

Frequently Asked Questions: Farm to Tap

Q. What is Farm to Tap?

A. It's part of our wider Catchment Management Programme – **Farming 4 Water**. Farm to Tap's focus is working in partnerships with farmers, land managers and other organisations to reduce diffuse pollution in raw water courses. Our current focus with Farm to Tap is metaldehyde, which is found in some slug pellets.

Q. What is the difference between the scheme "Farmers as Producers of Clean Water" and Farm to Tap?

A. We've changed the name so that it gives clearer signposting to the problem we are trying to solve. We believe the name makes a clear connection to the activities on farm and how it affects the quality of our drinking water that comes straight from the tap.

Q. Why is diffuse pollution so important to manage?

A. Some pesticides, including Metaldehyde are really hard to remove from the water when it gets to a water treatment works. The more pollution in the water the higher the treatment costs to remove it which could impact on our customers' bills.

Q. Why can't you, the water company, just manage how you treat the water more effectively?

A. If we can work with farms/land managers and produce the best quality water in our region without undertaking very expensive treatments to remove pesticides, it means that we can continue to keep our combined water bills the lowest – as they are currently.

Q. Farms don't need to be told how to manage their farms, why are you bothering?

We aren't telling anyone how to run their farms, we see the work that our Agricultural Advisors do as a wider partnership opportunity to manage challenges from diffuse water pollution together and give support and advice where we can.

Q. So is Farm to Tap looking at all pesticides?

A. Eventually it will be a broader umbrella around the work we do in relation to pesticide management and diffuse pollution. It will eventually include more opportunities to manage other pesticides.

Q. So what is Farm to Tap focused on this year?

A. This autumn we are still working hard to focus on the reduction of metaldehyde in raw water courses, in our priority catchments. This includes switching to ferric phosphate slug pellets.

Keeping metaldehyde out of drinking water

Q. Why focus on metaldehyde?

A. During the early autumn when you are busy on farm, drilling winter oil seed rape and winter wheat, we know you will be thinking about slug pressures, especially if the weather is wet. During the autumn we have seen huge spikes and concentrations of metaldehyde in raw water as it reaches the water treatment works. And it exceeds the levels expected from the Drinking Water Inspectorate and breaks EU Regulations.

Q. Why is using metaldehyde based slug pellets such a problem?

A. The molecular structure of metaldehyde is such that it is very difficult to remove from the water. It loves water so much that only a very expensive treatment process would remove it which economically wouldn't be viable without a huge investment in new processes and potentially, an increase in customer bills.

Q. What do you recommend as an alternative?

A. We believe there is no single solution to finding an alternative, as each farm is different, the land topography can be different to that of their neighbours, and they may be planning different crop rotations, and using other cultural methods. So we like to work with you to look at what might be the right solution, alongside the recommendations from your agronomist.

Q. My agronomist says to continue to use metaldehyde, but you're saying not to?

A. Farm to Tap recognises that there are numerous ways to control the loss of metaldehyde. Whilst **we strongly recommend the use of ferric phosphate** for making the most significant difference, some other practices are listed below.



Q. There has been lots of talk about a ban of metaldehyde, are you advocating a ban too?

A. Used responsibly and to guidelines, we believe it has a place in the mix of effective pest management and crop protection.

Q. Why should I work with Severn Trent Water? I've had issues in the past with pipe laying through land/ access issues/ supply issues/ flooding issues.

A. We are really sorry if you have had a bad experience with Severn Trent Water in the past, we will work hard to provide a great experience. Our Agricultural Advisors all have an agricultural background so understand the issues and challenges you may face. When you work with your local Agricultural Advisor, you will receive a friendly, knowledgeable and professional service.

They will provide advice on looking after your most valuable asset- your land and help prevent you losing your expensive pesticides into the water courses. At the end of a visit or workshop you have the opportunity to provide feedback on the service you have received, we welcome your comments as it helps us to develop and improve the service we offer.

How does this scheme work?

Q. What do I get for joining the scheme?

A. Help with switching to ferric phosphate, or other metaldehyde reducing activities, including payments made on water quality testing, and a potential bonus of up to £100 for water quality consistently less than the drinking water standard throughout the water testing period.

Q. This year, you are offering an early bird bonus for signing up before 31st August, why?

A. For the last two years we have worked hard to get farms to sign up, but we have taken on board feedback from lots of farms around the cost and the end results, so this year we are offering £25 bonus towards your costs.

