

What Professional Pest Advisors Need to Know about Ontario's New Regulatory Requirements to Protect Pollinators

Serving as a Professional Pest Advisor to Farmers



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A growing body of scientific evidence shows that neonicotinoid insecticides are highly toxic to honey bees and other beneficial insects.

In addition, neonicotinoid insecticides are persistent, meaning that they do not break down quickly in soil. They are water soluble and have the potential to easily run off into local watercourses, where they can potentially harm aquatic insects.

In Ontario, there is widespread use of neonicotinoid-treated seeds, in some cases, without evidence of pest problems. Close to 100 per cent of corn seed and 60 per cent of soybean seed sold in the province are treated with neonicotinoid insecticides.

On July 1, 2015, new regulatory requirements for the sale and use of neonicotinoid-treated seeds in Ontario will come into effect and be phased in over a period of time. The requirements will support the Province's target to reduce the number of acres planted with neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed by 80 per cent by 2017 and are focused on ensuring that neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seeds are used only when there is a demonstrated pest problem. Reducing neonicotinoid use in these two crops presents the greatest opportunity to decrease pollinator exposure to this neurotoxic insecticide.

This document outlines what farmers need to know to meet these new regulatory requirements.

1. What is the new class of pesticides?

The provincial government is responsible for classifying pesticides and regulating their sale, use, transportation, storage and disposal.

Treated seeds are seeds that have been coated with a pesticide. The new regulatory requirements will create a new class of pesticides—Class 12—for corn and soybean seeds treated with the following neonicotinoid insecticides:

- imidacloprid
- thiamethoxam
- clothianidin

This new class of pesticides applies to corn seed grown for grain or silage and soybean seed.

The regulation does not apply to popping corn, sweet corn or corn used for the production of seed. Nor does it apply to soybean seed planted for the purpose of producing a soybean seed crop of certified status under contract. Corn seed and soybean seed treated only with fungicide are not classified as Class 12 pesticides under the regulation.

Professional pest advisors play an integral role in ensuring that neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seeds are used according to the regulation made under the Pesticides Act.

2. Who are professional pest advisors?

Professional pest advisors perform pest assessments and prepare reports that verify if there are pest problems on a farm. To be contracted as a professional pest advisor, the advisor must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- recognized as a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) certified by the American Society of Agronomy and a member in good standing of the Ontario Certified Crop Advisor Association
- registered as a member (e.g. a professional agronomist) under the Ontario Institute of Professional Agrologists Act 2013, with a field of practice relating to pest control or the production, processing and protection of agricultural, horticultural and related products and supplies
- a person who holds an authorizing certificate issued by an out-of-province regulatory authority in respect of a field of practice similar to a professional agrologist or CCA
- a person who has the qualifications equivalent to a CCA or professional agrologist as determined by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

Beginning on August 31, 2017, a professional pest advisor must be independent. To qualify at that time, they cannot derive a financial benefit from a person (including a business corporation) manufacturing or selling a Class 12 pesticide.

3. What is a pest assessment report?

A pest assessment report is documented proof that there is a pest problem requiring the use of neonicotinoid-treated seed to control the pests.

In order to purchase neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed, a person (i.e. a farmer) must provide a pest assessment report to a vendor, sales representative or direct-to-farm vendor. Similar requirements apply to using the services of a custom seed-treater (please refer to the infosheet: Selling neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed and offering custom neonicotinoid seed treatment services to farmers).

There are two kinds of pest assessments: soil pest scouting and crop damage assessment.

Soil pest scouting is a method that confirms the presence of an average of two or more grubs or one wireworm in soil at a farm property (see the Pest Management Assessment Guideline for more information on pest thresholds). A report must verify that pest thresholds have been met or exceeded.

A farmer can choose when to do soil pest scouting. This is often done in the spring or fall.

From August 31, 2015 to August 31, 2016, any farmer can do soil pest scouting, perform a pest assessment and prepare a report.

Starting August 31, 2016 until August 31, 2017, farmers will be able to perform a pest assessment and prepare a report if they have a certificate number from completion of the new integrated pest management (IPM) training.

