

Press release

15 December 2020

Excessive levels of metaldehyde continue to be detected in water courses this winter.

Wet weather throughout the autumn created ideal conditions for slugs. The challenging conditions have also meant that farmers have struggled to get winter wheat drilled. But the wet weather has delivered a double whammy, causing excessive water run-off in some areas. The Anglian Water region in particular has seen excessive amounts of metaldehyde detected at well above the permitted level. Some abstraction points have had to be closed. The Voluntary Initiative is keen to remind growers of the need for best practice use of molluscicides, particularly metaldehyde, at this time.

Dr Neal Evans, Operations Director at the VI said; “Continued wet weather in some areas of the country has resulted in run-off to water courses. We have heard reports from some water companies that they have detected metaldehyde in raw water at levels well in excess of the 0.1 parts per billion (ppb) limit. It is important to stress the need for careful, best practice use of pesticides and metaldehyde in particular, as part of an integrated pest management approach. Careful stewardship of metaldehyde will be key as this slug pellet treatment is phased out.”

Further information on Integrated Pest Management and best practice is available from the VI website at www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk and information on metaldehyde, including a threshold guide for treatment, is available at www.getpelletwise.co.uk.

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Issued by: Neal Evans, Operations Director, VI

neal@voluntaryinitiative.org.uk

07736 638139

Notes to editors:

- The Voluntary Initiative is a programme of measures which promotes responsible pesticide use as part of an integrated pest management approach. It is sponsored by the Agricultural Engineers Association, Agricultural Industries Confederation, Country Land and Business Association, Crop Protection Association, National Association of Agricultural Contractors, the National Farmers Union, NFU Scotland and the Ulster Farmers Union. Further information on the VI can be found at: <https://voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/>
- On 18 September 2020 Defra revoked all approvals for metaldehyde products.
- Metaldehyde manufacturers and their agents can sell and distribute remaining stocks until 31 March 2021.
- From 31 March 2021 no further supplies from manufacturers will be permitted but distributors can still sell stocks and use will be permitted until 31 March 2022.
- The HSE revocation notice is available at:
<https://voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/media/2285/metaldehyde-revocation-notice2.pdf>