Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Virginia's Voluntary Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators

Background

In June of 2014, federal departments and agencies were tasked with taking new steps to reverse pollinator losses and help restore pollinator populations. To accomplish this effort, the Pollinator Health Task Force was created. Co-chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Task Force included representatives from a wide variety of departments and agencies that were directed to undertake agency-specific actions and to identify opportunities and initiatives to address the issue of pollinator health.

As part of this effort, the EPA was directed to engage state agencies for pesticide regulation in the development of state pollinator protection plans as a means of mitigating the risk of pesticides to honey bees and other managed pollinators. In Virginia, the state lead agency for pesticide regulation is the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). VDACS has been engaged by EPA to develop a managed pollinator protection plan specific to Virginia.

Virginia's voluntary "Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators" (Plan) is a specific set of voluntary recommendations and best management practices intended to increase protection of managed pollinators from pesticides while allowing effective control of pests that adversely affect crops, structures, public health, and domestic animals. Virginia's Plan facilitates a collaborative approach to implementing risk mitigation practices for beekeepers and pesticide applicators and encourages effective communication between individuals making pesticide applications (or their designees) and those engaged in beekeeping. Pesticide may be applied by professional applicators for hire, government employees who make applications as part of their job, agricultural producers, and homeowners. The Plan includes practices that mitigate potential pesticide exposure to bees, allowing for the effective management of pests, and avoiding situations of unnecessary conflict between these parties.

Virginia's Plan is one component of the *Virginia Pollinator Protection Strategy* (Strategy). The Strategy, which was enacted by the 2016 General Assembly, directs VDACS to develop and maintain a strategy to i) promote the health of and mitigate the risks to all pollinator species and ii) ensure a robust agriculture economy and apiary industry for honey bees and other managed

pollinators. It is recognized that the decline of managed pollinators is not due to one factor alone rather a number of variables including, but not limited to parasites, for example, Varroa mite, and other pests, pathogens, poor nutrition, failing queens, pesticide contamination, and a the narrowing genetic base of honey bees. Virginia's voluntary Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators focuses on recommended best management practices ~~for~~ to facilitate communication between beekeepers and pesticide applicators and to reduce the risk to managed pollinators from pesticides, whereas the Strategy focuses not only on communication between beekeepers and pesticide applicators, but also supports increases in pollinator habitat as well as education and outreach on pollinators.

VDACS recognizes the need to protect pollinators in agricultural and non-agricultural settings to ensure healthy pollinator populations, as they are critical to our nation's economy, food security, and environmental health. The Plan focuses on the voluntary implementation of best management practices and enhanced communication and coordination between pesticide applicators and beekeepers as a means to further protect pollinators. VDACS developed this Plan in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including producers, commercial and private pesticide applicators, beekeepers, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech and industry groups.

Virginia's Voluntary Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators

Managed pollinators primarily include honey bees (*Apis mellifera*), but may also include other species of bees, such as alfalfa leafcutting bees (*Megachile rotundata*), alkali bees (*Nomia melanderi*), mason bees (*Osmia lignaria*) and some species of bumble bees (*Bombus impatiens*). For the purposes of Virginia's Plan, the term "managed pollinators" refers to honey bees and includes commercial and noncommercial (sideliners and hobbyists) beekeeping operations. Commercial beekeeping refers to those operations with greater than 300 colonies; sideline beekeeping refers to operations with 50 – 300 colonies; and, hobbyist beekeeping refers to operations with 1 – 50 colonies. It is anticipated that mitigating the risk of pesticides to managed pollinators will also reduce the risk to native bees and other pollinators.

According to the Agency's 2006 Report to the Governor and General Assembly, *Study of the Plight of Virginia's Beekeepers* (Senate Document No. 20), approximately 8% of beekeepers are sideline beekeepers and 90% of beekeepers in Virginia are considered hobbyist. Virginia's Plan

includes hives maintained by commercial, sideline and hobbyist beekeepers and applies to outdoor agricultural and commercial non-agricultural pesticide applications which have the potential to adversely impact ~~managed pollinators~~a colony(s) in urban, suburban and rural areas including public health, turf and ornamental, right of way, forestry, agricultural and exterior structural pesticide applications. For the purposes of this Plan, the definition of pesticide is in accordance with § 3.2-3900 of the Virginia Pesticide Control Act and means "*any substance or mixture of substances intended for preventing, destroying, repelling, or mitigating any insects, rodents, fungi, bacteria, weeds, other forms of plant or animal life, bacterium, or viruses*" and includes natural and synthetic substances The Plan does not specify which types of pesticides are included in the plan. Rather, the Plan relies on the communication and cooperation between the pesticide applicator and the beekeeper to determine the best method of communicating all planned pesticide applications which have the potential to adversely impact managed pollinators. This communication and cooperation should enable beekeepers to make informed decisions regarding the appropriate measures necessary to protect their hives.

