

# Chelmer & Blackwater

## Catchment Partnership

Winter 2009

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## Essex & Suffolk Water Where are we sampling?

Since April 2009 Essex & Suffolk Water has been taking samples from the main Chelmer and Blackwater rivers and their tributaries. The map to the right illustrates where these samples are taken from.

Catchment sampling points

The material contained on this plot has been reproduced from an Ordnance Survey map with permission of the controller of H.M.S.O.

## We are offering a FREE advisory service

The Blackwater & Chelmer Catchment Partnership is a unique project offering **free of charge, non-regulatory** advice to local farmers\*.

The England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) has been working closely with farmers across England during the past 3 years. By such work, farmers have appreciated relevant advice improves their farm profitability, reduces risks to water and improves their businesses. We seek to build trust and help land managers reduce water pollutants from agricultural sources (nitrates, phosphates, pesticides & sediments).

Benefits to farmers have included:

Reduced fertiliser costs through better ways of using manures, improved timeliness and reduced ditch clearance costs by cutting sediment losses from fields.

Free farm visits by advisors can help you. Visits can include free soil analysis.

- Nitrate Vulnerable Zone records and rules,
- Calibration of spreaders for both fertiliser & pesticides,
- Nutrient, manure & soil management plans,
- Construction & use of biobeds for pesticide washings

Farm walks offering informal discussions on practical methods to reduce compaction, deal with cracking clays and reduce runoff from fields.

Following on from the success in Suffolk and Norfolk, we are pleased to be able to build on this experience and introduce a similar free advisory service to Essex. Please get in touch using the enclosed postcard to take advantage of this new service.

\*The free advisory service in the Catchment Partnership is jointly funded by the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative, Essex & Suffolk Water and the Environment Agency.



## Essex Farms – Farming in the catchment

By Keith Daly – Berners Hall Farm Manager

This Essex farm business has 6,613 acres (2,672 ha) of combinable crops throughout Essex and Hertfordshire. The majority of the land is owned with approximately one third of the land contract farmed. Soil types vary considerably. Nearly all our wheat is first wheat, therefore we have a large area of break crops with the biggest one being oilseed rape.

This year has been just as difficult to establish rape as any other. Last year we were fighting a battle with slugs and some very difficult seedbeds. However, this year we had almost perfect seedbeds, no slugs but no moisture.

All of our rape got off to a slow start. It really depends on what part of the county you are in as to what your rape crop looks like now. You will either have a good or an okay crop of rape, and this is dependent on when and how much rain you had. Even in mid October, the rape west of Bishop Stortford was still only poking through the ground in places and it was drilled in mid August.

As I mentioned, slugs for us this year was a non-event. I don't remember a year we have used so few slug pellets. In the rape we started on very low applications of the new 3% formulation pellets.

All the wheat after rape got one single dose of slug pellets and anything after beans or peas has had nothing. Wheat in general has got away to a good start, we took the decision to crack on with drilling in early September in the hope rain would come and thankfully it has. Again the land west of Bishop Stortford is slowly coming through as it had the least rain.

Although slug pellets have been the least of our worries this year, adopting best practice is of course still important. Our pelleting practices are good. The biggest thing we try to avoid is pellets on hard surfaces where they can easily get into a drain and then the river. Where practical, we fill and clean our spreader in the field away from ditches and roads. We also treat the headland last to avoid taking mud and pellets out of field and onto hard surfaces.

Our biggest two concerns going into the autumn for pests are rabbits and pigeons. Rabbits seem to have acquired more of a taste for rape over the years and now slugs are out of the way we have already turned our attention to pigeon patrol and rabbit control around the farms and it's a long time until next March to keep them moving every day.

## Pesticide Peaks in the Catchment Rivers

From our water quality monitoring it has been possible to analyse what is in the rivers. The table below summarises where we are finding the peak pesticide concentrations.

What?	Where?
Metaldehyde	River Can and River Wid
Clopyralid	River Pant
Triclopyr	River Wid
Bentazone	River Can, River Pant, River Ter
MCPA	River Wid and River Can
MCPP	River Can and Wid

## REALISE FARM SAVINGS

WITH

### Free Advisory Visits

Visits can be on a range of topics including:

- **New Soil Protection Review** – Single Farm Payment requirement from January 2010
- **Farm Health Check** – What is your farms environmental performance?
- **Spreader and Sprayer Calibration** – save money with efficient machinery

**\*BOOK NOW\***

...by calling Beth Cooper on 07792169545

Look out for the next catchment newsletter: February/March 2010