



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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26th October 2018

Des Caroline,

Thank you for your e-mail of 1 August about pesticide use. Please accept my apologies for the unacceptable delay in responding.

My priority is to ensure that pesticides do not cause harm to people or pose unacceptable risks to the environment. There are two main aspects to this. First, a comprehensive process for assessing the risks posed by a pesticide and prohibiting use wherever risks are found to be unacceptable. Second, a set of policies to help farmers and others use pesticides as safely and as little as possible. Our work in this area is, and will continue to be underpinned by the precautionary principle; lack of full scientific certainty is never used as a reason for postponing measures to protect people and the environment.

The 25 year environment plan – “A Green Future” – included a firm commitment to putting Integrated Pest Management at the heart of the government’s approach to support sustainable crop protection with the minimum use of pesticides. We will work to reduce reliance on chemical methods of pest control over time and to help people to make the greatest possible use of other techniques, including non-chemical alternatives, to minimise risks to people and the environment and combat the build-up of resistance in pests. We will consider carefully what actions the government can usefully take to support this process.

You suggested a ban on neonicotinoids as flea treatments and as ant baits. The new restrictions on agricultural use of neonicotinoids come into force from December and will over time result in significantly reduced levels of these substances in the environment. The Veterinary Medicines Directorate and the Environment Agency are assessing the potential contribution from flea treatments and are increasing monitoring in urbanised water catchments. The regulation of ant baits is the responsibility of DWP rather than my Department. However, I understand that there are strict conditions applied to the use of products containing neonicotinoids, particularly those authorised for use outdoors.

Thank you again for your e-mail.

With every good wish,

Yours,
[Handwritten signature]

Michael Gove