The Plan does not include pesticide applications where bees are the target pest, for example, bees infesting a structure or applications for which the potential for exposure of bees to pesticides is minimal or does not exist, for example, all indoor applications, soil injection, fumigation, as well as outdoor applications, for example, the use of rodenticides. In addition, the Plan does not include contracted pollination services at the site of application. Contracted pollination services result in a relatively large number of bees intentionally placed in or near the crop production area that may be treated and are therefore more likely to be directly exposed to pesticides during an application. The EPA, through the federal pesticide registration process, is considering additional label restrictions on a broader range of pesticide products to protect managed bees under contracted pollination services from the potential acute hazards of insecticides. As such, contracted pollination services will not be addressed in the Plan.

Virginia's Plan is not intended to prohibit, eliminate, or further restrict the application of pesticides, but rather reduce the risk of pesticide exposure to managed pollinators when pesticides are used nearby or within their normal foraging range. In all cases, pesticide applications must be made in accordance with the pesticide label and all applicable federal and state pesticide laws and regulations.

Stakeholder Participation

The input and cooperation of all stakeholders was integral to the development of Virginia's Plan. VDACS hosted seven listening sessions at various locations throughout Virginia in an effort to obtain input from interested parties. The intent of the listening sessions was to seek input from stakeholders on the critical elements included in the Plan. In addition, a dedicated email account was established for receiving stakeholder comments regarding the elements of the Plan. Approximately 450 agricultural producers, beekeepers, private and commercial pesticide applicators, landowners, researchers, and Virginia Cooperative Extension agents participated in these listening sessions. In addition to the verbal comments received during the listening sessions, 169 written comments were also received.

Critical Elements of Virginia's Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators

Virginia's Plan promotes the use of Best Management Practices (BMP) by beekeepers, pesticide applicators, agricultural producers, and landowners with the goal of reducing the potential for pesticide exposure to managed bees that are adjacent to or near a pesticide treatment site. Bees may be exposed to pesticides when foraging in the treatment site or flying through treatment sites to nearby foraging areas or via drift. One key component of the Plan is timely and voluntary communication and coordination among key stakeholders, including beekeepers, and agricultural and commercial non-agricultural pesticide applicators.

I. Best Management Practices (BMPs)

The best management practices were developed based on stakeholder input and provide measures which beekeepers, pesticide applicators, agricultural producers and landowners, can implement to reduce the exposure of bees to pesticides. Implementation of one or more of the following BMPs may reduce the potential for pesticide exposure to managed pollinators.

A. Beekeepers

1. Inform neighbors who may be applying pesticides within one mile of hive location(s) that you have hives. In urban/suburban settings, property owners abutting the site of the hive.
2. Ensure bee health by practicing proper hive management (See Attachment A: Best Management Practices for Maintaining Honey Bee Colonies);

3. Establish apiaries in areas where there is a reduced risk of potential pesticide exposure to managed pollinators;

4. Relocate bees when a pesticide application is scheduled. If unable to move bees, cover or restrict the flight of bees to prevent exposure to the pesticide

5. Provide a visual indicator at the hive location; and

6. Increase the availability of bee forage at your apiary site.

B. Pesticide Applicators (See Resource List for additional Best Management Practices for specific types of pesticide applications)

