

Effective Slug Control #1



What is the problem?

Water destined for drinking water must adhere to the drinking water standards which say that no individual pesticide will exceed 0.1µg/l (0.1ppb). This is an extremely small amount and can be equated to:

- 1 stem of hay in 111,000 bales
- 1 grain of wheat in 390 tonnes
- 1 second in 320 years
- 1p in £100million

Metaldehyde, which is the active ingredient in some slug pellets is detected in water above 0.1µg/l and is not treatable at Anglian Water's WTW's.

Background

Amy Jobe (G & B Dobson Ltd) farms 1,240ha at South Elkington on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds.

Cropping consists of winter wheat, winter and spring barley, oilseed rape and spring beans. A Lincoln Red suckler herd producing 'Amy Jobe's Lincoln Russet'. Soil type is a mixture of loamy land with heavier clay in places and some fields over chalk/limestone.



What is the Issue?

The land drains into the Louth Canal which feeds Covenham Water Treatment Works. Covenham WTW provides drinking water to 100,000 properties across Grimsby, Boston, Louth and the surrounding villages and metaldehyde is detected in the Louth Canal at levels above the 0.1µg/l.

What has changed?

Up until 3 years ago the farm used metaldehyde based slug pellets across their whole farm where required however, since working with Anglian Water's Catchment Advisor, Kelly Hewson-Fisher, Amy says they have "definitely changed farming practices".

Amy states "prior to meeting Kelly we were metaldehyde across the whole farm across all crops and we knew we should be using something else as there were slight problems in the water but we had no knowledge how that actually impacted Anglian Water's business".



Kelly worked with Amy looking at the connectivity of the land farmed and providing information on metaldehyde levels throughout the season. Amy adds "since meeting Kelly, reading her emails and talking to other farmers at meetings Kelly has organised, we have been made fully aware of how it impacts Anglian Water, shutting down abstraction points, re opening them several days later and the impact that then has and the fact that you chemically can't treat metaldehyde".



Amy has begun to make changes and says “where we used metaldehyde exclusively, we changed 3 years ago to use Ferric Phosphate along the headlands which tied in with the metaldehyde stewardship guidelines - not allowing metaldehyde pellets to fall within 10m of a field boundary. We used metaldehyde for the first application at 5kg/ha on the OSR, wheat and barley and after that and as the season progresses we use Ferric Phosphate”. “2 years ago we took the decision to use Ferric Phosphate across the whole farm and we haven’t used metaldehyde since”.

Amy has been looking at the data from field trials which Kelly has undertaken and says “Looking at the trials that you have been part of and that Frontier have used, Ferric Phosphate does do a good job. Our farming practices have changed, for the better and we have seen no reduction in slug control at all. Also, our knowledge is much wider and I think for the better”.

For further information:



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More information about Anglian Water’s work in catchment to improve the quality of our drinking water can be found at <http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/environment/our-commitment/our-plans/catchment-management.aspx>
Twitter: @AWCoastCountry

What has been the benefit of working with Anglian Water?

Amy says the benefit of working with Kelly has been the increase in knowledge. Amy adds “I had very little knowledge of Ferric Phosphate and hadn’t seen many trials and didn’t have very much confidence in it but since meeting Kelly, I have learnt a huge amount on the impact of metaldehyde on farm and in the water courses and I think from a farmers point of view - it’s okay to be told to use a different product and to be told that it’s going into the water but we’re not then told as to why that’s a problem”.



“So, having spoken to Kelly, read her emails and spoken to a lot more local farmers, we now understand the impact it has on the Anglian Water business and the problems it can create and that does stem back to us as farmers”.



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