

Presented on behalf of the Vermont Golf Course Superintendents Association (VTGCSA)  
By Kevin Komer, CGCS

Golf course superintendents are educated and highly trained individuals that manage golf course properties with an emphasis on environmental stewardship. Our management programs are based on the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). We believe in responsible land management because we are dedicated to the preservation of lands where the game of golf is enjoyed.

Under the current pesticide permit program administered by the Agency of Agriculture, all golf courses are required to submit a pesticide management plan, which is subject to approval by the Agency of Agriculture. Vermont is considered to be on the cutting edge of pesticide regulations for the Golf Course Industry in the country. The current pesticide permit program for golf courses is both protective of the environment and of human health. In addition, pesticide applications on golf courses must be conducted by licensed applicators. These license holders must complete sixteen credits of pesticide related education within a five year period to renew their license.

The VTGCSA would like to offer the following comments on H.205:

1. Neonicotinoids are an important component of a golf course IPM program to control the larval grubs of various beetle species that feed on turfgrass roots. Neonics are one class of chemistry that controls most species of beetles and it is important to have more than one chemistry option to avoid resistance issues long term. The VTGCSA believes these products can be used safely on golf course turf.
2. Golf Course Superintendents are educated professionals who are licensed to use pesticides and understand the importance of following the label regulations and using the products safely. The neonics are clearly labeled with a "Bee BOX" designation that specifies not to apply the product when plants are in bloom. This alone reduces the potential impact to pollinators.
3. In the golf industry, neonicotinoid applications are predominantly made to the critical short cut turf areas of greens, tees, & fairways. There are also occasional applications to higher cut rough areas, but these are generally spot treatments. Most of these applications are made either early in the morning or in the evening when pollinators are not actively foraging. In addition, pollinators do not forage on turfgrass itself, but rather on the flowers of any weeds that might be present. Most golf course environments are weed free reducing the exposure to bees.
4. Current research suggests minimal connection between golf course turfgrass applications and pollinator decline. In addition, the trend in the golf course industry is to increase natural or native rough areas, which are not treated and provide habitat for wild pollinators and honey bees.
5. Currently, a cooperative effort amongst the New England states is underway to produce a Best Management Practice manual for golf courses. The content will be based on the latest university research. Of the twelve chapters in the BMP manual, there will be one dedicated to pollinator protection. This document is scheduled to be published in late 2019.

VTGCSA members are educated and trained golf course professionals and make use of the above products under regulation by the Agency of Agriculture. Where appropriate, licensed applicators make use of these products as a part of Integrated Pest Management programs.