

Quality of Pellet Makes a Difference

Date added: 05/10/09

Even though slug levels in crops are low at the moment due to the season's dry start, growers must plan to use a good quality slug pellet should control become necessary, warns ProCam Group Technical Director, Dr. David Ellerton.

Failure to do so could result in lower than expected control levels and increase the risk of water pollution, he says.

"Slugs pose a threat from crop emergence up to four true leaves in oilseed rape and up to the start of tillering in winter cereals and these crops need careful monitoring from emergence onwards. Once rain arrives and soil becomes moist, slug populations can escalate. Each slug can kill up to fifty seeds in the first week after sowing.

"Although some crops in the wetter areas of the country are already under threat, most are awaiting rain to reach threshold for treatment.

When risk becomes high and thresholds reached, it is important to consider the most appropriate action, with water issues high on the agenda," says Dr. Ellerton.
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Slug pellets can easily contaminate watercourses, he explains, adding that all that is needed to exceed the critical limit is one pellet in 10,000 litres of water.

"As 69% of oilseed rape and 30% of all winter wheat is usually treated for slugs, it's a large area of land to steward properly. The best advice is to apply pellets with as much care and precision as a pesticide.

"It is vital that growers are familiar with and follow the Get Pelletwise guidelines on [HYPERLINK "http://www.getpelletwise.co.uk" www.getpelletwise.co.uk](http://www.getpelletwise.co.uk), to optimise the efficacy of applied slug pellets and to avoid metaldehyde entering the water system.

"Without proper stewardship of metaldehyde products this autumn, we could be facing a future without them, a situation which could have dramatic effects on what crops we grow and the overall profitability of arable farming. It's as critical as this."

The guidelines start by advising care in storing, handling and transporting slug pellets and applying pellets carefully, using thresholds and a fully calibrated machine. If conditions are such that you wouldn't spray a pesticide, then don't apply a pellet.

"I would also advise using a high quality slug pellet. Good quality pellets hold together much better. They also spread more evenly, with little dust, and so cover the soil more effectively. One high quality pellet that we recommend is TDS Major, a pasta pellet based on the active ingredient

metaldehyde.”

Dr Ellerton points out that poorer quality slug pellets are usually cheaper, but are often a false economy as they easily disintegrate in very wet conditions and may have to be applied two or three more times for the same end result.

“Poorer quality pellets break down whilst spreading and can then wash down through the soil, increasing the risk of water contamination, which must be avoided at all costs,” he warns.

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PRM221

5th October 2009

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