1. Read and follow all pesticide label directions including environmental hazards and precautionary statements. The EPA is now requiring a "Protection of Pollinators" advisory box on certain pesticide labels. Look for the bee hazard icon for instructions and restrictions that protect bees and other insect pollinators;
2. Ask agricultural producers/landowners/homeowners/occupants if they are aware of any hives in their neighborhood or in the surrounding area;
3. Provide notification of pesticide applications to known beekeepers as soon as possible after the decision has been made to apply a pesticides in order for beekeepers to take actions to protect hives; **Notifying beekeepers does not exempt applicators from complying with pesticide label restrictions. Many insecticide labels prohibit their use if pollinators (bees) are present in the treatment area*.
4. When possible, use selective pesticides that have minimal impact on non-target species as this protects pollinators and conserves natural enemies of target species. Select pesticides with the shortest residual effect if these pesticides will result in reduced exposure (Note: Pesticide with a short residual may result in multiple applications and can therefore increase the potential for exposure). A list of pesticides and their toxicity to bees is available https://extension.entm.purdue.edu/publications/E-53.pdf
5. When possible, avoid dusts and wettable powder insecticide formulations as they can leave a powdery residue that sticks to hairs on bees. In addition, ultra-low volume formulations pose an increased risk for off target movement. Granular and liquid formulations reduce the risk to pollinators since granules are not typically picked up by bees and liquids dry onto plant surfaces;

6. When possible, ~~A~~apply pesticides when bees are less likely to be foraging, preferably in the late afternoon and into the evening;
7. When possible, postpone pesticide applications when the wind is blowing toward bee hives or off-site pollinator habitats;
~~7.~~8.. Be alert for visual indicators (Example: flags) that indicate the presence of a hive in close proximity to application sites.

C. Agricultural Producers:

1. Implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices. Utilize economic thresholds and IPM to determine if insecticides are required to manage pests. When insecticides are required and the potential for impact on managed pollinators exists, select insecticides with low toxicity to bees, short residual toxicity, or repellent properties towards bees when possible. (Note: Pesticides with a short residual may result in multiple applications and can therefore increase potential for exposure). A list of pesticides is available https://extension.entm.purdue.edu/publications/E-53.pdf ~~-~~;
2. If renting land for agricultural production, the renter should discuss with the landowner, the hive location(s) and specific time period which the hives will be on the property.
3. Provide information to commercial pesticide applicators regarding known beekeepers and the location of apiaries in the surrounding area; and
4. ~~When planting seeds treated with insecticides~~When possible, utilize alternatives to talc/graphite if alternatives will result in a reduction in exposure by bees to insecticides used to treat seeds. ~~The talc and graphite can cause the insecticide treatment to come off of the seeds creating insecticide-containing dust that can drift onto hives and flowering plants or otherwise be picked up by bees~~.
5. Discuss who is responsible (agricultural producer, landowner, or pesticide applicator) for notifying the beekeeper regarding anticipated pesticide applications

D. Landowners/Homeowners

1. If renting your property to others, landowners should discuss bee issues with renters such as specific location and time period which hives will be on the property.

2. Provide information to renters and commercial pesticide applicators regarding known beekeepers and the location of apiaries in the surrounding area;

II. Communication and Coordination Between Beekeepers and Pesticide Applicators

Pesticide applicators need accurate and timely information on the location of nearby hives if they are to communicate with beekeepers regarding pesticide applications. Similarly, beekeepers need accurate information regarding areas where pesticides may be used in order to determine potential locations for placing bee hives and measures they will take to protect their hives.

To facilitate and encourage the voluntary exchange of information~~, DriftWatch Specialty Crop Site Registry (DriftWatch), developed by FieldWatch, Inc. and Purdue Research Foundation~~, an online technology based communication tool will be made available to all stakeholders. ~~DriftWatch is an online database system that will~~The online communication tool will allow beekeepers to indicate the location of their beehives and provide the contact information which is needed by the agricultural ~~producer, landowner~~ and commercial nonagricultural ~~, and~~ pesticide applicator when informing the beekeeper of an anticipated pesticide application. It will also allow the opportunity for conventional and organic agricultural producers to record the location and type of crops in production and provide the contact information needed by the beekeeper when determining the potential location for an apiary. ~~DriftWatch~~ The online communication tool will be administered by VDACS staff, with access to the information limited to pesticide applicators and beekeepers who have registered to use the online registry. In addition, ~~DriftWatch will require~~ annual renewal by users will be required to ensure the most accurate information is available regarding the location of the hives and cropping systems.

A. Communicating the Location of Hives – Beekeepers should provide ~~agricultural producers,~~ agricultural and commercial non-agricultural pesticide applicators~~, and landowners~~ with information regarding the location of hives so that notification of upcoming pesticide applications can be made. When communicating with

~~agricultural producers and~~ pesticide applicators regarding the location of hives, beekeepers are encouraged to:

1. Provide complete contact information including the preferred method of communication;
2. Provide the number and specific location of all hives; and
3. Provide timely updates regarding new hive locations, including hives that have been moved or those locations that are no longer being used.

