

This information note highlights important changes to labels as they affect 'straight' MCPA products.

MCPA

In recent years, there have been frequent low level detections of a number of herbicides in surface water bodies (streams/rivers/lakes) throughout Ireland, including some water bodies used for the supply of drinking water. Whilst the levels being detected do not pose any health risks, the presence of pesticide residues in water bodies ultimately ending up in drinking water supplies is cause for concern.

MCPA residues account for the greatest number of detections in drinking water supplies nationwide, with levels in many cases above the legally permissible limit of 0.1 part per billion (ppb). This limit is so low that a single drop, or foil seal from a pesticide container, could potentially cause an exceedance along a small stream for a distance of 30km. Careless storage, handling or use of pesticides, or improper disposal of foil seals or empty pesticide containers, can easily cause breaches of the limit.

MCPA is the active substance (a.s.) in a number of herbicides predominantly used by grassland farmers to control rushes, heavy infestations of which may have land eligibility implications. In many locations the problem with rushes will have been exacerbated by the recent sequence of wet summers which has further restricted control opportunities. Whilst not exclusive users of these products, grassland farmers, account for a significant percentage of the total product purchased annually. Given the myriad of uses of pesticides (Plant Protection Products & biocides) in the world today, some detections are inevitable, but repeated breaches of the 0.1ppb limit indicate that the products are not being used with sufficient care. If the situation in general, and more specifically in relation to MCPA does not improve, Local Authorities could seek to introduce Bye Laws prohibiting use of a product or products within their area of responsibility, a development no-one wants to see.

The following should be noted and acted upon by all users of plant protection products in order to ensure the quality of Irish water courses, and to reduce in particular the levels of MCPA detected;

- ALWAYS read and follow label instructions
- Be aware of the location of nearby water bodies and their proximity to the intended treatment area
- Find out the location of any nearby drinking water abstraction points and ensure compliance with safeguard zones
- Ensure application equipment is properly maintained and calibrated
- NEVER fill sprayers directly from a water course
- Perform handling operations well away from a water course and drains
- Take great care to avoid spills

- Minimise water volumes (rain and washings) on handling area
- Clean and wash down sprayer afterwards

To further ameliorate the problem, the Pesticide Controls Division (PCD) of the DAFM has revised all existing labels for 'straight' MCPA based products. Label changes came into effect from December 2015, and now stipulate a revised maximum individual dose (MID) of 1350g a.s./ha for straight MCPA products – see Tables 1 & 2. Effectively the maximum application rate for the use of these products has been reduced. The following is also applicable to existing and reregistered 'straight' MCPA products;

- The listed products are for use with tractor mounted sprayers only. **THEY ARE NOT APPROVED FOR USE WITH HAND HELD SPRAYERS OR WEED-WIPERS.**
- A 5m buffer zone must be observed with each product.
- Products should not be applied if rain is forecast within 48 hours.
- Products should not be applied to saturated ground.
- Products should not be applied between the end of September and the beginning of March (prohibited October thru to February).

Table 1. Recently reregistered ‘straight’ MCPA products bearing significantly revised application rates

Product	PCS No.	Conc. of active substance (g/l)	Max. rate of use L/ha
Mortone	03529	300	4.5
Hempacide 30	03531	300	4.5
Bandon MCPA 30	03751	300	4.5
Agritox	05498	500	2.7
Agritox 500	05499	500	2.7
Agroxone 50	05500	500	2.7
Mastercrop MCPA 50	05510	500	2.7
NU46	05501	500	2.7
M50		500	2.7
NuOxone 50		500	2.7
Pol-MCPA 500 SL	05494	500	2.7
Farmco MCPA		500	2.7
Easel	05502	750	1.8

Table 2. ‘Straight’ MCPA products revoked since 31 December 2015

Product Name	PCS No.	Authorisation Holder	Revocation date
Mortone	91881	Hygeia Chemicals Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Hempacide 30	90734	Hygeia Chemicals Ltd.	31-Dec-15
MCPA	90675	Hygeia Chemicals Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Agritox	04160	Nufarm UK Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Agritox 50	03505	Nufarm UK Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Agritox 500	05318	Nufarm UK Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Agroxone 50	03523	Nufarm UK Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Mastercrop MCPA 50	04222	Hygeia Chemicals Ltd.	31-Dec-15
MCPA 50	04170	Nufarm UK Ltd.	31-Dec-15
NU46	03504	Nufarm UK Ltd.	31-Dec-15
M50	04169	DHM Agrochemicals Ltd.	31-Dec-15
NuOxone 50	04937	DHM Agrochemicals Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Pol-MCPA 500 SL	04471		31-Dec-15
Farmco MCPA	04414	Farmco Agritrading Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Easel	04617	Nufarm UK Ltd.	31-Dec-15
Larke	04185	Nufarm UK Ltd.	31-Dec-15

IF YOU ARE USING ANY PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCT, READ THE LABEL AND FOLLOW ALL GUIDELINES. TAKE SPECIAL CARE TO AVOID CONTAMINATION OF WATER COURSES. REMEMBER, IF YOU DO NOT USE THESE PRODUCTS APPROPRIATELY, THE ULTIMATE SANCTION IS THAT THEY WILL BE PROHIBITED, AND AN IMPORTANT, COST EFFECTIVE CONTROL MEASURE WILL BE LOST.