

Press release: Restrictions on the use of metaldehyde to protect wildlife

A ban on the outdoor use of metaldehyde, a pesticide used to control slugs in a range of crops and in gardens, is to be introduced across Great Britain from Spring 2020, the Environment Secretary announced today (19 December).

The decision to prohibit the use of metaldehyde, except in permanent greenhouses, follows advice from the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that metaldehyde poses an unacceptable risk to birds and mammals.

Slugs can cause significant damage to plants and crops, particularly potatoes, cereals and oil seed rape. However, there are other ways to mitigate their impact through soil preparation. For example, sowing the seed deeper into the soil may prevent the slugs from reaching them. There are also alternative pesticides containing ferric phosphate which provide effective control of slugs and snails without carrying the same risks to wildlife.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

I recognise that significant effort has been put into encouraging growers and gardeners to use this pesticide responsibly by the Metaldehyde Stewardship Group. However, the advice is clear that the risks to wildlife are simply too great – and we must all play our part in helping to protect the environment.

I encourage companies and growers to look at the alternatives, such as ferric phosphate, which is authorised and does not carry similar risks.

The outdoor use of metaldehyde will be phased out over 18 months to give growers time to adjust to other methods of slug control. It will be legal to sell metaldehyde products for outdoor use for the next six months, with use of the products then allowed for a further 12 months.

The new restrictions on metaldehyde will also reduce the possibility of the pesticide contaminating drinking water sources. Although this was not a factor in the advice from ECP and HSE, the restrictions will help water companies continue to meet our robust drinking water standards.

News story: Tell us how you are helping to deliver the Global Goals

The UK is reviewing its progress towards the [Sustainable Development Goals – also known as the Global Goals](#) – in a process called the [Voluntary National Review](#).

The Sustainable Development Goals are for everybody and we want to hear from any group, organisation, or individual about what they are doing to help achieve the goals in the UK.

Tell us by completing this [online survey](#) OR by completing [this form](#) and emailing it to sdgs@dfid.gov.uk

Please try to submit your response by 11 January 2019.

[Find out more about the Voluntary National Review and having your say.](#)

News story: PHE investigating rise in reports of rare illness

Latest update

Following Public Health England (PHE)'s ongoing investigation into the increase in reported cases of AFP, a total of 40 cases have been reported in the UK across 2018. Many of these were reported months after the initial diagnosis.

Up until August 2018, 6 cases of AFP occurred which was then followed by a rapid rise in the number of people showing symptoms of AFP during September 2018. The number of reported cases peaked in October 2018 and have declined since. The cases were scattered across the United Kingdom.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisations at PHE said:

Our investigations into potential causes are ongoing, and we are continuing to build better awareness amongst health care professionals about how to test and manage patients with AFP.

We are not clear whether all of the apparent increase is real, or whether this represents increased awareness and diagnosis over recent years. The current best theory is that this is a very rare

consequence of enterovirus infection, as the increase coincides with increases in infection.

Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) has been found in around one quarter of cases. However, as the infection is very common, and most children have been infected by the age of 5 years, there must be other factors involved.

19 December 2018

Public Health England (PHE) is investigating an increase in reported cases of a rare condition called acute flaccid paralysis (AFP). So far in 2018, 28 cases have been reported in England, the majority of which have been since September. A rise in reported cases has also been seen in the US.

AFP affects the nervous system, causing one or more of the limbs to become weak or floppy – and may look similar to polio. It tends to particularly, though not exclusively, affect children. It is very rare, so PHE is stressing that if an adult or a child develops weakness in any limb they should seek medical attention so appropriate testing and care can be given.

Typically, a handful of cases of AFP are reported to PHE each year for investigation. PHE monitors these types of symptoms as part of the World Health Organization's (WHO) requirements to monitor for polio and confirm it remains eliminated in the UK.

Certain viruses are known to cause AFP including polioviruses and non-polio enteroviruses. Enteroviruses commonly cause mild infections with a range of symptoms including colds, coughs and diarrhoea. Such illnesses from viral infections are common, especially in children, and most people recover. Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) and other viruses have been detected in several cases of AFP so far in 2018. The risk of developing neurological symptoms due to EV-D68, or any other viral infection is extremely low.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisations at PHE said:

AFP is very rare. However, if you or your child develops weakness in any limb you should seek medical care immediately so that appropriate testing and care can be given.

We are investigating potential causes and working hard to build better awareness amongst health care professionals about how to test and manage patients with AFP.

We are ensuring up-to-date information is available for patients and their families who may be affected.

PHE is looking into the potential causes of the apparent rise in reports of AFP, including the role of EV-D68 or other infections. This will include ensuring that healthcare professionals' are aware of and can access guidance

on the investigation and management of such cases. PHE is also supporting healthcare providers by developing up-to-date information for patients and/or parents.

AFP can be difficult to diagnose because there are many other causes of weakness. Doctors will typically examine a patient's nervous system and look at images of the spinal cord and brain. They can also test the fluid around the brain and spinal cord and may check the nervous system conduction.

Doctors should report any suspected cases of AFP to Public Health England and samples should be sent to specialist labs for additional testing.

Background

1. Tests for enterovirus infection are typically only undertaken on individuals admitted to hospital with conditions such as chest infections and meningitis. Although enterovirus infection is not notifiable, PHE receives reports of confirmed enterovirus infection from NHS laboratories, and offers specialist typing for very serious cases – including children with AFP. 68 cases of laboratory confirmed EV-D68 infection have been diagnosed in 2018 – though many other cases occur but remain undiagnosed.
2. 12 cases of AFP have been associated with an enterovirus. EV-D68 has been detected in 8, EV-C104 in 1, and coxsackie B1 in 1; in 2 cases the enterovirus was not typeable.

News story: New cyber security standard for self-driving vehicles

- car industry leaders help develop guidance on cyber security
- new guidance to help protect self-driving cars from hacking
- UK blazing the way by publishing first standard of this type

The UK's position as a world leader in the development of self-driving vehicles has been boosted by a pioneering new [cyber security standard, published by the British Standards Institute](#) today (19 December 2018).

Working with academics and experts from leading businesses in the car industry including Jaguar Land Rover, Ford and Bentley, as well as the National Cyber Security Centre, and funded by the Department for Transport, the British Standards Institute developed the guidance to set a marker for those developing self-driving car technology. The UK market for connected and automated vehicles is forecast to be worth up to £52 billion by 2035.

Jesse Norman, Future of Mobility Minister, said:

As vehicles get smarter, major opportunities for the future of mobility increase. But so too do the challenges posed by data theft and hacking.

This cyber security standard should help to improve the resilience and readiness of the industry, and help keep the UK at the forefront of advancing transport technology.

This follows the [government's publication last year which set out key principles](#) of cyber security for automated vehicles, such as the expectation that systems should be designed to be resilient to attacks and respond appropriately when its defences fail.

Car manufacturers will be able to use the new standard published today to demonstrate that they are following these principles.

Press release: Accountant banned for assisting client to defraud creditors

An accountant has been disqualified from running companies after he helped one of his clients to defraud creditors of more than £1.65 million.