**Health Canada proposes ban of controversial neonicotinoid pesticide**

**Current use of imidacloprid is 'not sustainable' says Health Canada in draft risk assessment on the pesticide**

By Lisa Johnson, [CBC News](http://www.cbc.ca/news/cbc-news-online-news-staff-list-1.1294364) Posted: Nov 23, 2016 4:59 PM PT Last Updated: Nov 24, 2016 2:46 PM PT

Widespread bee deaths have prompted concern about neonicotinoid pesticides, including imidacloprid, which are widely used insecticides in Canada. (Michael McCollum/The Record/Canadian Press)

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* [Ontario moves to limit use of bee-killing pesticides](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/neonicotinoid-pesticide-use-to-be-reduced-by-80-in-ontario-1.2849318)

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* [Health Canada announcement on imidacloprid](http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1158989&tp=1)

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Health Canada is proposing a ban on almost all uses of a controversial neonicotinoid pesticide called imidacloprid, saying it is seeping into Canadian waterways at levels that can harm insects and the ecosystem.

Neonicotinoid pesticides, the most [widely used class](http://rd.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11356-014-3470-y) of insecticides in the world, have faced increasing restrictions because of the risk they pose to bees, but have been allowed in Canada for agricultural and cosmetic purposes.

Today, Health Canada released its [draft risk assessment](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pest/part/consultations/_prvd2016-20/prvd2016-20-eng.php) for imidacloprid for public comment. This review doesn't look at bees — that's being done in a separate assessment.

"Based on currently available information, the continued high-volume use of imidacloprid in agricultural areas is not sustainable," the assessment states.

* [Pesticides linked to bee deaths must be banned, scientists say](http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/pesticides-linked-to-bee-deaths-must-be-banned-scientists-say-1.2685492)
* [Senate report on bee health finds neonicotinoids harmful but wants more study](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/senate-report-on-bee-health-finds-neonicotinoids-harmful-but-wants-more-study-1.3089518)

It proposes phasing out all agricultural uses of imidacloprid, and a majority of other uses, over the next three to five years.

"I'm really surprised," said Mark Winston, a professor of apiculture at Simon Fraser University and senior fellow at the university's Centre for Dialogue.

"To take an action to phase out a chemical that is so ubiquitous, and for which there is so much lobbying pressure from industry, I think that's a really bold move."

Based on its findings for imidacloprid, Health Canada is launching "special reviews" of two other widely used neonicotinoids: [clothianidin and thiamethoxam](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/pest/_decisions/rev2016-17/index-eng.php).

* [Vancouver votes to ban bee-killing neonicotinoid pesticides](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-bans-neonicotinoids-1.3675572)
* [Montreal bans neonicotinoid pesticide to help save the bees](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/montreal-bans-neonicotinoid-pesticide-to-help-save-the-bees-1.3360458)
* [Neonicotinoid pesticide use to be reduced by 80% in Ontario](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/neonicotinoid-pesticide-use-to-be-reduced-by-80-in-ontario-1.2849318)



There are a number of stressors and toxins, including neonicotinoids, contributing to problems with bee health, says SFU biologist and bee expert Mark Winston. (iStock)

## Bees and neonicotinoids

The effect of neonicotinoids on bees has been [hotly debated amid widespread colony collapse](http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/bee-researchers-raise-more-warning-flags-about-neonicotinoid-pesticides-1.2644354).

[Vancouver](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-bans-neonicotinoids-1.3675572) and [Montreal](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/montreal-bans-neonicotinoid-pesticide-to-help-save-the-bees-1.3360458) have both voted to ban the use of neonicotinoids, and [Ontario](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/neonicotinoid-pesticide-use-to-be-reduced-by-80-in-ontario-1.2849318) and [Quebec](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/neonicotinoids-bee-colony-collapse-new-pesticide-rules-quebec-1.3329523) have moved to limit use of the chemicals, citing concerns about bees. Health Canada is currently conducting its own review on the effect of imidacloprid on bees and other pollinators.  Neonicotinoids can kill bees at high concentrations, and cause more subtle but still damaging effects at lower levels, says Winston, who is also author of [*Bee Time: Lessons from the Hive*](http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-november-10-2015-1.3311956/lessons-from-the-bee-hive-teach-us-how-to-better-communicate-and-be-present-1.3311970). However, the exact role of "neonics" in colony collapse, compared to other pesticides and stressors on bees, is still being determined, he says.

* [SPECIAL REPORT | Bee researchers raise more warning flags about neonicotinoid pesticides](http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/bee-researchers-raise-more-warning-flags-about-neonicotinoid-pesticides-1.2644354)

"Eliminating neonicotinoids in my opinion will help bees, but it will not solve the entire bee crisis," said Winston. "It's a good step in that direction."