Q. When do I get my £25 sign up bonus payment?

A. These payments are sent to you at the end of the scheme, along with any additional element, such as refer a friend payments or rewards for low levels of metaldehyde.

Q. How does the "refer a friend" element in the scheme work?

A. For every farm neighbour who you refer and signs up, you'll get an extra £10:

1. when signing up to Farm to Tap, simply provide your Agricultural Advisor with your farm friends details, you will need to ask their permission before you do this
2. It might be a good idea to check that they are in the right catchment and have met the eligibility criteria, in the same way you have
3. If they're happy to be referred, pass on their details to your Agricultural Advisor – they'll check they aren't already signed up and that they are eligible
4. Once they've signed up your Agricultural Advisor will let you know and you'll receive your £10 for each friend at the end of the scheme in February/March 2019

Q. When do I get my "refer a friend" payment?

A. These will be paid to you at the end of the scheme, in February/March 2019.

- Q. You also offer up to £8/ha towards costs, payable at the end of the scheme's testing period, why is this?**
- A. £8 per hectare was determined as roughly 50% of the cost difference between metaldehyde and ferric phosphate. This all depends on the brand and quality of the pellet you were buying and the alternative you might switch to. We pay this proportion of the scheme at the end so we can base the payment on the water quality results throughout the period.
- Q. So if my water quality isn't up to scratch, I won't receive the £100 bonus**
- A. If any single water sample is tested for metaldehyde above the drinking water standard in the sampling period of September to December, you and any other farm signed up to the scheme in your sub-catchment will not be eligible for the £100 bonus.
- Q. What happens if my water quality tests fail? What will I get?**
- A. You will get your guaranteed £25 sign up bonus, you may still receive refer a friend payments too. If the average of all the sample tests is greater than the drinking water standard you won't receive a payment. If the average is between half the standard and the standard i.e. between 0.05 and 0.1 ppb you will receive 50% payment which is £4/ha.
- Q. So I might do all of this to keep my metaldehyde use to a minimum or not use any, but someone downstream or upstream of my farm/land might carry on and affect the water quality, how is that fair?**
- A. We know that seems harsh, that's why this year, we are introducing a refer a farm friend incentive, so that you can help us create a co-op of farms near you, all trying to keep metaldehyde out of our water courses.
- Q. But what about low water levels and the impact of metaldehyde concentration that will skew results?**
- A. Under metaldehyde stewardship guidelines and integrated pest management planning you should be undertaking slug trapping to understand slug pressure and whether or not slug pellet application is justified. Therefore, if as a result of dry weather the slug pressure is low then best practice would be not to apply metaldehyde or any other slug pellet. Less applications of slug pellets will result in lower concentrations in the water courses.
- Q. So I might not get anything other than £25?**
- A. Yes that is a possibility but we really hope that if we get enough farmers on board in each sub-catchment we can really make an impact on the metaldehyde concentrations across all our priority catchments. You can help us with this by referring a farm friend to the scheme. If they sign up you will receive an extra £10 per friend you have referred.

Eligibility

- Q. Am I eligible for this autumn's scheme?**
- A. Simply answer the following questions:
- a. Are you planning on growing winter oil seed rape, or winter wheat this autumn?
 - b. Would you normally apply a pesticide, such as metaldehyde to prevent an infestation of slugs?
 - c. Do you have a least one high risk field?

Q. What is a high risk field?

- A. A high risk field, or red risk field is a field that has:
- Heavy, cloddy, clay soil
 - Has a slope
 - Is in close proximity to a water course

Q. I'm not sure if my fields are high risk, what do I do?

- A. Contact your local agricultural advisor, they can come and see you and together you can discuss the areas of concern

Q. Why is the scheme only focusing on winter wheat and winter oil seed rape? Why does it not include potatoes, for example?

- A. Using our data and that of other water companies, on average the greatest spike of metaldehyde in the raw water is during the autumn/ winter period. This is when winter wheat or winter oil seed rape makes up the greatest percentage of crop grown during this time of year.

Q. Why should I sign up, if I know my neighbours are using metaldehyde products ineffectively?

- A. The more and more farms who join the scheme in a sub-catchment, the higher the chance of influencing a good water quality testing period. We hope that the influence of neighbours' good practice could sway those reluctant to sign up. And, you can now refer a friend too, so it's worth asking them to join – you could receive an extra £10. You will still get £25 participation payment as a minimum.

