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Q and A on Aminopyralid following its re-approval for use in the UK

Q: What is aminopyralid?

A: This is the active ingredient of a range of products e.g Forefront, Banish, which was launched in 2006 for the control of perennial weeds in grassland. It was the first new product brought onto the grassland market for many years and offered superior control to existing alternatives hence rapidly obtained a large market share.

Q: Why was it removed from the market?

A: A voluntarily suspension of approval for sales and use was sought by the manufacture, Dow AgroSciences in July 2008 after sensitive crops on some allotments and gardens were affected by manure containing traces of the herbicide. This received widespread publicity in the press and media.

Q: What has happened now?

A: Authorisation has been given for 2 products, 1 aimed at agricultural use and 1 for amenity use to be returned to the market.

Q Who makes this decision?

A: The independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP). This is a body of experts who look at all the data supplied. On the basis of the data they make a recommendation to the Minister. The ACP at its May and July meetings, considered a range of further information on the reported incidents and the properties of aminopyralid. Major changes to the way the herbicide is to be sold and used were proposed. The ACP advised Ministers that these changes reduced the risks involved and approval could be recommended. Ministerial approval was finally given in October. See http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/safe_use.asp?id=2799 for further details.

Q What will prevent a repeat of the problem for allotment holders?

This will be achieved by a combination of a comprehensive stewardship training programme plus changes to the label which aim to keep all manure produced from stock grazed on grass treated with an aminopyralid based product on the farm.

Q: What are the label changes?

A: Amongst the major changes being introduced are:

- The product will only be approved for the grazing market. It will not be approved for use on grass intended for conservation as hay or silage
- Use on grass grazed by cattle and sheep only, not horses or other forms of stock
- Any manure accidentally produced from animals that have grazed fields treated with aminopyralid must remain on the farm and be spread on grassland .

Q What is included in the stewardship programme?

A: this will be the most comprehensive stewardship programme of any product on the market and will include:

- Prior to sale of the product, potential purchasers are required to receive training from qualified advisors (BASIS certified) so that the risks and how to prevent these are fully understood. Checks will also be made on the proposed use and ability to meet the warnings and restrictions. Only when all these checks have been satisfied will the product be sold.
- Information on the instruction leaflet to be more rigorous. Summary of information in picture format will be attached to the container.
- The herbicide will be sold in only large containers to make the product over expensive for casual users. It would be illegal to pass on any of the chemical for use by someone else who isn't a registered user and has received appropriate training.

Q Will all aminopyralid based products be allowed back on the market?

No. Approval was only asked for 2 products. The first will be for professional agricultural use only. The other product is for use against invasive weeds like Japanese Knotweed on industrial and amenity land which will not be grazed by any stock. The product previously on sale aimed at the non-professional market will not be on the market at the moment.

Q: When will aminopyralid be back on sale?

A: The 2 approved products have approval for sale with immediate effect but Dow Agrosiences have clearly indicated they will not put the products back on sale until the new stewardship package has been implemented and training provided to suppliers and advisors. This return is likely to be phased in across the UK.

Q: If I have existing product in stock can I use it up now?

A: No, as the new products will have different MAPP numbers which would make it illegal to use the old product. All product in distributor's stores has been taken back but some may remain on farm. Arrangements are being made to take this back now and further details will be released in due course.

Q: What is the NFU position on aminopyralid

A: The NFU believes that aminopyralid is a very effective product, superior to the alternatives currently on the market, and that farmers should have the option of using it subject to the requirements of the stewardship programme. Those who need to export manures and slurry or who grow sensitive crops may choose not to use it.