

Local Pesticide Incidents in 2012

This year has seen three incidents involving pesticides in the local area, as the Environment Agency reports...

“ In June this year a crop sprayer turned over discharging its contents into Toppesfield Brook. The crop sprayer had been virtually full at the time, containing between 5-6,000 litres of diluted field-ready pesticide. The Environment Agency was alerted and were at the scene quickly.

The contents quickly dispersed and dams were installed in the watercourse by the Environment Agency. With the agreement of local landowners, the contents were pumped out of the river onto farmland. This was repeated in three locations and at three dams. However, the contents of the crop sprayer were incredibly toxic to the wildlife that lives in the river. With knowledge of what chemicals had been spilt, technical experts advised that levels in the watercourse were a million times higher than the fatal dose for fish. To dilute the river to a level that would have been safe for fish, it would have required between **5-6 billion litres of water** or approximately the contents of **2,400 Olympic sized swimming pools**. The pesticide was designed to poison at a small droplet level, so such a large volume entering a watercourse was enormously damaging.

After the damming work the concentration of pesticide in the river had been vastly reduced but it was still some 3-7 times stronger than the fatal dose for fish.



Toppesfield Brook enters the River Colne and as a consequence the spillage entered the main river and killed wildlife for around 10km downstream. The Environment Agency mounted a huge fish rescue operation, removing fish in front of the spillage. Despite this the number of fish killed is still estimated

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to be in the thousands. Additionally, the invertebrates in the river, an important food source for fish, were wiped out.

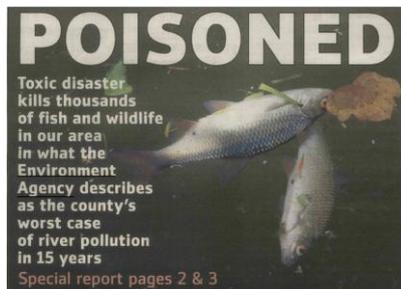
The incident generated considerable media and public interest, with numerous calls from the community, articles in the local newspaper, local radio articles and BBC and ITV television news coverage due to its effect.”

There have also been two other incidents this year in Essex involving laden sprayers, where the quick actions taken by the farmers involved, reduced the impact....

“In March 2012 a spray operator was driving a tractor and unit along the field edge. He dropped something onto the floor of the cab and tried to pick it up whilst driving, losing control of the tractor and it slipped into the ditch with around 1,000 litres of

herbicide on board. Although there didn't appear to be any leakage from the tank or any diesel from the tractor, the operator took the precaution of damming the ditch at two points downstream of the incident and at one point upstream. The operator then pumped the herbicide from the tank into IBC's before removing the tractor from the ditch. As a final precaution mud from the bed of the ditch was removed and spread onto land.

The following month it was reported that a tanker load of spray had slipped into a ditch and all the chemical on board, around 2,000 litres, had entered the ditch. The operators immediately dug a sump in the ditch downstream of the spillage and blocked the ditch further downstream with the material removed. Most of the chemicals spilt accumulated in the sump. A portable pump was brought in and the contents of the sump removed to an IBC. The temporary sump was left



Front page of the Halstead Gazette
Friday 22nd June 2012



in place for several days to collect the remaining chemicals caught in pockets along the ditch upstream of the sump."

Do you have an emergency action plan? Do the staff on your farm know where to turn to in the event of an emergency? Do you have the Environment Agency Incident Hotline number saved in your phone?

These incidents this year have shown the importance of having a fully completed Emergency Action Plan on your farm. This should contain details such as the location of gas and electricity isolation points and fire extinguishers, nominated First Aider, the location of your first aid kit and a map of your farm yard drainage.

Alex Dinsdale, Countryside Policy Advisor at the NFU says "Having an effective plan in place can save a lot of problems for you, your staff and your business in the event of a pesticide spill. Making sure that everyone



knows what the plan involves and their individual responsibilities means that should the worst happen then environmental damage, and costs to your business, can hopefully be minimised."

If you would like further advice and information on completing your Emergency Action Plan or to hear the full story of the recent incidents, come to our event on 7th November (details below). We have also enclosed a sticker for your tractor cab or sprayer, containing all the numbers needed in your Emergency Action Plan... stick it in your cab today!