Starting on August 31, 2017, a requirement that a professional pest advisor conduct a soil pest assessment and prepare a report will begin to be phased in. This requirement is being phased in over time on a geographic basis to best target regions with the greatest pollinator mortality rates.

For the soil scouting method an *Inspection of Soil – Pest Assessment Report* will need to be completed and signed. The report form can be downloaded online or a copy can be requested by contacting the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

Crop damage assessment is a method that confirms:

- at least a 15 per cent stand loss in corn caused by pests
- at least a 30 per cent stand loss in soybean caused by pests.

If a farmer believes they have experienced crop damage from pests, they can choose to have a crop damage assessment conducted. A professional pest advisor will be required to conduct this assessment as this method requires specialized knowledge of pests and crop damage.

Pest assessments must be done according to the *Conducting a Pest Assessment for Use of Class 12 Pesticides* guideline. The guideline is available online at www.ontario.ca/neonics or can be requested by contacting the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

The guideline outlines how assessments are to be conducted, sets out the minimum thresholds, and explains how to calculate the application area where the neonicotinoid-treated seeds are to be planted at the farm property.

For the crop damage pest assessment method, an *Inspection of a Crop – Pest Assessment Report* will need to be completed and signed by a professional pest advisor. The report form can be downloaded online or a copy can be requested by contacting the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

4. When would a professional pest advisor need to perform a pest assessment and complete a report?

A. For Crop Damage Assessments

For the crop damage assessment, farmers must acquire the services of a professional pest advisor. This requirement applies every year. Crop damage assessments can be conducted by a professional pest advisor starting March 1, 2016.

B. For Soil Pest Scouting Assessments

Until August 31, 2016, any farmer can perform a soil pest scouting assessment with no special certification or training.

On or after August 31, 2016, in preparation for the 2017 planting season, only a person with a certificate number from completion of the new integrated pest management (IPM) training can conduct a soil pest scouting assessment and prepare a pest assessment report.

On or after August 31, 2017, in preparation for the 2018 planting season, the requirement for professional pest advisors to conduct a soil pest scouting assessment and prepare a pest assessment report will come into effect. This requirement is being phased in over time on a geographic basis in order to target regions with the greatest pollinator mortality rates.

Once the professional pest advisor requirement for soil scouting pest assessment is phased-in, a farmer must hire a professional pest advisor to perform or supervise the assessment and prepare a report at least once every three years. A farmer with a certificate number from completion of the new integrated pest management (IPM) training can perform an assessment and prepare a report in the intervening years.

A schedule of the counties and regions of Ontario lets farmers know when professional pest advisors are required for their area.

5. Should professional pest advisors take integrated pest management (IPM) training?

Although professional pest advisors are not required to take the new IPM training, they are welcome to do so.

Integrated pest management (IPM) is an approach to managing pests that is environmentally and economically sustainable. IPM promotes the use of different methods to prevent and reduce the risk of pests and encourage beneficial insects, including pollinators. Under IPM, pesticides are used as a last resort to control pest problems.

The IPM training will be unique in that it will include training on the importance of pollinators in the ecosystem and how to protect them from pesticide exposure. It will also include training on identifying pests and pest scouting methods and alternatives to using pesticides.

The new IPM training course will be available starting in fall 2015 and will run continuously thereafter. Follow-

ing successful completion of the course, farmers will receive a certificate number.

IPM training will be made available in a classroom at various locations or online through the University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus. To encourage participation, IPM training will be offered free of charge until September 2016. More information about training will be available in August 2015.

6. Can professional pest advisors supervise others who perform a pest assessment?

Yes. As is common with other provisions in the pesticide regulation, a professional pest advisor can supervise others when conducting a soil pest scouting assessment if the following conditions are met:

- the professional pest advisor is present at the farm property during the assessment and can quickly attend at a pest scouting location in the field
- the professional pest advisor supervises no more than seven people at one time
- the person who does the pest assessment is trained on how to conduct a soil pest scouting assessment
- the assessments is performed according to the Pest Assessment Guideline
- the professional pest advisor must sign the pest assessment report.

To access guidelines and pest assessment forms you will need to submit, please visit:

www.ontario.ca/neonics

Completed and signed pest assessment forms must be submitted to the address specified in the form.

For more information, please visit:

www.ontario.ca/pollinators

Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Public Information Centre

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