

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023**

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HOUSE BILL 625

Short Title: The Pollinator Protection Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Harrison, Setzer, Prather, and Ager (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Agriculture, if favorable, Regulatory Reform, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and
Operations of the House

April 18, 2023

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ENACT THE POLLINATOR PROTECTION ACT OF 2023.

Whereas, pollination services, including by honeybees and numerous other pollinators, are a vital part of agricultural production in North Carolina; and

Whereas, one-third of food produced in North America depends on pollination by honeybees, including nearly 95 varieties of fruits and other foods of high nutritional value to all of North Carolina's citizens; and

Whereas, over the past several years, documented incidents of colony collapse disorder and excessive honeybee mortality have been at a record high, with some beekeepers losing large portions of their operations and suffering reduced production of their valuable honey; and

Whereas, the State has undertaken numerous projects to improve pollinator health, including the North Carolina Department of Transportation Wildflower Program to increase pollinator habitats, establish pollinator habitats on Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services research stations, and support bees through the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Apiary Program; and

Whereas, scientists have linked the use of systemic neonicotinoid insecticides to the rapid decline of honeybees and other pollinators and to the deterioration of pollinator health; and

Whereas, neonicotinoid insecticides are systemic insecticides that are absorbed into treated plants and distributed throughout their vascular systems, which can render a plant, including the roots, leaves, stems, flowers, nectar, pollen, and guttation fluid, toxic to insects; and

Whereas, neonicotinoid insecticides cause sublethal effects, including impaired foraging and feeding behavior, disorientation, weakened immunity, delayed larval development, and increased susceptibility to viruses, diseases, and parasites; and numerous studies have also demonstrated acute, lethal effects from the application of these toxins; and

Whereas, bumblebees, beneficial insects of all kinds, and whole food chains of aquatic invertebrates, insects, birds, bats, and other pollinators in North Carolina are at risk from environmental contamination by highly persistent neonicotinoids; and

Whereas, scientists have also found that the use of neonicotinoids in seed treatment is harmful to birds; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 143-460(25a) is recodified as G.S. 143-460(25b).



1 **SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 143-460, as amended by subsection (a) of this section, is
2 further amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

3 "(25a) The term "neonicotinoid pesticide" means any pesticide containing a chemical
4 belonging to the neonicotinoid class of chemicals, including, but not limited
5 to, the following:

6 a. Imidacloprid.

7 b. Nithiazine.

8 c. Acetamiprid.

9 d. Clothianidin.

10 e. Dinotefuran.

11 f. Thiacloprid.

12 g. Thiamethoxam.

13 h. Any other chemical designated by the Board as belonging to the
14 neonicotinoid class of chemicals.

15 The term does not include pet care products used to mitigate fleas, mites, ticks,
16 heartworms, or other animals harmful to the health of a domesticated animal,
17 personal care products used to mitigate lice or bedbugs, or any product
18 regulated under the North Carolina Structural Pest Control Act (Article 4C of
19 Chapter 106 of the General Statutes)."

20 **SECTION 2.(a)** G.S. 143-443(a) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

21 "(7) Any neonicotinoid pesticide to members of the public at retail, unless the
22 seller is authorized to sell a restricted use pesticide under this Article and
23 regulations adopted under the authority of this Article."

24 **SECTION 2.(b)** G.S. 143-443(b) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

25 "(8) For any person to use a neonicotinoid pesticide, unless the person is any of the
26 following:

27 a. A pesticide applicator licensed under Part 4 of this Article, or a person
28 working under the direct supervision of a pesticide applicator licensed
29 under Part 4 of this Article.

30 b. A farmer, or person working under the direct supervision of a farmer,
31 who uses the pesticide for agricultural purposes as defined in
32 G.S. 106-581.1, including crop production and production of
33 livestock, poultry, equine, or noncrop agricultural fields.

34 c. A veterinarian using the pesticide in the practice of veterinary
35 medicine."

36 **SECTION 3.** The Pesticide Board, with the assistance and input of the Pesticide
37 Advisory Committee, shall monitor the final pollinator risk assessments undertaken by the United
38 States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) as part of the Registration Reviews for the
39 neonicotinoid pesticides imidacloprid, clothianidin, thiamethoxam, acetamiprid, and dinotefuran
40 and report on any legislative or regulatory changes necessary to protect pollinators within the
41 State, taking into account findings and any recommendations of the US EPA risk assessment.
42 The Board shall forward its report and recommendations for statutory and regulatory changes to
43 the Commissioner and the Environmental Review Commission within six months of the US
44 EPA's completion of the final pollinator risk assessments for neonicotinoid pesticides.

45 **SECTION 4.** The Pesticide Board shall study whether the State should have the
46 authority to regulate the use and sale of seeds treated with systemic insecticides, including
47 whether the State should require that untreated seeds and seeds treated at lower insecticide
48 application rates be available in the market. In conducting this study, the Board shall consider
49 the efficacy of seed treatment rates, scouting techniques, pest pressures, economic thresholds,
50 planting technology differences, and any other criteria the Board deems appropriate. The Board

1 shall submit the results of the study, including any legislative recommendations, to the
2 Environmental Review Commission no later than November 1, 2023.

3 **SECTION 5.** Sections 1 and 2 of this act become effective October 1, 2023. The
4 remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.