ill-considered legislation will arbitrarily remove one of the most effective methods of managing bed bugs in city housing and termites damaging government buildings. Moreover, the use of neonicotinoid pesticides indoors, in soil treatments or on the exterior of buildings poses zero risk of exposure or harm to honey bees. Thus, there is absolutely no justification for banning such uses, as they clearly have no impact whatsoever on honey bees and other pollinators. At the very least, treatments for bed bugs, termites and other structural pests should be exempt from the legislation. When used appropriately and lawfully, neonicotinoids are an essential tool in protecting and preserving our quality of life from pest related diseases and dangers.

For these and many other reasons, I urge you to oppose legislation banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on government property.

Sincerely,



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Getting a Letter to the Editor published can sometimes help influence the debate about various legislation. Thus, if a local government is considering legislation banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, PMPs may wish to consider submitting a Letter to the Editor opposing the measure.

Most papers are online and have an easy to find Letter to the Editor section that allow readers to easily submit comments about virtually any subject. [Click here to see the sample Letter to the Editor.](#)

## SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Council is presently considering legislation that would ban the use of neonicotinoid insecticides on public property, include both indoor and exterior treatments. The bill's proponents claim that this ill-considered legislation is necessary to protect honeybees and other pollinators; however, scientists, entomologists, apiarists, and other knowledgeable individuals would strongly disagree.

Unfortunately, this measure is driven by raw emotion, inaccurate media hype, and completely overlooks the complexity of the bee health issue as well as the fact that no scientific evidence exists to show that the lawful use of neonicotinoids systematically threatens bees and other pollinators. Arbitrarily prohibiting some of the best tools for controlling bed bugs, termites and countless other insect pests that damage property as well as protect public health will unnecessarily increase costs. Moreover, it is inexcusable to force residents of city housing or employees working in city buildings with bed bug infestations to suffer for a longer period of time than they would otherwise have to if neonicotinoid insecticides were available for use. It is especially egregious to eliminate such uses of neonicotinoids when their use indoors or to treat subterranean termites clearly poses no risk of exposure to honey bees.

For these and many other reasons, the Council should vote down the proposed neonicotinoid legislation when it comes up for a vote.

Sincerely,



# **SAMPLE TALKING POINTS OPPOSING LEGISLATION BANNING THE USE OF NEONICOTINOID PESTICIDES ON PUBLIC PROPERTY**

- The decline in bee health is an extremely complicated phenomenon that involves a variety of factors including parasites, disease and loss of bee habitat
- Professional structural pest control applicators are specifically trained to use pesticides consistent with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved label directions
- The industry uses pest control products according to precautions printed on the products' labels, in order to ensure that the product has the desired benefit without causing bee mortality
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is presently re-evaluating neonicotinoid pesticides to ensure the products meet contemporary health, safety and environmental standards. While the process is expected to last until 2018, that does not preclude EPA from imposing use restrictions more expeditiously, if the data warrant such action. In fact, in August of 2013, EPA revised language on neonicotinoid product labels to better safeguard bees from unintended agricultural and non-agricultural pesticide use
- Many pest management professionals (PMPs) have working relationships with beekeepers, whom they often call when asked us to deal with honeybees; beekeepers are then able to collect and relocate the bees without harm
- Though beneficial, bees pose health and safety risks to the public. Stinging insects send an estimated 500,000 people to the hospital every year and are the leading cause of anaphylaxis-related deaths in the United States. Consequently, bees are - and some government entities have deemed them - a public safety hazard. Furthermore, some bees are also wood-destroying pests
- Neonicotinoid pesticides are among the most effective at managing bed bug infestations. Unlike other pesticides, bed bugs have not yet developed resistance to this chemistry. An arbitrary ban on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides would ban this very valuable tool and subject residents of city housing and city employees to living or working with prolonged bed bug infestations
- Bed bug treatments are made inside structures and pose zero risk to any pollinators

