

## Farm to Tap

### Keeping Metaldehyde out of raw water

**“A responsible approach is the way forward for the industry”...**

**That’s according to Doug Mccowarn, who manages Woodlands Farm, near Shifnal in Shropshire.**

Doug’s farm is in a sensitive water catchment as water from his farm flows into a nature reserve. He is a member of a local stewardship group for the Aqualate Mere and with the support of his local Agricultural Advisor, Ben Young, from Severn Trent, Doug has been successful in three applications for support with his water management. He said, **“I’ve received about £15,000 in grants which is fantastic. I’ve put in a spray shed, biofilter and some cross-slope drilling.**

**I’ve also joined the metaldehyde reducing scheme, now called Farm To Tap, which means I get an extra payment per hectare for reducing metaldehyde levels in the water.”**

Prior to joining Farm to Tap, Doug used a mixture of metaldehyde and ferric phosphate and he continued with this initially. However, once on the scheme and attending results meetings for water testing, he was surprised to see that metaldehyde levels were still high. This convinced him to fully switch to ferric phosphate.

“In terms of performance, there is no real difference between metaldehyde and ferric phosphate. We can see that from the crop. Some farmers don’t like that you can’t see the dead slugs as evidence, but if we’ve got a strong crop with no damage then it’s obviously working.”

“I also like that you can use ferric phosphate right up to the boundaries of fields as hedge lands can be the worst for slug pressure. With metaldehyde, MSG recommends you leave a 10 metre buffer zone.”

“Ben from Severn Trent has also been part of the team, advising on cultural controls we can put in place to reduce the slug pressure.”

Doug considers himself lucky to be in a catchment where all the eligible farms are part of the scheme. “If we don’t all work together, it won’t be as successful. Last year metaldehyde levels were down to less than 0.1 ppb which meant that we got a £100 bonus on top of the £8 per hectare.

#### Farm Facts - Woodlands Farm

- **456 hectares of all arable land**
- **In rotation: milling and feed wheat, OSR, feed barley, seed beans for Wynnstay and potatoes for McCain.**
- **Soil type: mix of sandy and medium-heavy loam**

All in all it was just over £1,000 which All in all it was just over £1,000 which pays for 1.5 applications of ferric phosphate on my wheat, OSR and potato crops. We wouldn't be getting that money if we were using metaldehyde and everyone in the catchment contributes to this success."

"As an industry we have to be a lot more responsible or we'll lose out. Stewardship and schemes like Farm to Tap are so important. We need to protect the actives we have and that means using them responsibly. We all have to do our bit."

To find out more about Severn Trent catchment management schemes visit  
<https://www.stwater.co.uk/about-us/environment/catchment-management/steps1/>

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