B. Communicating Upcoming Pesticide Application ~~– Agricultural producers, p~~ While there are many factors that may impact the ability of a pesticide applicator to provide advance notification of pesticide applications, ~~A~~agricultural and commercial non-agricultural pesticide applicators~~, and landowners~~ should provide beekeepers with advance notice of upcoming pesticide applications which have the potential to adversely impact managed pollinators in urban, suburban and rural areas. When communicating with beekeepers regarding an upcoming pesticide application, ~~agricultural producers, landowners, and~~ pesticide applicators are encouraged to:

~~1.~~ Provide notification of pesticide applications to beekeepers as soon as possible in order for beekeepers to take actions to protect their hives. ~~Notify all known beekeepers with hives within one (1) mile of the application site of all planned pesticide applications.~~

~~2.~~1.~~Notify beekeepers as soon as the application is planned and when possible, at least 24 hours in advance of the application~~

~~3.~~2.Provide complete contact information including the preferred method of communication; and

3. Provide information regarding the pesticide ~~product information~~being applied including the product name, ~~active ingredient, formulation, method of application and~~ EPA Registration Number and planned time of application. The EPA Registration Number serves as a unique identifier for the product applied.

C. Communicating Potential Locations for Hives – In rural areas, ~~B~~beekeepers can use information from agricultural producers and landowners regarding potential pesticide application sites when determininge the best location for hives. ~~based on information provided by agricultural producers, pesticide applicators, and landowners regarding pesticide application sites.~~ When communicating with beekeepers regarding potential locations for placing bees, agricultural producers, ~~pesticide applicators,~~ and landowners are encouraged to:

1. Provide complete contact information including the preferred method of communication;
2. Provide the acreage and type of crop produced;
3. Identify the production as conventional or organic; and
4. Provide timely updates regarding the acreage and crop information as appropriate.

Plan Implementation

VDACS will encourage voluntary participation in Virginia's Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators and utilize a variety of outreach methods to inform stakeholders and other interested parties of the Plan. Outreach methods include VDACS press releases, posting on the VDACS website, direct distribution to industry and beekeeper associations, presentations at pesticide industry and beekeeper association meetings, and collaborating with Virginia Cooperative Extension in an effort to include information regarding Virginia's voluntary Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators in certification and recertification courses for pesticide applicators and other meetings (for example, field days). Other outreach activities will include the development of audience appropriate fact sheets, information pages, and brochures for homeowners and other interested parties. VDACS will quantify its outreach activities.

Periodic Review

Virginia's voluntary Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators will undergo annual Agency review. VDACS will seek stakeholder input as needed to ensure the Plan remains relevant and meets the unique needs of Virginia's agricultural producers, landowners, pesticide applicators, beekeepers, and others using managed pollinators.

Measuring Effectiveness of the Plan

Virginia's voluntary Plan to Mitigate the Risk of Pesticides to Managed Pollinators promotes the implementation of best management practices and enhanced communication between ~~agricultural producers, landowners~~agricultural and commercial ~~, pesticide~~non-agricultural; pesticide applicators~~,~~ and beekeepers as a means to further protect pollinators. Metrics to determine the effectiveness of the Plan include:

1. Awareness of the Plan by agricultural producers, landowners, pesticide applicators, and beekeepers;
2. Number of registered users of ~~DriftWatch~~ the online communication tool;
3. Number of beekeepers that were contacted by agricultural producers, landowners, and pesticide applicators prior to the application of pesticides;
4. Number of agricultural producers, pesticide applicators, and landowners who have adopted or implemented best management practices to protect pollinators;
5. Number of beekeepers who have adopted or implemented best management practices to protect pollinators;
6. Number of beekeepers that contacted agricultural producers or landowners regarding the location of hives; and
7. Number of beekeepers that contacted agricultural producers or landowners regarding the potential location for placement of hives.
8. ~~7.~~Percentage of tips, complaints, or reports alleging adverse impacts on managed pollinators that result in a violation of pollinator protection label language.

