



# Pesticides in forestry: the issues

Queries from members to the Confor Pesticide Helpline provide a useful insight into the hot pest and weed topics concerning foresters and managers who are aiming to cost effectively establish and protect our forests and woodlands.

So, what pesticide issues have concerned Confor members in 2017?



## CONFOR PESTICIDES HELPLINE QUERIES IN 2017

Total number of calls	126
Specific herbicide queries	62
Specific weed queries	34
Specific crop related queries	9
Application	6
Other	17

### 1 HERBICIDES

Asulox, glyphosate & Kerb were the three most discussed herbicides.

**Asulox**  
Two issues were of particular concern over bracken control with Asulox - the operation of the Emergency Procedure, and how to apply the product.



The rather unnecessary EC registration delay for Asulox approval has meant that for the last few years, an Emergency Approval permitting use has been required. The 2018 conditions are likely to be - storage 14 May to 31 October, and use from July to 10 September. Application may be by helicopter, tractor sprayer or by knapsack, but the onerous 1000l/ha water rate for knapsacks means that scattered clumps of bracken are best controlled with glyphosate.

#### Glyphosate

The threat of loss of glyphosate lead to considerable concern - but we should have it until at least the end of 2022. Questions also focussed on the weeds which may be less successfully controlled, such as on gorse, rosebay, willowherb, calamagrostis grass and Salmonberry (a new one for me). In these situations the addition of an adjuvant such as Validate to assist penetration will help. Validate will also assist foliar rhododendron and laurel control, and is preferred over Mixture B NF due to its better operator and environmental characteristics.



Significant interest was also generated

by the revised version of Ecoplugs which contain glyphosate for cut stump control. An offlabel approval also permits use for chemical thinning and removal of the stems of invasive species.

#### Kerb

The removal of propyzamide from the FSC HH list meant that foresters needed to update themselves on the current recommendations. Kerb remains a very useful residual herbicide for grass control in areas where wind and rainfall make glyphosate application problematic.



#### Other Herbicides

Other herbicides also had an airing, particularly north of the border where farm forestry was requiring pre emergence control of annual weeds with products such as Stomp Aqua or Flexidor, or foliar control of perennial weeds such as ragwort, dock, nettle and thistle, where 2,4-D and MCPA were often mentioned. Note that MCPA has no approval for use through knapsack sprayers.

### 2 WEEDS

Difficulties with the control of gorse was evident as a result of the lack of any approved triclopyr product for use in forestry. Glyphosate, even at high rates tends to produce variable results, so we must hope that the long awaited Timbrel Pro will emerge in time for use in the autumn. This will also resolve the lack of a reliable herbicide for rosebay willowherb and provide improved control of nettle.

### 3 INSECT AND MAMMALIAN PESTS

#### Hylobius and Gazelle

Unsurprisingly, Hylobius control with Gazelle generated a great deal of interest, particularly as FSC will no longer permit the use of Forester. The mode of action differs from Forester in that while much of the longevity of Forester reflected its strong anti-feeding properties, Gazelle, instead, provides a relatively rapid kill - so that dead weevils may often be found at the transplant stem base compared with Forester affected weevils which walk away and expire elsewhere.



Gazelle is supplied as a crystalline powder which is difficult to weigh out in a breezy forest. The best solution is to accurately weigh the correct quantity for a knapsack fill into a 250ml jug or beaker, and mark the height of the volume on the side of the container with a waterproof felt pen. Then for each knapsack fill, the product can be added to the jug / beaker up to this mark. As the formulation may be slow to dissolve in cold water, it may be advisable to pre-mix in a large (5 litre) jug prior to adding to the knapsack to ensure that the product is fully dispersed.

Forester continues to be available for use in PEFC certified or non-certified forests, and plants treated in the forest nursery with Gazelle, Alpha 6ED or Merit Forest may be used in all forests.

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>> Rabbits and Deer

Rabbits and deer are the bane of many a forester trying to establish woodlands in the absence of effective fencing. We do have a couple of products which can assist - ASBO (or Curb) to deter rabbits, and the newly introduced Austrian sheep fat remedy Trico to deter deer. Trico is unusual in this field as it is pleasingly rainfast.

**4 APPLICATION**

Two topics particularly found their way onto the agenda - knapsack use close to water, and the potential for drone spraying.

The rules changed last year over the off-label approval for knapsack sprayer use. Previously knapsack off-label approvals were rejected where the product had an aquatic buffer zone in excess of 5m, but this has now changed so that new applications in this situation may be considered. This is only likely to be useful in farm woodlands, though, where weed spectrums require the use of agricultural products.

The potential for drones for bracken spraying provoked a lot of interest, and the regulator is now looking at procedures to assess this use. In reality, it will probably not be before at least 2020 that this use will be authorised.

**5 REGULATION**

Always a thorny topic, where it can seem that politics and an overly bureaucratic process is designed to be frustrating to the user. Fortunately, so long as we have access to glyphosate and some effective insecticides, then forestry is not as badly affected by product withdrawal as other

specialised areas. Horticulture in particular is finding it increasingly difficult to control key pests and weeds, and in the longer term this could be equally damaging for the forest nursery sector.

Operator certification has generated a lot of angst, and yes, the current rules on which equipment may be used by which PA6 holder do fall in the category called 'bizarre' - but hopefully the chart published in the December issue of FTN will provide a degree of clarity.

For those advising on pesticide use in forestry, the only currently available certification route is via the organisation BASIS, but the forestry requirements fail to meet our needs, and it is doubtful if more than a handful of advisers manage to fulfil the annual registration requirements. The solution is probably one which Confor in liaison with the Forestry Commission will need to resolve.



**MEMBER SERVICES  
Pesticides helpline**

Pesticides helpline is a free service operated by Confor's crop protection adviser Colin Palmer on behalf of Confor members. The helpline operates by email and telephone 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday on 01531 633500 (leave a message if necessary) or by email to: [branchline@xln.co.uk](mailto:branchline@xln.co.uk)

**Reds find a friend**

BBC News reported in March that there is now hard evidence that the pine marten can indeed be a valuable ally for the beleaguered native red squirrel. Scientists at the University of Aberdeen have studied the relationship between pine martens, grey squirrels and red squirrels. The pine marten is a predator of the reds, but in areas where it thrives, the number of grey squirrels reduces. "Where pine marten activity is high, grey squirrel populations are actually heavily suppressed. And that gives the competitive advantage to red squirrels," says Dr Emma Sheehy.

This evidence - that their comeback has given a boost to red squirrel survival - could indicate that they are able to catch and eat the non-native greys more easily.



Pine martens are gradually becoming re-established in parts of Scotland, after their near extinction in the UK. The BBC also reported that the first ever video footage of a pine marten in Northumberland has been captured by the Brinks's Pine Marten project, led by the Vincent Wildlife Trust.

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-43308588](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-43308588)



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