

Pollinator Protection: Reducing Risk from Treated Seed

Wild and managed pollinators are vital to agricultural production, the environment and biodiversity. It is estimated that; 1 out of every 3 mouthfuls of food we eat and beverages we drink is facilitated by insect pollination, 70% of the top 100 food and fibre crops rely on insect pollination and 90% of all wild plants use insect pollination for reproduction. With the increasing use of applied seed treatment technologies it is necessary to take all possible measures to reduce risk to pollinators from exposure to dust generated during the planting of insecticide treated seed.

Best Management Practices

Before Seeding:

- Be aware of weather and environmental conditions that increase the likelihood of pollinators being exposed to treated seed dust and try to avoid seeding on windy and/or very dry days.
- Control flowering weeds in the field to reduce the likelihood of foraging bees.
- Communicate to neighbours and local beekeepers about when seeding will occur so they can plan accordingly.
- Know the location of bee hives and confirm that the hives are upwind of the planting field or that the beekeeper has arranged to place the hive in shelter belts, and have access to clear water sources.

During Seeding:

- Ensure that treated seed and coating are of a high quality. Seeds should be clean and the coating should be well-adhered.
- Handle bags with care during transport, loading and unloading.
- Pour seeds carefully into the planter in such a way as to avoid the transfer of dust from the seed bag. Do not shake the seed bag.
- Use seed flow lubricants correctly.
- Cover any exposed seed and clean up any spills.
- Follow the directions provided from planting equipment manufacturers and keep up-to-date on new use practices.

After Seeding:

- Follow provincial/municipal disposal requirements.
- Keep treated seed and dust away from surface water.
- Properly dispose of any dust or treated seed remaining in planting equipment
- Do not leave empty bags or left-over treated seed in fields or the environment and participate in collection programs for seed bags where available.
- Do not load or clean planting equipment near bee colonies, flowering crops or weeds, or hedges and clean and maintain planting equipment regularly.

The unabridged BMPs as developed by PMRA are available publicly by visiting: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/pest/fact-fiche/pollinator-protection-pollinisateurs/index-eng.php#a6>