Q. I know my farm neighbours won't change to a ferric phosphate based pellet or change other activities on their farm. Will you take this into account when looking at water testing quality?

- A. Payments will be based on the results of run off from the entire sub-catchment so if your neighbour is contributing and causing the results to be high, then no-one in the sub catchment will receive their payments.

However, in some sub-catchments where we know we had high metaldehyde results last year, we are including extra sample points, the results of which we will share with farmers in that sub-catchment. The results could show a smaller area that the metaldehyde is coming from, we hope this could persuade the reluctant farmers to sign up next year.

Lower Derwent and Staunton Harold catchments:

Q. Why are these two catchments not included in this scheme?

- A. Since we began our programme of looking at diffuse pollution, these two catchments were part of a trial. This trial started over two years ago, and we are still running the trial.

Q. When will the trial finish?

- A. The trial period will come to a conclusion at the end of March 2019.

Catchment boundaries

Q. How do I know if my land is in a priority catchment?

A. Check online maps or alternately ask your local advisor.

Q. Why is some land in catchment and some out of catchment?

A. The catchment schemes use drinking water safeguard zones set out by the Environment Agency. A safeguard zone catchment is an area upstream of a water treatment works where diffuse pollution is causing a challenge to the water treatment works processes. We use these boundaries to determine our priority catchments

Q. What is a sub-catchment?

A. A catchment is the area that drains to a watercourse governed by the topography of the land sloping in that direction. Our priority catchments are broken into segments by the Environment Agency by topography so that everything in a sub-catchment flows to one point- where we take the water samples. In our smaller reservoir catchments- Cropston and Staunton Harold- we don't break it into smaller catchments so it is treated as one whole sub-catchment and we sample all the streams that run into the reservoir.

Q. What is my sub-catchment?

A. Ask your local advisor, they can provide detailed maps to show you where you're positioned

Q. What were the results for last year's scheme in the local sub-catchment?

A. Please ask your local advisor, they have all the results from last year's scheme

My farm and my crops

Q. I only grow a small amount of winter wheat/oil seed rape, and I don't use slug pellets, why should I sign up?

A. You can still sign up, and receive help towards your other costs, and know that you are helping to keep Metaldehyde out of our drinking water – you are acting responsibly already and can help spread the word

Q. I am already planning on using ferric phosphate as part of my crop protection/prevention, can I still join the scheme?

A. Yes, of course...

Q. Do I get paid per slug pellet application?

A. No

Q. Do I get paid even if I don't have to pellet my crops this year?

A. Yes, but still dependant on the water quality results

Q. I have never pelleted my crops can I still apply if I am growing the right crops in the right area?

A. Yes

What else do I need to give to Severn Trent to register for the scheme?

Q. What paper work do I have to submit to claim the payment for ferric slug pellet's and do I have to submit this paper work every year?

- ✓ Find a copy of a field map or a whole farm map. This can be either a Rural Land Registry (RLR) map, Natural England ELS/HLS map, soil map or an old farm plan/ sketch (ideally with the grid reference or field parcel number stated).

Grid references can be looked up at www.gridreferencefinder.com

Then find one of the following:

- ✓ A pesticide recommendation sheet from your agronomist that lists those eligible fields on your farm that are within the catchment, the crop being grown and the cropped area of each field.

OR

- ✓ A cropping record summary page from an official cropping system like Gatekeeper or Muddy Boots.

Then carry out one of the following as per your map/s:

- ✓ Number each field then write that number against the corresponding field on the agronomist recommendation sheet or cropping record off Gatekeeper or Muddy Boots.

OR

- ✓ Write the parcel number against the corresponding field on the agronomist recommendation sheet or cropping record off Gatekeeper or Muddy Boots.

(Note: if you submitted RLR maps or a map with parcel ID's in last year's window, then just mark the parcel IDs on the cropping records, as last year's maps will suffice.

Protecting my Personal Data

Q. You've asked for my personal data, as part of the sign up process, how are you going to manage my data and will it be passed on to anyone else?

A. We will only use your data for the purpose for which it was collected. For further details please, read the Privacy Policy on our website –

<https://www.stwater.co.uk/help-and-contact/legal/privacy>

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