

[House Bill 7129](#) & [Senate Bill 2299](#): Neonic Factsheet – February 2022

Neonicotinoids (neonics) are a class of insecticides that share a common mode of action that affects the central nervous system of insects, resulting in paralysis and death. Studies show that neonicotinoid residues accumulate in pollen and nectar of treated plants and represent a potential risk to pollinators. As a result of this and their pervasive use, there is a concern that neonics play a major contributing role in pollinator declines.

Neonicotinoids are also persistent in the environment, and when used as seed treatments, translocate to residues in pollen and nectar of treated plants. These pesticides also contaminate waterways and are highly toxic to aquatic organisms. Residential overuse of pesticides was the major problem identified by the RI Pollinator Working Group and the Senate Pesticide Study Commission.

[House Bill 7129](#) and **[Senate Bill 2299](#)** will keep neonics out of the hands of *untrained users*. Use of these pesticides will be restricted to only certified applicators and those under the direct supervision of certified applicators.

The bill includes exemptions for:

- Indoor pest products
- Treated (coated) Seeds used by farmers (as they do not directly affect pollinators)
- Pet or veterinary care products
- Personal care products for lice and bedbugs
- Academic research

What are Other States Doing:

Rhode Island's proposed law is most similar to Vermont & Connecticut (though there are differences).

Maine – Law enacted in June 2021

- *Prohibits* (not just restricts) the use of four types of neonicotinoids in “outdoor residential landscapes” (so does not prohibit agricultural uses)
- Exceptions for products used for
 - preserving wood,
 - controlling indoor pests,
 - controlling insects outside around structures, and
 - treating pets
- Certified applicators can use neonics for controlling invasive insect pests.

Massachusetts – Regulation adopted in March 2021

- Classifies all neonics approved for *outdoor use* as **restricted use** (so must be a trained professional to purchase and use).
- Exceptions for:
 - outdoor structural uses
 - outdoor agricultural uses

Vermont – Law enacted in 2019

- Classifies all neonics approved for outdoor use as **restricted use** (so must be a trained professional to purchase and use).
- Exceptions for:
 - pet care products;
 - personal care products (lice or bedbugs);
 - indoor pest control products; and
 - pesticide treated seeds.

Connecticut – Law enacted in 2016

- Classifies all neonics labeled for treating plants as **restricted use** (so must be a trained professional to purchase and use).
- Prohibits applying neonics to linden / basswood trees and to plants bearing blossoms.
- No stated exceptions, but b/c law only applies to neonics labeled for treating plants, it does not apply to treating pets, indoor pests, wood products / seeds, etc.

Maryland – Law enacted in 2016

- Prohibits use of neonics by anyone other than a certified applicator, a farmer, or a veterinarian (or someone working under the supervision of one of those people).
- Prohibits any pesticide dealer from selling neonics unless they also sell restricted use pesticides.
- Exceptions for:
 - Pet care products;
 - personal care products (lice or bedbugs);
 - indoor pest control products
 - (no stated exception for seeds, but this law does not apply to seeds)

What Is a Certified Applicator? Why Does it Matter?

Pesticides are toxic chemicals, designed to kill insects. Many pesticides are also harmful to beneficial insects. Neonics have been shown to be toxic to bees, beneficial insects, birds and mammals, including humans. The licensing and certification process ensures that professionals applying these toxic chemicals have been trained and know how to apply them as safely as possible.

In Rhode Island, anyone who applies pesticides on other people's property needs to get a commercial pesticide *applicator's license* to apply general use (over the counter) pesticides. Farmers and farm workers who apply restricted use and state limited use pesticides to produce an agricultural commodity need to get a *private applicator's certificate*. Dealers who sell restricted use pesticides and state limited use pesticides to certified applicators need to get a *pesticide dealer's license*.

To get a *commercial pesticide applicator's license*, one must pass the pesticide core exam. The applicator must also provide an insurance certificate as proof of financial responsibility, have a letter of employment from their employer, and pay the \$30.00 licensing fee. To be **certified**, after passing the Core exam, one needs to take and pass a Category exam, for each category one wishes to be certified in.

Q: What if I want a Beautiful Lawn? How do I do X without neonics?

A: There are lots of ways to have a beautiful lawn without neonics! One great resource is the SustainPVD (Office of Sustainability for Providence) Pesticide Free PVD campaign website - lots of tricks and resources on pesticide-free lawn care: <https://www.providenceri.gov/sustainability/pesticide-free-lawn-care/>

For instance, did you know that you can deal with a lot of grubs & mites with a horticultural soap? Here is an example recipe: <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/plant-problems/pests/pesticides/homemade-soap-spray.htm>

Q: If you really need to use neonics for a certain pest or application, can I still hire a certified applicator to ensure you are using it safely?

A: Yes. Neonics are dangerous for bees, birds, and also you & your family (if not used properly) in the same way that it's dangerous to handle your own electric work without a license or to serve food from an unlicensed kitchen. Hiring a professional to apply pesticides in and around your home is the right best practice and supports the professionals who put in the work to get certified and do the work safely.

Q: I have flies in my restaurant kitchen and want to use fly paper. Will this prevent me from doing that?

A: Nope! Most modern fly papers are just paper with adhesive on them. Flypaper without pesticides is a great alternative to neonics!

Q: What if I have wood-eating pests in my home? What if neonics are the best treatment?

A: There are specific carve-out to apply neonics within your home to kill wood-eating insects and avoid structural damage if they are pesticides labeled for indoor use only. You can also hire a certified applicator for neonics labeled for indoor and outdoor use to be used in your home.

Q: What if I want to buy my dog a neonic treated collar to avoid fleas & ticks?

A: You can do that! Veterinary uses are carved out.

Q: I'm a Farmer: I want to use Neonics so that my potato seeds aren't attacked before they can finish germinating!

A: You can totally do that! Neonic coated seeds were specifically carved out as exemptions in this legislation specifically for farmers.