

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

May 2016

Dear Constituent,

Thanks for contacting me about neonicotinoid insecticides and bees.

I entirely agree with you that bees and other pollinators play a vital role in the security of our food supply and the quality of our natural environment. I welcome the work the Government has done over the last few years to understand and protect them, most recently through the National Pollinator Strategy.

Pesticides are tightly regulated, and decisions on the approval of these substances are made at the European level. Since December 2013, three of the five currently approved neonicotinoids are not permitted for use on a wide range of crops considered attractive to bees. The Government has implemented these restrictions in full. They are not time-limited, and will remain in place unless the European Commission decides to change them.

The European Food Safety Authority has begun a review of the science relating to neonicotinoids and bees, which is expected to conclude in the summer. This includes looking at the effects on bees caused by seed treatments, and uses of the restricted pesticides in the form of granules. The Government has said that it will contribute fully to this review, because any decisions must be based on solid evidence.

Rest assured that restrictions on neonicotinoids will not be removed if the evidence shows that they should remain.

You might be interested in the response I received earlier this year when I wrote to George Eustice MP, Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), concerning similar matters that had been raised by fellow constituents. I have attached it for your reference as it also outlines the results of two emergency authorisations of neonicotinoid treatments from this winter.

Once again, many thanks for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY



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Our ref: MC393221/SC

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January 2016

From George Eustice MP
Minister of State

Dear Chris

Thank you for your letter of 15 December to the Secretary of State on behalf of a number of your constituents about bee health and neonicotinoids. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I attended and spoke at the Westminster Hall debate on 7 December about bees and neonicotinoids in my capacity as Minister of State for Farming. I agree that the health of our pollinators is very important in itself and for the wider environment. That is why in November 2014 the Government launched a 10 year strategy which will ensure pollinator needs are addressed as an integral part of land and habitat management as well as further investigating the ways we can help pollinators thrive. This includes research on the use of pesticides.

Following concerns about some types of neonicotinoid pesticides the European Commission restricted the use of three neonicotinoids from 1 December 2013. The main European Regulation on pesticides provides for limited and controlled use of those restricted neonicotinoids on an exceptional basis in emergency situations to control a danger which cannot be contained by other reasonable means.

In the UK we use the best available science to make the decision on applications. We have a committee of scientists called the Expert Committee on Pesticides. It is the Committee's job to advise Ministers on what authorisations are capable of being issued using evidence about the impact on the environment and public safety and reflecting the relevant criteria for authorisation. When it provides its advice it has to take into account all environmental factors; such as increasing resistance to alternative pesticides due to over-reliance on them, the effect of using greater quantities of less effective pesticides on farm biodiversity, and the availability of alternative pesticides and agronomic techniques to reduce the need for pesticides.

The Committee considered two applications for emergency authorisations, each for two separate neonicotinoid seed treatments for winter oilseed rape this year. It recommended the first application, which requested authorisation to use two neonicotinoids on 79% of the national crop area, was rejected as their use was not limited and controlled. The Committee and Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser recommended that the second application, which requested authorisation to use two neonicotinoids on 5% of the national crop area, was accepted as their use was limited and controlled, was subject to stewardship arrangements, and was to control a danger which could not be contained by any other reasonable means. The minutes from the Committee's meeting are available online:

www.pesticides.gov.uk/guidance/industries/pesticides/advisory-groups/acp/acp-minutes

Ministers followed the Committee's advice on the basis that the criteria for granting the authorisations were met.

George Eustice

GEORGE EUSTICE MP

