Managing Metaldehyde in the River Wid Catchment

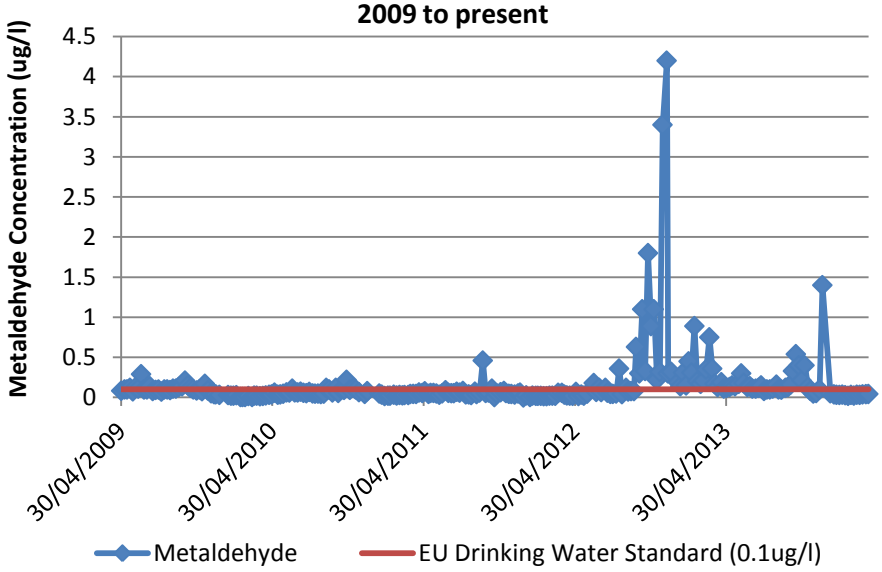
Maintaining water quality and crop productivity

The aim of this initiative is to work with farmers and growers to substantially reduce concentrations of metaldehyde found in the River Wid and its tributaries. As part of the work of the Chelmer and Blackwater Catchment Partnership, river water sampling has taken place since 2009 in the River Wid catchment. This has shown that metaldehyde, the main active ingredient in slug pellets, regularly occurs at levels above the EU Drinking Water Standard of 0.1ug/l, particularly over the autumn / winter period following applications. These levels have an impact on the Essex & Suffolk Water abstraction point at Langford and on drinking water compliance, because metaldehyde is difficult to remove during the water treatment process.

This leaflet highlights some of the ways you could reduce the amount of metaldehyde you use, whilst continuing to ensure effective slug control.

River Wid Catchment

Metaldehyde Concentrations in the River Wid at Writtle - 2009 to present



Follow the Get Pelletwise Guidelines

- Use the minimum active per hectare
- Maximum total dose rate 1 Aug to 31 Dec: 210g of metaldehyde/ha
- Maximum individual dose: 210g of metaldehyde/ha
- Maximum total dose: 700g of metaldehyde/ha/calendar year
- Do not apply metaldehyde based slug pellets when land drains are flowing.

Chelmer & Blackwater Catchment Partnership

Best Practice Actions on Your Farm

By employing the following actions, you can help to reduce the amount of metaldehyde found in our rivers:

Reduce slug risk

- Remove or incorporate as much crop residue as possible after harvest
- Use **cultural controls**, for example rolling to create a consolidated seedbed

Identify high risk areas

- **Identify the high risk fields** on your farm - those which are close to watercourses, on heavy clay soils, with a slope or underdrained.
- Take extra precautions on these fields when using pellets and consider using a ferric phosphate pellet.

Employ best practice advice

- **Calibrate your spreader** before use - contact Teresa on 07792 169545 if you would like a free calibration of your spreader.
- **Brush your spreader down in the field** to ensure it is free from residue. Make sure that this is not in the gateways, on the headland or above land drains.
- **Keep your applicator under cover** or away from rainfall....in a recent study, a "blue" applicator was washed down and the concentration of metaldehyde in the wash water was 1100ug/l this equated to 0.22g of metaldehyde, enough to contaminate 2.2 million litres of water.

Consider using alternative slug pellet products

- Reduce metaldehyde usage by using **a lower concentration metaldehyde pellet, for example a 1.5% pellet**. These pellets provide a similar number of baiting points at lower rates of active and can enable an additional application(s) if required.
- **Ferric phosphate** is the main alternative to metaldehyde and available as Sluxx or Derrex. It has proven effectiveness as a product and no concerns for water quality. Consider using these products on high risk fields, when land drains are flowing or when you reach the maximum application rates per hectare.

We look forward to working with you in the River Wid catchment to keep this important product for slug control and to achieve excellent water quality in the river catchment.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Any questions, please contact **Teresa Meadows, Chelmer and Blackwater Catchment Advisor** on 07792 169545 or e-mail: teresa.meadows@nwl.co.uk

Phil Cottey of Ramsey Tyrells, Stock, thinks ferric phosphate is the "right tool for the job", good practice for high risk land next to the river Wid, a less aggressive product for filling and handling and because of how the product works, if you monitor for slug damage it has proven its effectiveness.

The Chelmer and Blackwater Catchment Partnership is supported by the following organisations:

A clear solution for farmers CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

ESSEX&SUFFOLK WATER living water

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