CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
Cambridge Health Alliance

TO: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager

FROM: Claude-Alix Jacob, Chief Public Health Officer

DATE: June 26, 2015

SUBJECT: Response to Policy Order #15, adopted 5/18/15

Excerpt of Order: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the appropriate departments to determine if neonicotinoid pesticides are being used by city employees or its contractors and to immediately discontinue their use; and be it further that the City Manager be and hereby is requested to communicate to all applicable employees and contractors that the use of neonicotinoid pesticides are strictly prohibited; and be it further that the City Manager be and hereby is requested to coordinate with the Cambridge Public Health Department to distribute materials to all retail establishments within Cambridge that sell neonicotinoid pesticides, outlining the dangers of such chemicals to bees and the ecosystem, urging them to cease stocking the pesticides; and be it further that the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council on this matter.

Full text: http://www2.cambridgema.gov/cityClerk/PolicyOrder.cfm?action=search&item_id=49777

Neonicotinoid pesticides are a class of insecticides that work by a neurological mechanism that does not differentiate between beneficial insects, such as bees and other pollinators, and insects considered nuisance pests on ornamental plants and agricultural pests (e.g., aphids and weevils).

Recent agricultural research has suggested that crop yields have not been significantly improved by application of neonicotinoid insecticides to reduce pests, and other literature has pointed to reduced crop pollination by bees due to decline in bee numbers, which may lead to a future impact on sustainability and food security. Emerging scientific literature has suggested an association between neonicotinoid exposure and colony collapse disorder in bees, particularly in the recent work of the Environmental Exposure Biology Laboratory out of the Harvard School of Public Health.

The Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) is aware that other local jurisdictions across the country have recently passed limited bans on use of neonicotinoid insecticides (e.g., on parks and recreational spaces), including Seattle and Spokane, Washington; Portland and Eugene, Oregon; Sacramento, California; Boulder, CO; and Sherwood, Minnesota. At the federal level, the White House established a Pollinator Health Task Force in 2014 to coordinate public education on steps individuals and businesses can take to address the loss of pollinators.

Action Steps

With regard to the request that CPHD distribute educational materials to Cambridge retail establishments that sell neonicotinoid pesticides, CPHD will:

- Identify products that contain neonicotinoids, as well as the distributors and local retailers who sell them. CPHD will work with the city's Community Development Department (CDD) to review the Business Registry database to identify retailers stocking these products.

- Research available guidance on alternative practices that could eliminate or reduce the need for pesticides, as well as research existing educational outreach materials that can be adapted for educational materials specific to local Cambridge retailers.
- Produce educational materials for local retailers based on this research that will outline the dangers of neonicotinoid pesticides and urge retailers to cease stocking them.
- Conduct an awareness campaign targeting local retailers who sell products containing neonicotinoid pesticides. Activities may include meetings with community groups and business owners; promoting materials and messages via social media, websites, and CCTV; and promoting Cambridge retailers who have "pledged" or joined as early partners in the effort.

Timeline

Staff from the Cambridge Public Health Department's Environmental Health Division expects to complete the research phase of this project by the end of August. The educational campaign, including distribution of materials, will take place in fall 2015.