

# Northwest Alfalfa Seed Growers Association's PESP Strategy

## **Describe your Organization's Five-Year Goals Related to Pesticide Risk Reduction**

The NWSGA's five year goal is to reduce the use of pesticides while maintaining the quality, quantity and profitability of the alfalfa seed produced in the western United States. This will be accomplished through an aggressive integrated pest management program which will include ongoing research on current and future chemicals, development of genetically modified alfalfa seed varieties and continuing grower education.

## **What do you envision doing (broadly) to try to resolve your major issues?**

NWSGA will work to improve and refine the Integrated Pest Management program based on the following elements:

- Research – Continued research on existing and future chemicals. Recent reduced risk chemicals include Assail, Beleaf and Rimon. These products have been shown to be effective in helping control pests while protecting bees and beneficial insects.
- Biotechnology – Use of beneficial insects to control predator insects in alfalfa seed.
- Bio-Tech – NWSGA will work closely with the National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance (NAFA) in the promotion of future genetically engineered alfalfa varieties.
- Education

The above research and education will be conducted to benefit the producers, protect and sustain the environment and have positive impacts on the seed market. These elements will be developed to protect the pollinators, control the pests, and reduce the use of pesticides and, at the same time, increase yields and assure the long term profitability for growers in the western United States.

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## **Goal 1 and Tactics**

We will conduct research on existing and future chemicals to help identify reduced risk pesticides that are effective and economical while controlling the pest population without harming the pollinators and beneficial insects. Current research includes IPM for lygus bugs in alfalfa seed, new methods for control of lygus bugs, investigation of alfalfa leafcutting bee reproduction and survival, and weed management.

By educating on new chemicals, growers will find, through these studies, the best products to use for any given pest. Using the best product is usually the most cost effective because it will get the job done while protecting bees and other beneficial insects. Applying it in the prescribed manner also reduces waste. The bottom line is that good research applied in daily on-farm situations saves growers money as it reduces the use of pesticides. The two go hand in hand.

The effectiveness of Activity 1 will be measured in two very specific ways.

1. Through reports given at least annually by the researchers involved in each area. In these reports we will find the data to tell us the extent to which each method of pest control is to be reduced or expanded.
2. Through yield data provided by growers.

It's important to remember that the strategy must include procedures that will keep growers in business at a reasonably profitable level. This is an essential part of the "integrated" program because without it, the industry is gone.

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## **Goal 2 and Tactics**

We are and will continue to conduct research on biological methods to control pests in alfalfa seed production in the following ways:

1. The use of cultural practices which contribute to the reduction of pests and the protection of natural predators to these pests must be exhaustively researched. Practices such as burning fields in early spring will be monitored in terms of pest reduction and effect on air quality and careful attention paid to alternatives, such as cultivation practices, that may accomplish the same thing.
2. A continuing and vigorous effort will be made in the identification, propagation, protection and control of insects that will provide biological control of alfalfa seed pests. Big-eyed bugs, damsel bugs, Anaphesiole wasps, lady bugs and, *Peristenus pallipes* wasp, are all naturally occurring predators that greatly reduce alfalfa seed pests and can dramatically reduce the need for chemical control.
3. Research on the use of biopesticides, such as pheromone and reproduction manipulations and their effect on bees.

The effectiveness of Activity 2 will be measured in two very specific ways.

- Through reports given at least annually by the researchers involved in each area. In these reports we will find the data to tell us the extent to which each method of pest control is be reduced or expanded.
  - Through yield data provided by growers.
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### **Goal 3 and Tactics**

NWASGA will work closely with the NAFA as new genetically modified varieties of alfalfa are made available to the market to make certain that they are environmentally safe and that the relationships that have been developed over time with foreign markets are not put in jeopardy. As new GMO varieties are developed, pest resistance will be a component, including current work on lygus bug resistance. This will reduce the amount of pesticides needed to control pest populations in alfalfa seed production.

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### **Goal 4 and Tactics**

We will educate growers by providing information regarding optimal IPM practices to them in the following ways:

1. Through our annual *seed school*. This event brings the best informed people from university research programs, the seed industry, biochemical experts and government personnel together with growers in one place for a two day conference. We use this conference to emphasize the IPM procedures outlined here.
2. Most states in the NWASGA hold one or more field days in the production area during the growing season. Growers receive hands-on information about current research and field trials being conducted on alfalfa seed. These are invaluable in showing growers how to apply the research in their area.
3. Through periodic publications which are sent to all growers. We currently publish a newsletter two times a year which contains detailed information from researchers and other industry people to guide growers through particular pest problems.
4. As part of its affiliation with NAFA, the NWASGA helps in the publication of pest resistant characteristics of over 200 varieties of alfalfa. Each year we work with genetic suppliers and breeders to develop this publication by encouraging participation and assuring accuracy. The genetics of the alfalfa plant greatly affect its resistance to disease and pests. By seeking to get as many varieties as possible in the publication, growers will be able to make informed decisions about varieties that are resistant to particular pests in their area. The more “good fits” that are made, the more growers will be able to reduce pesticide use
5. On our web site, [www.nwasga.org](http://www.nwasga.org), we will have the opportunity to make available to growers at any time up to date notices on pesticide use, weather conditions and pest problems.

We measure success by the feedback we receive from the growers themselves in our routinely scheduled meetings by using surveys designed to determine pesticide use, timing and effect each season. We will also get feedback from the seed school to make certain the information presented there was useful to the attendees.