



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Minister for Work and
Pensions (Lords)
4th Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9DA

0207 340 4000

www.gov.uk/dwp

ministers@dwp.gov.uk

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

22nd December 2020

Dear Baroness Bennett,

The Chemicals (Health and Safety) and Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020

During the debate on the above Regulations on 9 December I gave an undertaking to provide you with a written response to the questions raised.

A report has shown that two products – fipronil and imidacloprid – are showing up in high levels in rivers. Are the Government looking at this issue?

Under the Biocidal Products Regulation, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has responsibility for national authorisation of insecticides for non-plant protection uses.

Both fipronil and imidacloprid have been approved under the EU Biocidal Products Regulation. The legislation aims to provide a high level of protection for the environment and biocidal products need to demonstrate that the risk to the environment (including surface water compartments) is acceptable before they can be placed on the market.

HSE has authorised a number of biocidal products containing fipronil (5) and imidacloprid (28). The risk assessments for these biocidal products concluded that the risks to the environment (including surface water) were acceptable if a number of conditions of authorisation were imposed.

In particular, biocidal products containing fipronil have been authorised in the UK for use as baits to control ants or cockroaches in and around domestic buildings. The following environmental risk mitigation measures were set as conditions of authorisation and must be included on product label for users to comply with:

- Apply only in areas that are not liable to submersion or becoming wet, i.e. protected from rain, floods and cleaning water
- Do not discharge unused product on the ground, into water courses, into pipes (sink, toilets...) nor down the drains.

Regarding imidacloprid, biocidal products containing this insecticide have been authorised in the UK for use as baits to control ants, flies or cockroaches in and around domestic and agricultural buildings. The following environmental risk mitigation measures were set as conditions of authorisation and must be included on product label for users to comply with:

- Do not allow to get into surface water, drains and ground water.
- This product may not be used in premises where there is bare soil and no hard standing.
- This material and its container must be disposed of in a safe way.

Medicines containing imidacloprid and fipronil are accompanied by advice to users; if these measures are followed, exposure to the environment should be negligible.

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) deal with applications for pet flea treatments and in relation to the recent reports of flea treatments being found in watercourses, the VMD has commissioned the University of Sussex to carry out additional research to determine the extent to which (if any) these treatments have on the aquatic environment. The results are not yet available.

Pending the findings from this commissioned research, and other available evidence, currently we do not plan to change the existing regulatory controls on flea treatments for pets, including the existing risk mitigation warnings

In the 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) the Government made clear its ambition to leave the natural environment in a better state than we inherited it and the steps needed to achieve this. One of the key commitments made is the publication of a Chemicals Strategy, which will set out our ambitious approach to the improvement of the quality of our water, air, and soil, the biodiversity in our marine and land environments, and public health. It will set our priorities for action in these areas, and detail how we will achieve our goals and measure success.

The Strategy will be a vehicle for exploring options to develop an early warning system for identifying emerging chemical issues, considering how to address the tracking of chemicals in products, and working internationally on the standardisation of methods that assess chemical safety. It will be developed to ensure a holistic approach to the safe management of chemicals, building on existing government strategies, such as the Resources and Waste and Clean Air Strategies, both of which have been successfully delivered in line with 25YEP commitments.

The principles of high levels of protection for human health and the environment will be at the forefront of the Chemicals Strategy. The Strategy is being developed with a strong evidence-based approach and in consultation with stakeholders, and is expected to be published in 2021/2

The Government's view on the 'cocktail effect' of the potential impact of different chemicals mixing on humans and the environment

The previously mentioned Chemicals Strategy will also recognise the importance of understanding the effects of chemical exposure, including from chemical mixtures, on human health and the environment; and will continue to support collaborative work on human and wildlife biomonitoring.

Public Health England (PHE) lead on the UK's participation in the European Human Biomonitoring Project (HBM4EU) in collaboration with Defra. The initiative includes a project to harmonise procedures, generate exposure data and develop methodologies to improve chemical risk assessment.

Through this project, a cross-government steering group has been formed. This group, chaired by Defra, includes PHE, the Environment Agency (EA), the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and HSE and seeks to deliver science in support of chemical management policy.

A number of these departments are carrying out work in this field, for instance, the Environment Agency's Exposure Metrics Programme which includes wildlife monitoring for substances, such as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). Project work is under way and a range of options are being considered in developing the programme. This includes addressing emerging substances of concern, identifying how indicators could be integrated across freshwater, terrestrial and marine environments and exploring links to human biomonitoring.

I hope the above explanations address the points you raised in the debate.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the library.

Yours Sincerely

Debbie Stedman-Scott

**BARONESS STEDMAN-SCOTT
MINISTER FOR WORK AND PENSIONS (LORDS)**