Agency Contact Information

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact:

Keith Tignor, State Apiarist
Office of Plant Industry Services
keith.tignor@vdacs.virginia.gov
804-786-3515

Liza Fleeson Trossbach, Program Manager

Office of Pesticide Services
liza.fleeson@vdacs.virginia.gov
804-371-6559

Select Resources

United State Environmental Protection Agency - Protecting Bees and Other Pollinators from Pesticides http://www2.epa.gov/pollinator-protection

VDACS Office of Pesticide Services http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticides.shtml

VDACS Office of Plant Industry Services http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/plant-and-pest.shtml

Best Management Practices for Pesticide Applications [add links – to be developed by representative group]

Public Health Pest Control
Turf and Ornamental Pest Control
Right of Way Pest Control
Forest Pest Control
Agricultural Pest Control
Structural Pest Control (Exterior)

General Crop Production Information
(To be added)

General Beekeeping Information
http://articles.extension.org/pages/21752/basic-bee-biology-for-beekeepers
https://agdev.anr.udel.edu/maarec/honey-bee-biology/the-colony-and-its-organization/
https://agdev.anr.udel.edu/maarec/honey-bee-biology/seasonal-cycles-of-activities-in-colonies/

Attachment A

Best Management Practices for Maintaining Honey Bee Colonies

The recommended practices for maintaining honey bees in managed colonies include:

1. Maintain strong, healthy, populous colonies.
    a. Remove or securely seal any empty hive equipment.
    b. Remove or combine all weak colonies.
    c. Repair or replace old, worn or defective hive boxes, frames and other hive equipment.
    d. Replace frames containing old comb with new or cleaned frames containing foundation such that all comb in a hive is replaced every 5 to 7 year.
    e. Maintain a minimum of 20 pounds of honey in hive with sufficient pollen stores for brood production during the growing season. Hives should enter winter with a minimum of 60 pounds of honey and 4 frames of pollen.
    f. Take appropriate measures to prevent disturbance or injury to honey bee colony or hive by vertebrate pests.
    g. Treat or remove all disease and/or pest infested colonies that may be detrimental to the health of other colonies in the area. Thoroughly inspect hives for disease at least every 3 to 4 months. Monitor pest populations for exceeding treatment thresholds.
    h. Report disease and/or pest infested colonies to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Plant Industry Services at (804) 786-3515.

2. Practice proper management and control techniques to prevent colonies from swarming.

3. Maintain a water source within 50 feet of colonies or less than one-half the distance to the nearest unnatural water source, whichever is closest for urban and suburban apiaries.

4. Maintain colonies with honey bee races certified as European honey bees (EHB).
    a. Purchase queens, packaged bees, nucleus colonies, or established hives from certified EHB suppliers. Avoid purchasing queens or honey bees from suppliers within 100 miles from known Africanized honey bee (AHB) populations.
    b. Introduce queens from certified healthy stock when making divisions or splits of established colonies.
    c. Replace queens in all captured or trapped swarms within 30 days.
    d. Replace queens in all colonies every two years to minimize swarming behavior.
    e. Mark or clip queens prior to introduction to splits, swarms, and colonies.

10. Obtain queen and bees from local suppliers.

11. Report suspected pesticide related bee incidents to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Pesticide Services.
    a. Include the following when reporting a suspected pesticide incident:
        i. Previous health of colony.
        ii. Prevailing winds.
        iii. Name or EPA registration number of suspected pesticide if known.
        iv. Previous treatments for honey bee pests and diseases.

v. When and where bees may have been exposed to a pesticide.

b. Do not disturb affected hives or bees in immediate vicinity pending an investigation.

c. Symptoms of honey bees suspected of potentially having been exposed to pesticide include:

i. Excessive numbers of dead and dying adult honey bees in front of the hive or on the bottom board.
ii. Dead brood at the hive entrance and in brood comb.
iii. Lack of foraging bees under normal weather conditions for bee flight.
iv. Adult bees that appear dazed, unconscious or paralyzed.
v. Adult bees that appear jerky, wobbly or experiencing rapid movement.
vi. Disorientation and reduced efficiency of foraging bees.
vii. Immobile or lethargic bees unable to leave flowers.
viii. Crawling adults on surface of hive or ground near hive unable to fly.
ix. Queenless or broodless hive.

(Note: symptoms may be similar to disease and pest infestation of honey bee colony.)

Recommendations are provided by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Plant Industry Services, telephone: 804-786-3515, email: VABees@vdacs.virginia.gov.