Pesticides and Water Event – Hanningfield Water Treatment Works

You are invited to bring your Emergency Action Plan along to this event and find out more about the local pesticide spills that have happened this year, what to include in your Emergency Action Plan and see how pesticides are removed with your own guided tour of Hanningfield Water Treatment Works and reedbed system.

Wednesday 7th November 2012 – Arrive at: 09:45 Leave before: 14:45

Morning Session

Pesticide Spill on Toppesfield Brook

Jamie Fairfull who led the emergency response from the Environment Agency, will talk through the series of events, the teams involved, the downstream impacts and emergency action planning on-farm.

Emergency Action Plans – what to include?

Sarah McCarney will advise what you need to include in your Plan and is happy to look at yours if you would like to bring it with you for advice.

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Afternoon Session

Your choice of...

Hanningfield Water Treatment Works Tour

Phil Hitchins and Dorothy O'Mahoney will take you through the water treatment process...do you know how pesticides are removed?

Reedbeds

Your chance to see these impressive newly built reedbeds for treating the water treatment process effluent. They are the biggest reedbeds of their kind in Europe and well worth a visit!

You will have the opportunity to do one or both of these tours as you wish.



BASIS and NRoSO points available. To book your place, please call Teresa on 07792 169545 or e-mail teresa.meadows@nwl.co.uk by Friday 2nd November.

NVZ Revisions - Following Recent Consultation

The main intended changes that are likely to mean you will need to revise the way you do things:

- Closed period for spreading high available N manures on most soil types to be extended to 31st January.
- Siting of field heaps near watercourses – intended that the minimum distance will change from 10 to 30m.
- Slurry- maximum application rate in weeks immediately after end of closed period to be reduced from 50 to 30m³/Ha
- N max calculations to take account of N from all organic manures (i.e. include sewage sludge and composts etc).
- N Max- N efficiency values for pig & cattle slurry to be increased by 5% from 1/1/2014.
- Reduced priority for inspection for farmers who complete and implement a full nutrient management plan e.g. PLANET or Tried & Tested.

SSAFO Revisions:

- The proposal to remove the regulation exemption of pre '91 store facilities has been held over to conduct a full review to determine appropriate rule changes.
- New Stores – Required notification to EA of new or refurbishment of existing stores before use to be changed to require notification prior to construction.

See full details at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/files/nitrates-government-response.pdf>

Our nutrient management planning visit will help you in preparing for these changes – please call to discuss what would best meet your need.



PLANET
NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT



Nitrate Study

The Chelmer and Blackwater nitrate study is ready to start this autumn. Come along on:

Wednesday 14th November 2012

11am – 1:30pm including lunch

Young Farmers Barn, Whitbreads Lane, Chatham Green, CM3 3LQ

To hear more about the project and get your **FREE**:

- nitrate sampling kit
- rain gauge
- farmer log book
- farm maps
- date for soil sampling the fields next to your two chosen locations.



If you would like to find out, in a very confidential manner, how much nitrate is coming off your fields, then this is the project for you.

You will be asked to sample two land drains from fields of differing land use, once a week for a period of 8 weeks over the winter. It is hoped that the collection of this data will then provide you with further information to save costs in your farm business and practical solutions to reduce nutrient loss from the field.

To sign up and book onto the event, ring 07792 169545.

