

Long lasting Ferrex flies evenly



With virtually all the arable land on their three farms in a catchment sensitive farming initiative, the BW Field partnership have long been involved in careful management of potential pollutants, including slug bait.



The Mimmshall Brook project in South Hertfordshire was set up with local farmers, Affinity Water and Natural England in 2011. Due to the fractured chalk nature of the geology in this area, the groundwater is influenced by heavy rainfall, creating a significant risk of diffuse pollution from agriculture.

Alistair White of BW Field and Partners is a member of the steering group and within a few years of the project's launch he had begun experimenting with ferric phosphate slug products in place of metaldehyde on the highest risk land. Having found that ferric phosphate does the job, he decided to adopt it for the whole farm.

"I decided that if we could trust it on some of the land, we should trust it on the rest. For the last seven years we have used a variety of products and as we buy through North Herts Farmers, we began using Ferrex last year," he explained.

The partnership's 1400 acres of arable is split between wheat, barley, oilseed rape and oats. The Ferrex lentils are usually applied to the OSR immediately after drilling and rolling, using a Stocks fan jet applicator attached to a pick-up truck. This vehicle ensures an adequate power source for the applicator when it is set at a comparatively high, 24m spread width.

Winter wheat does not receive a blanket application, usage tailored to previous cropping, cultivation and soil type. On recently established crops a quad bike is used and the spread width is reduced to 12m, making use of tramlines.

Alastair wondered whether the lightweight lentils might be affected by windy conditions, giving less uniform distribution at the wider spread width but has not noticed a problem. He has, however, noted the product's excellent stability:

"This year we applied Ferrex to 100 acres of oilseed rape just before several days of heavy rain. A week later the lentils were still visible on the ground which we did not expect."

Precautions are followed with all agrochemicals and a 6 metre margin is maintained for watercourses. The results across the catchment area has been highly successful, Alistair believes:

"We have a good relationship with Affinity Water and receive a payment for clean water. In the last period every farmer in the scheme received a full payment which shows that the initiative is working."

Photo and information provided courtesy of CROPCO.