



February 17, 2014

TO: Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Committee
Supervisor Andersen, Chair
Supervisor Piepho, Vice Chair

FROM: Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator

SUBJECT: Progress Report on IPM Activities

PERIOD COVERED: May through September 2014

Please Note: Although the IPM Coordinator reported on IPM activities at the 2014 March and June meetings of the TWI Committee, she did not report at the September, October or November 2015 meetings because of meeting cancellations and other circumstances.

IPM Advisory Committee

1. Staffed the May 7, July 2, and September 3, 2014 meetings of the IPM Committee (the Committee).
On May 7, the Committee heard a presentation on anticoagulant rodenticides from Stella McMillin of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Ms. McMillin analyzes dead animals for rodenticide poisoning. She explained that it is not possible to determine when an animal was exposed to rodenticides, and that it is difficult to tease apart the effects of disease, nutrition, and pesticides. She also noted that mortalities from first generation anticoagulants (such as the diphacinone that the Agriculture Department uses for ground squirrel control in the County) are not common, though she has documented some exposure in the animals she sees. Since 2004 a total of 19 hawks and owls have been submitted from Contra Costa County to Ms. McMillin's unit for testing. Of these, 10 were either too desiccated to test or were tested and no anticoagulant was found; the more deadly second generation anticoagulants were detected in 8 of the birds; and both a second generation anticoagulant and the first generation anticoagulant diphacinone were detected in one bird.

At the July 2 meeting, the Committee heard a presentation on the current state of honeybee health from Dr. Eric Mussen of U.C. Davis, who is a world-recognized expert on honeybees. Dr. Mussen said that the current state of honeybees in California is not dreadful, but it is not good, and the past several years of drought have put considerable stress on bees. Honeybees suffer from many kinds of stress. Dr. Mussen believes that malnutrition (i.e., the loss of habitat for nectar plants from urbanization and paving over land) is perhaps the most important stressor. Honeybees are also afflicted with a number of serious parasites and diseases that weaken colonies. Colony Collapse Disorder, which has been much in the news lately, results in all the adult honeybees leaving the hive over a short period of time. The cause is still unclear, but it is probably a combination of factors. Pesticides have long been a problem for honeybees. As early as the 1800s, the lead arsenate pesticides used in agriculture were killing bees. Dr. Mussen noted that bee keepers use a number of pesticides *directly* in bee hives to combat parasites and disease. Currently a new class of pesticides called neonicotinoids, is under scrutiny. Dr. Mussen is not convinced that the agricultural use of neonicotinoids is causing a problem for bees. Landscape applications of these pesticides pose a far greater problem because there they are used at higher concentrations. These pesticides contaminate pollen to a degree that can be deadly to honeybees. This contamination does not last forever, and in trees and other perennial plants it decreases over time. Note that the County Grounds Division does not use any neonicotinoid pesticides.

At the September 3 meeting, the Committee heard final reports from the 3 subcommittees (see #2 below), and heard updates from the Departments and the IPM Coordinator. The Committee decided to choose its 2015 work priorities at the November 2014 meeting instead of waiting until January 2015.



The term for the Environmental Organization seat, currently held by Scott Cashen, will end on December 31, 2014. Advertising for applicants for this seat will begin soon so that a new member can be seated in January 2015.

