

Sipcam Molluscicide, Ferrex proves highly attractive to Slugs.

Farm manager Bryan Harvey is building up good experience of ferric phosphate slug bait, having switched from metaldehyde in 2019.



Around 10% of the land farmed by the GE Morley partnership near Sudbury in Suffolk has been in the Entry or Higher Level Stewardship schemes and so although metaldehyde had a temporary reprieve, having made the change he felt they should not revert to this form of slug control.

Having decided to use ferric phosphate in the form of Ferrex – a brand manufactured to form a well compacted lentil-shaped bait, – the weather has at times been so wet he was reluctant to apply any form of slug bait. But with the crop “disappearing before our eyes”, action was needed.

“Last year the weather was so awful that when we had problems with first wheat drilled after oilseed rape, I limited the Ferrex application rate to 45% of the recommended level. Fortunately Ferrex seems to be more weather resistant than our former metaldehyde product and the slugs loved it. Our agronomist, Bruce Hill, found them nibbling the disks within half an hour of application.

“Although dead slugs are not visible on the surface, we inspect crops early in the morning or in the evening and could see slug numbers decline. In general, they seemed to be grazing on the surface so we could see a difference. In the end losses were light and the wheat tillered well so we need not have worried about the cost of the slug bait.”

Ferrex has been applied with a Stocks Fan Jet applicator set for a spread width of 15m to match the 30m tramlines. The applicator is calibrated each year to comply with the farm’s assurance scheme requirements and Bryan has encountered no problems with distribution. Getting the rate right is important on the farm’s large fields, he points out:

“Our fields tend to be 100 acres or even 150 acres plus, so by the time you finish you could be a long way out. We haven’t had any problems in spreading Ferrex.”

Slug bait is not routinely applied and applications are based on weather conditions and field observation. Applications have been at 14-day intervals but as Ferrex has proved to be a stable product this has been extended to 21 days.



On oilseed rape, which is direct drilled using a Claydon’s drill, an initial low rate application is also applied using a spreader on the drill.

Water courses have a 6m buffer strip but to ensure there is good protection the tramlines are used as field boundaries on this land. Bryan has found that although this means they get more slugs along the grass margins the heavy rolls used on the farm give good headland compaction which helps to limit slug numbers.

For this autumn Bryan took early delivery of Ferrex to ensure the product is on farm when needed.

“We had a lot of rain in May which is when the slugs are breeding and so it seems likely there will be a fair number this autumn,” he predicts.