

Sprays for rushes threaten changes to use

ANDY DOYLE
TILLAGE EDITOR

ad Doyle@farmersjournal.ie

IFJ
8/8/15

Incidents of grassland herbicides, those used for spraying rushes, etc, being found in rivers and waterways threaten changes to the continued use of these products. If incidents of contamination continue to occur, then it seems likely that restrictions will be placed on their use to help prevent their occurrence in rivers and waterways destined for drinking water.

There have been a number of incidents of herbicides such as MCPA, CMPP and 2,4-D being found in water at levels significantly above the tolerable values (*de facto* zero) in rivers this year alone.

There have been many more instances of products found in water at or close to the legally allowed levels.

These instances are being recorded in grassland regions where these actives are widely used. However, it should be noted that the bulk of these breaches do not involve any consumer health issues.

As well as the current findings, there is also mention of pesticides in an EPA report recently released for the 2010 to 2012 period. The report states that a number of pesticides, including Mecoprop (CMPP), MCPA and 2,4-D were detected at low concentrations at a large number of river monitoring sites during routine monitoring.

It states that "the signifi-

cance of the pesticide levels detected will be assessed and may require the implementation of further controls through, *inter alia*, the development of environmental quality standards and associated measures for these substances in water".

Further restrictions

If water samples continue to contain levels of these pesticides, it is likely that further restrictions will be put on their use.

Some of the products being found in water samples are mainly used to control rushes in grassland, which need to be controlled to comply with cross-compliance requirements.

It is essential that farmers are water aware when

applying herbicides and are conscious of the necessity to keep all pesticides away from waterways, buffer zones, etc. This means paying attention to label rates, where the spray is being placed and not filling sprayers directly from streams or rivers.

The main herbicides concerned – MCPA, 2,4-D and CMPP – provide economical weed control options for grassland and, in some instances, represent the only option for certain troublesome weeds such as rushes. Failure by farmers to keep these products away from water sources may result in severe restrictions on their use or the disappearance of these products. The safe use of pesticides is essential for everyone.