Insert Company Logo

Insert Date

Insert Committee Chair Name

Insert Address

RE: Lawn and Landscape Industry Opposes Insert Bill Name and Title

Dear Chair,

The underlying premise of (insert bill number) seems to be that the neonicotinoid insecticides have somehow thus far escaped regulatory scrutiny and that they present such a significant risk to humans and the environment that they warrant special consideration from the legislature. This is, of course, not true; quite to the contrary. The neonicotinoids are regulated just the same as any other pesticide and have great utility to the lawn and landscape industry in protecting valuable plant material from predation. Intervention by the legislature into matters that should and ought to be resolved through regulation undermines the entire predicate for our established framework for the oversight of pesticide products. It is essential that the science-based, deliberative process of regulating pesticides be left to regulatory experts at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Board of Pesticides Control.

EPA is finalizing registration review of neonicotinoids, which is expected to be published this summer or fall. Putting in place a ban on a valuable pesticide would be premature at this point. Neonicotinoids do not have viable alternatives at this time and EPA will take into account peer reviewed science to determine if additional mitigation measures are necessary. In February 2022, the EPA announced in a memo improved processes between EPA Office of Pesticide Program Staff and the Science Advisory Board, stating:

*The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to restoring the central role of science and evidence in addressing numerous challenges to public health and the environment, including climate change, environmental justice, PFAS, children’s health, air quality, water quality, contaminated lands, and many others.  Durable EPA decision-making is dependent on the credibility of the science that informs these decisions.  The credibility of the science depends on adherence to well established, time-tested processes and procedures for peer review that assure scientific integrity, and strong peer review depends on engaging independent external experts in a timely and rigorous manner.  Today’s action addresses these goals.*

The safe use of pesticide products is the entire aim of the regulatory process prescribed under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) that leads to the eventual registration of each active ingredient. An important part of this process involves research into effects on pollinators. Considerable mitigation measures have been undertaken by EPA in their latest decision on the neonicotinoids to protect pollinators including removing liquid applications to residential turfgrass.[[1]](#footnote-2)[[2]](#footnote-3) At EPA’s invitation, NALP drafted and submitted pollinator best management practices (BMPs) for turfgrass and ornamental plants. NALP continues to push these BMPs throughout the lawn and landscape industry to promote the responsible use of pesticides to avoid negative impacts on pollinators.

Neonicotinoids bring tremendous value to the landscape industry that service your constituents. The ability of neonicotinoids to move systemically is of particular value in controlling insects that either feed within the vascular system of plants or reside in the soil outside of the reach of topical sprays. The low mammalian toxicity of the neonicotinoids makes them a popular choice for not only agricultural and horticultural applicators, but also for the control of fleas, flies, and lice for veterinary use. The neonicotinoids represent a significant improvement over the far harsher chemistries that they replaced and, more importantly, are far safer than those professional applicators would be forced to use if the neonicotinoids were restricted or banned.

Further, the neonicotinoids are essential tools for combating invasive insect species that dwell within plants (as opposed to residing on the surface of the plants) making their control difficult if not impossible. The loss of the neonicotinoids would directly result in the loss of countless trees not only in the landscape but in the wild as well. Make no mistake: this legislation only contemplates certain uses, those that appear at first blush to be reasonable. This is but the camel’s nose beneath the tent. If it is acceptable for the legislature to dictate which pesticide uses are permissible and which are not this establishes a precedent in which another bill will follow as sure as day follows night to remove yet another group of uses. Note well that old pesticides such as DDT, Agent Orange, Silvex 2,4,5-T and a host of other long-banned pesticides are not prohibited in statute.

Neonicotinoids protect public health. In almost all use patterns and in all settings, both residential and commercial, structural pest management professionals believe we’re protecting public health in every service we perform, and neonicotinoids are a vital tool. Neonicotinoids protect against Arthropod borne diseases, in green spaces, like Zika, Dengue, Powassan, West Nile Virus, and Lyme disease are transmitted by mosquitoes and ticks. Neonicotinoids are also used against stinging insects and ants; According to the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, more than two million Americans are allergic to stinging insects, more than 500,000 enter hospital emergency rooms every year suffering from insect stings, and between 40-150 people are killed each year as a result of these stings. The applications to prevent these diseases do not just occur around structures but also on turf and ornamental plants where these dangerous pests live and breed.

Imidacloprid and other neonicotinoid insecticides are critical tools used by turfgrass managers to prevent damage caused by soil inhabiting insects including, but not limited to, White Grubs, the larval stage of the scarab family of beetles. Before discussing the features and benefits of the neonicotinoids, it is helpful to understand the challenges involved in controlling these insects.

White grubs feed upon the roots of turfgrass and other ornamental plants. When this happens, the plant’s roots are severed rendering them incapable of drawing up water and nutrients. Turfgrasses can withstand quite a few White Grubs per square foot before damage is visible, indeed there are many lawns that you would never guess have grubs in them just by looking. It’s when the White Grubs are at populations that are above the damage threshold that we need to concern ourselves.

The damage threshold is an inflection point at which the health of the stand of turfgrass becomes threatened by the predation of white grubs. Turfgrasses can generally withstand populations of 5 to 10 White Grubs per square foot in unirrigated lawns, while irrigated lawns can withstand twice that number. The damage resulting from going beyond the inflection point can be devastating to a homeowner and their property value requiring significant investments to remediate the infestation and then replace the turf.

Lastly, neonicotinoids are more efficient than predecessor chemistries with few if any alternatives for their specific use patterns. Neonicotinoids have gained increased importance since the cancellation of many organophosphate insecticides’ structural use patterns. Other valuable alternative insecticide classes (pyrethroids) are under review by EPA and the structural pest management industry is becoming increasingly concerned that EPA decisions will seriously inhibit our ability to effectively use pesticides to protect public health.  We believe if EPA truly endorses integrated pest management and understands persistent resistance issues, the Agency cannot afford to limit any use patterns for Neonicotinoids . Instead, we explicitly highlight the importance of Neonicotinoids to the structural pest management industry and warn of the public health risks to society associated with limited pyrethroid use patterns.

Insert Name

Insert Title

Insert Company

1. https://www.epa.gov/pollinator-protection/proposed-interim-registration-review-decision-neonicotinoids [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://www.epa.gov/pollinator-protection/epa-actions-protect-pollinators [↑](#footnote-ref-3)