

Slugs poised to hit vulnerable crops



Click on the image to download a high-res version, or go to <http://www.mistral-pr.co.uk/library/metaslugs.htm>

Growers in the south and east have been advised to stay vigilant as moisture returns to cloddy soils in which high value wheat and oilseed rape crops have struggled to establish. Poor seedbeds have left crops very vulnerable to attack from slugs.

Hutchinson technical manager Dick Neale describes crops as a "mixed bag", with a relatively low proportion of ideal, fine, firm seedbeds. "Some rape sown in

September is struggling, and some crops have already been lost to slugs," he reports.

"The main worry is wheat that has recently been drilled into heavy, cloddy soils. These crops need an appropriate rate of quality slug pellets as soon as it rains. Don't wait until you see damage because it will be too late. Growers must remain vigilant and continue to monitor crops for further signs of damage."

Where surfaces are dry, slug activity is currently low. But there are uncommonly large populations lurking in moist soils beneath. These won't need much encouragement to come to the surface, says Markus Bieri, technical manager with Meta-metaldehyde manufacturer Lonza.

"Growers should keep a close eye on field conditions. In autumn, as the temperature drops, experience suggests that mist or early morning dew can be enough to increase slug activity. While if the seedbed is moist then slugs are likely to be on the surface already," he explains.

"To optimise their slug control programme, growers should ensure they use quality Meta-metaldehyde pellets. These will give around two weeks protection, even in wet conditions. Poor quality pellets tend to disintegrate as soon as it rains, which is when you need them to do their job."

Growers should choose pellets that carry the Meta Quality logo, such as those made by Certis and De Sangosse. These have been manufactured to minimum quality standards that ensure they last in wet conditions, spread well and are palatable to slugs, Mr Bieri points out.

“And metaldehyde has the added advantage that it is a specific molluscicide. That means beneficial organisms, such as earthworms and carabid beetles, remain unaffected if they come into contact with it.”

-ends-

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*Because not all slug pellets
are the same*

Note to editors:

1. A selection of high-resolution photos is available at <http://www.mistral-pr.co.uk/library/metaslugs.htm>. This includes general slug photos, pictures of Dick Neale and Markus Bieri and the Meta logo.
2. Lonza has set out minimum quality requirements (MQRs) for all manufacturers wishing to use its active ingredient. These cover aspects of manufacture and raw ingredient which ensure pellets spread well, are palatable and last in wet conditions. Only pellets that meet these standards can bear the Meta® logo, which in the UK are those made by Certis and De Sangosse. For more information, go to www.metaldehyde.com.

Further information:

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