



4 April 2010

Take care when spraying this spring, warns VI

As spring field work gets into full swing, farmers are reminded of the need to ensure herbicides do not reach water courses and to refer to the latest advice available from the H2OK? campaign.

In spring, as in autumn, it is vital to ensure key herbicides are kept out of water to ensure their long-term availability for the industry. This includes paying attention to weather and soil conditions when spraying, as well as taking care during pesticide handling and when washing down sprayers.

In recent years, mecoprop-p (CMPP-p) and bentazone – both widely-used spring applied products – have been detected in water at levels that if not reduced, could result in product use being restricted.

Mecoprop-p is used in a number of products for grassland as well as spring and winter cereals where it can help combat resistant weeds, such as chickweed. It is very soluble in water and so is vulnerable to run-off into surface waters after heavy rain, especially if there is insufficient crop/weed cover. As a result of a European review its use has been restricted and more restrictions may follow if it continues to show up in water sampling.

Bentazone, which is used on a range of broad-leaved crops including peas and beans, potatoes and narcissi, is more likely to leach into groundwater although surface water must also be protected as this drains to groundwater. Therefore, matching spray timing to soil and weather conditions is important. This is why in some catchments a text messaging service is used to warn farmers and agronomists about local risks to water.

New for 2011 is a Water Protection Advice Sheet (WPAS) giving guidance on bentazone. Users are helped through a nine point self-assessment that considers soil conditions, weather, field slope, proximity to water courses, timing, etc. A similar WPAS is available for mecoprop-p.

“We have been concerned about bentazone detections in groundwater for some time so we welcome the new WPAS which will we hope help users minimise the risk of this herbicide entering rivers or groundwater,” says the Environment Agency’s Jo Kennedy. “By following best practice, farmers and growers have a better chance of avoiding further restrictions or product losses.”

While there is a considerable amount of advice and reference material available on the Voluntary Initiative website www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk any farmer or grower concerned about their spring herbicide programmes should consult a BASIS registered adviser.

To help farmers and their advisers meet the challenge, Water Protection Advice Sheets (WPAS) are available for both mecoprop-p and bentazone.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. The mecoprop-p WPAS sheet can be found at http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/Attachments/resources/1149_S4.pdf
2. The bentazone WPAS can be found at http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/Attachments/resources/1341_S4.pdf

The sponsors of the Voluntary Initiative are the Agricultural Engineers Association, Agricultural Industries Confederation, Country Land and Business Association, Crop Protection Association, National Association of Agricultural Contractors, the NFU, NFU Scotland and the Ulster Farmers Union.

The Crop Protection Association represents companies in the UK engaged in the manufacture, formulation and supply of crop protection products for use in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, home gardening, industrial, and local authority outlets. www.cropprotection.org.uk

The England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) is a partnership project between Defra, Environment Agency and Natural England which offers advice and support to farmers to reduce diffuse water pollution from agriculture. For further information see <http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/landmanage/water/csf/>

Further information

Patrick Goldsworthy, Voluntary Initiative Manager m: 07711 416312
patrick@goldsworthyassociates.com

Issued by

Geoff Dodgson, Chamberlain 01223 884600
geoff.dodgson@chamberlain.uk.com m: 07710 379561