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Conservation Notes

Current topics and issues affecting hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation in our North Dakota.

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Insecticides Pose Threats

Neonicotinoids or neonics are a class of neuro-active insecticides chemically similar to nicotine. They are widely used in agriculture and by homeowners, schools, and city landscapes, and are often used prophylactically, meaning that there is not a demonstrated need for the chemical.

Neonicotinoids are very toxic to pollinators, beneficial insects, and aquatic invertebrates. Because they are systemic chemicals absorbed into plants, neonicotinoids can be present in pollen and nectar, making them toxic to essential pollinators like bees. It is almost impossible for a farmer to buy corn seed without a neonic seed coating and approximately ½ the soybeans planted have neonic seed coating. Two separate large-scale studies confirmed that neonicotinoid pesticides commonly found in agricultural areas kill bees and hurt their ability to reproduce, killing them over extended periods of time.

But because neonicotinoids are also water soluble, the leftover insecticide not taken up by plants are now routinely found polluting streams and rivers around the country. Studies have indicated reproductive and thyroid issues in white-tailed deer. There also is concern with domestic livestock and pheasants,

Therefore, to protect our essential pollinators and valuable wildlife, both urban and rural landowners need to reduce or eliminate the use of neonicotinoid insecticides and other highly toxic, systemic insecticides. Working together with ag producers, homeowners and other insecticide users, industry, pollinator biologists, extension specialists and others need to further develop alternatives like integrated pest management and only resort to chemical treatment when pest populations reach a demonstrated, economically damaging threshold to reduce or eliminate the need for neonicotinoids.

Understanding and reducing chemical products and practices that are harmful to the environment is beneficial to our lands long-term productivity.

For more information on this message or other conservation topics, contact: John Bradley, Executive Director, North Dakota Wildlife Federation, (jbradley.ndwf@gmail.com), Mike McEnroe, Past President, North Dakota Wildlife Federation (memcenroe@midco.net) or Rick Nelson, Past President, North Dakota Chapter, The Wildlife Society, (bluebill@bis.midco.net). For a complete list of Conservation Notes visit (www.ndctws.wordpress.com)-articles.