2. Staffed 13 subcommittee meetings (Transparency, Decision-Making, and Cost Accounting).
 - a. The Transparency subcommittee reviewed how the County posts for pesticide use and learned about how the County responds to public records requests.
 - b. The Decision-Making subcommittee reviewed four decision-making documents this year: artichoke thistle, Japanese knotweed, and purple starthistle from the Agriculture Department, and weed management at airports from Public Works Vegetation Management.
 - c. The Cost Accounting subcommittee investigated the cost of a long-term transition to more sustainable landscaping around County buildings that would require less maintenance, energy and water, and minimal or no pesticide use. The committee found that the issue is quite complex and that there is no easy answer. The committee looked at the cost of converting areas of lawn to artificial turf; but decided that using artificial turf is not the answer to pesticide or maintenance issues. Artificial turf is expensive, still requires maintenance and herbicides (to kill any vegetation before it is installed and to kill weeds that grow on top of it), and the committee was concerned about the fact that it is a petroleum product and about the fate of the plastic once it is worn out. The committee learned that the Grounds Division does not use any insecticides or fungicides and does not use a large amount of herbicide on County landscapes. The largest amount of herbicide is used on the Marsh Creek Firing Range because bare ground must be maintained there to prevent fires. The committee also investigated the costs of traditional landscapes vs. native plant/drought-tolerant landscapes and found research from the City of Santa Monica that shows that native and drought tolerant landscapes use considerably less water, produce less green waste, and require much less maintenance. The committee concluded that where appropriate the County should strive for landscaping that is drought-tolerant and low maintenance.

Structural IPM

3. Continued monitoring the work of Pestec, the County's structural IPM contractor.
4. Coordinated the process for choosing the county's structural IPM contractor.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for Structural IPM Services for County buildings was published on May 16. On July 2 the County held a pre-bid conference and 10 pest control companies attended. Eight companies attended a building walk-through on July 8 to become familiar with some of the County's properties. The companies were instructed to develop bids for the 6 representative buildings on the tour. These bids accompanied their proposals for how they would perform IPM services for the County and were due on July 22. Six companies submitted proposals, and a team that included the IPM Coordinator and representatives from Public Works Facilities and the Agriculture Department read and rated the proposals. The team chose three companies to interview. Interviews were conducted on August 5, and Pestec, the County's current IPM provider, won the contract.

Landscape IPM

5. Arranged for and attended a workshop provided by Dr. Igor Laćan, U.C. Cooperative Extension Horticultural Advisor for the Bay Area, on managing landscapes during drought. Sixteen County staff from Public Works (administration, Special Districts, Grounds, and the Watershed Program) and two Town of Danville staff attended.

Bed Bugs

6. Continued to organize bi-monthly meetings of the Contra Costa Bed Bug Task Force.
7. Reviewed and commented on surveys that will be used to gather baseline information on bed bug infestations and control throughout California. This work is part of the bed bug grant that will compare "conventional" bed bug treatments with an IPM program for bed bugs in multi-family apartment buildings in Contra Costa County and in southern California. County Partners on this project include U.C. researchers, pest control companies in both

southern California and the Bay Area, Monument Impact (formerly the Chavez Center) in Concord, and this County's IPM Coordinator

8. Responded to a number of calls from tenants for assistance with bed bug problems.
9. Provided a bed bug awareness talk to residents of Meadow Wood at Alamo Creek, a senior living facility in Danville, and follow-up help to individual residents and staff.
10. Accompanied Environmental Health inspectors and California Department of Public Health staff on the County's second bed bug inspection in an apartment in Concord on July 21.
11. Advised the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program (GRIP) Family Housing Program about bed bug prevention. Connected them with Target Specialty Products, which is conducting a fumigation training for pest control personnel in Richmond and is looking for a facility where they can demonstrate (for free) fumigation for bed bugs. Fumigation is an expensive control option for bed bugs and is generally only used when an infestation is extremely severe and widespread. The GRIP facility does not have a severe infestation, but fumigating the Family Housing Program quarters will let GRIP start anew and institute a strict prevention protocol to keep bed bugs out. On Friday, September 26, Target Specialty Products will meet with GRIP to view the facility and determine if it is appropriate for the fumigation.

Other Projects

12. Wrote an article on the new state and federal regulations on rodenticides for Supervisor Andersen's July eNewsletter.
13. Met with the newly hired Agricultural Commissioner, Chad Godoy.
14. Compiled pesticide use figures for County operations and began work on the IPM Annual Report.
15. Updated a document responding to various concerns from the public about the County's IPM program (see County Staff Responses to Issues Raised by the Public, attached).