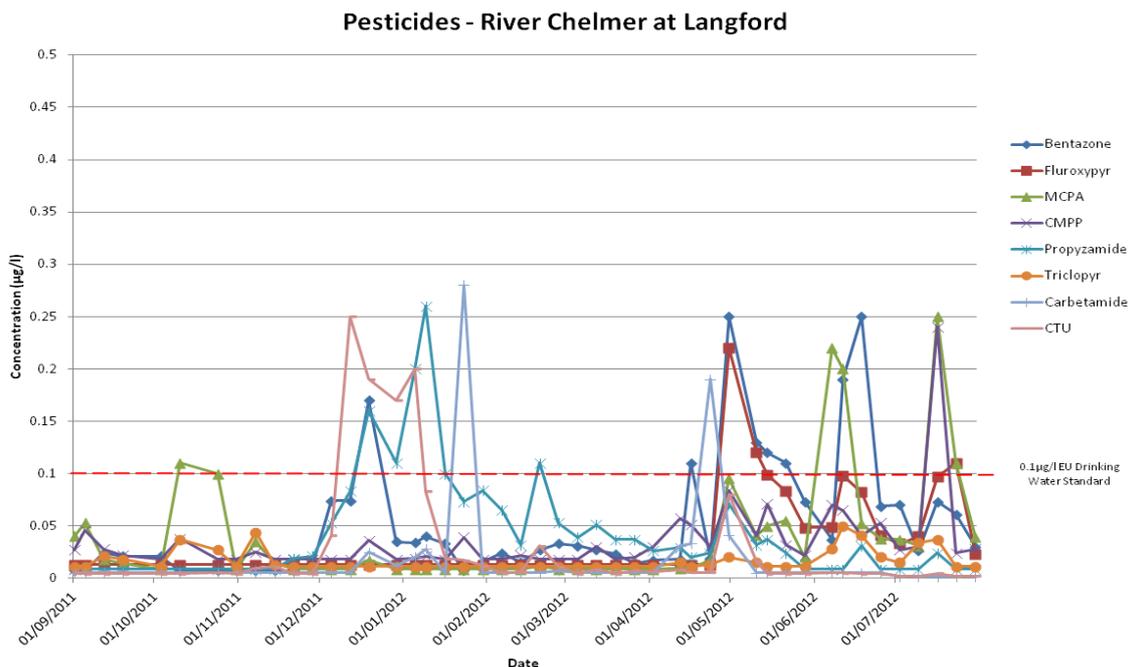
Capital Grant Scheme

100% of our 29 applications to the Capital Grant Scheme this year were successful. This results in over £250,000 worth of investment into projects to reduce diffuse pollution and make infrastructure improvements, in the Chelmer and Blackwater catchment.

Are you missing out? There will be chance to apply again in March 2013 when the next application window opens – but to take advantage of this it would be best if you contact me sooner rather than later to plan and prepare for any application. Do please give me a call.

What has been found in the rivers of the catchment over the summer?

This summer has been different to the past few years in terms of pesticides, which is unsurprising given the wet season. The graph to the right shows the results on River Chelmer at Langford from September 2011 to August 2012. When compared with the same period from September 2010 to September 2011, the number of times that the pesticide concentration in the river exceeded the 0.1µg/l EU Drinking Water Standard this year was much more frequent. These exceedances were in line with the high rainfall and the levels dropped at the end of August and beginning of September.



Metaldehyde

Metaldehyde levels in the rivers remained low at the beginning of the autumn, but we have seen levels at 3.1µg/l in the River Can on 24/09/2012, which is 31 times the limit and higher in the River Chelmer at the beginning of October. This does not pose any risk to human health, but is difficult to remove in the water treatment process. Please **take care** when using slug pellets, particularly on tracks and yards as often these provide direct contamination to watercourses giving these high results. **Be careful** when washing dust off machines that the water doesn't work its way into the closest drain or ditch!

Help Available...

We have the following farm advisory visits available (**free** and with no obligations attached):

1. **Nutrient Management Planning** (check your NVZ records/plans and make best use of any manures and bagged fert) (See NVZ revisions overleaf)
2. **Soil Management Planning** (check your Soil Protection Review and have a soil health check)
3. **Soil, Manure, Slurry** analysis and recommendations (one off per farm).
4. **Fertiliser/Slug Pellet Spreader** testing / calibration (one off per farm).
5. **Pesticide Handling Area** (most farm facilities could do with improvements –this is a good place to start)
6. **Whole Farm Plan** (a “general health” check around the farm/office records, SSAFO compliance)
7. **Emergency Action Plan** (take a look at your Plan with an advisor and get help on filling in the missing sections, including free mapping of farm yard drainage with a CCTV survey of condition)

5 and 6 are particularly useful if you might be considering a grant application. Give me a call to book one of these visits at a time to suit you or to talk through any other help needed.

Look out for the next catchment newsletter: Winter 2012

The Chelmer and Blackwater Catchment Partnership is supported by:

