

## USE SLUG CONTROL WITH CAUTION THIS YEAR

Date added: 16/10/08

Even though the level of slugs in crops is high this year, growers should make sure they use a good quality slug pellet only when necessary and only when monitoring indicates a risk, says ProCam's Technical Director, Dr. David Ellerton.

"Unsurprisingly with the recent wet weather, a lot of crop debris from harvest and less than ideal seedbeds, the threat of slugs in winter crops is very high this year," he points out.

"This is particularly so in those crops that are emerging slowly, as the slugs have more time to graze and feed on them. It is important not to act indiscriminately to this slug pressure, but monitor the threat and consider the most appropriate action, with environmental issues such as water very much in mind."

ProCam along with two other national distributors are undertaking widespread trapping and monitoring of slug populations as part of a responsible stewardship approach to minimise slug pellets getting into watercourses.

"With the threshold for treatment being 4 slugs per trap, one site in East Anglia has recently resulted in 28 slugs/trap, which gives some indication of the high pressure we are dealing with this year. This new trapping and monitoring service is available to farmers as part of our new Profile service this year," David Ellerton says.

"Monitoring slug populations is crucial but don't start this too late as you may miss the boat and the crop may already be damaged. When thresholds are reached or exceeded, make sure that you use a good quality slug pellet. Good quality pellets remain entire in the rain, spread evenly and so cover the soil more effectively.

"One high quality pellet that we tend to use is TDS Major, based on the active ingredient metaldehyde. Poorer quality slug pellets are usually cheaper but disintegrate in the wet and have to be applied more times for the same end result. Poorer quality ones can also break down while spreading and then wash down into the water," he warns.

This view is supported by ProCam agronomist Paul Gardiner who advises farmers in East Anglia.

"TDS Major is a pasta-based slug pellet and so holds together much better without disintegrating in the wet. It is a false economy to use cheaper poorer quality products, particularly in wet conditions. You could end up using them three or more times and of course this increases the risk of water contamination, which must be avoided."

Dr. Ellerton emphasises the need to make sure that slug pellets do not contaminate watercourses.

"Take particular care when spreading pellets close to water and on the headlands. Proper stewardship of these products is essential, not just for good control but also to make sure that we have these products available to us in the future."