Reducing **pesticide** use in forestry

Silviculturist **Ian Willoughby** of Forest Research highlights a new Forestry Commission publication to help managers who want to reduce pesticide use in woodlands.

People choose to use pesticides because they're cheap and they work. However, the Code of Practice for the Safe Use of Pesticides for Non-Agricultural Purposes tells us that in every situation, managers must consider whether or not pesticide use is really necessary.

In addition, where woodlands are certified under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard, managers must attempt to reduce, and if practicable entirely eliminate the use of synthetic pesticides.

The Forestry Commission will shortly publish new guidance on how to reduce the use of pesticides in all forestry operations. The guide covers the whole range of damaging agents for which pesticides might be used – pests, diseases, vegetation and mammals. For each damaging agent, the background to the problem, likely impacts and options for control are discussed.

Help in making a decision

The simplest way to start to use the new guidance is to fill in the decision recording sheet contained within it. In the first section (stage 1) of the sheet, users are asked to identify the potential problem, assess its likely consequences, and decide on possible control measures.

Options for control are categorised into 'take no action', 'avoid the problem' and 'take remedial action'. Should remedial action be required, users are asked to record which non-chemical method is appropriate, or the reason why none is practicable or cost-effective. Should chemical use be necessary, the second section (stage 2) on the decision recording sheet asks managers to record the choice of chemical.

Two decision keys help people to complete the form. The core decision key is used to complete stage 1 of the decision recording form. It guides people through the process of identifying the problem and decisions on control measures and links to detailed guidance on key pest, disease, vegetation or mammal problems in the main part of the publication.

The pesticides decision key is used to complete the second part of the decision recording form. This key gives guidance on selecting the product that has least risk of negative impact on human beings, and any non-target wildlife, insects, fungi, aquatic life and flora that may be present. Again, the key links into other parts of the publication giving guidance and information on this issue.

Who will the guide help?

People who have some experience of achieving and maintaining UKWAS certification may already have their own systems in place to reduce pesticide use and record how they are going about it. It is hoped that at the very least, this new collation of guidance on the potential chemical and non-chemical approaches to managing our major damaging agents will prove a useful reference source for busy woodland managers.

Further details of the new publication, once published, will be available by searching via the following link:

www.forestry.gov.uk/website/publications.nsf

Support groups

Information about the regulation and use of pesticides is available from a number of organisations, and the key players are listed here.

■ **Health & Safety Executive (HSE)**
www.hse.gov.uk

A government quango which administers and regulates compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Most of this compliance is within the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations, which provide guidance for pesticide storage, mixing, application and disposal.

HSE also act as the national regulator for pesticides such as wood preservatives, and for biocides such as Talunex and rat poisons.

■ **British Agrochemical Supply Industry Scheme (BASIS)**
www.basis-reg.co.uk

BASIS co-ordinates training and certification of merchants and advisers involved with the supply of pesticides.

All persons involved with the selling or storage for sale of pesticides are required by the Control of Pesticide Regulations to hold a BASIS certificate. Specific modules for forestry and amenity exist to serve those involved with silviculture and amenity horticulture.

BASIS also co-ordinates a Professional Register which complies with Continuing Personal Development (CPD) requirements, and administers the Amenity Pest Management Certificate for those involved in setting amenity contracts or tenders.

■ **National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC)**
www.nptc.org.uk

NPTC coordinates operator training and certification as required by the Control of Pesticide Regulations.

The most commonly held certificates in the forestry and amenity sectors are: PA1 Foundation Module and PA6 Hand Held Applicator.

Spray operators require a certificate if:

- they were born after 31st December 1964 unless working under the direct and personal supervision of a certificate holder
- they are operating as a contractor away from the property owned by their employer.

■ **British Crop Protection Council (BCPC)**
www.bcpc.org

The BCPC is a non profit organisation which supports the efficient use of pesticides in a number of ways, but are probably best known for the annual green book the "UK Pesticide Guide". Other popular guides include 'Using Pesticides' a complete guide to safe and effective spraying, and the 'Hand Held and Amenity Sprayers Handbook'.

BCPC also organise conferences and seminars including the annual International Crop Protection Conference.

Particular assistance has been provided to forestry through FTA's membership of the 'Minor Uses' sub-committee, which, with PSD was largely responsible for the establishment of Off label Approvals, and more recently Essential Uses of soon-to-be revoked pesticides.

■ **Crop Protection Association (CPA)**
www.cropprotection.org.uk

The CPA is the trade organisation of pesticide manufacturers and suppliers. It provides information and seminar materials for schools, colleges and training events both as leaflets and in videos.

The CPA has been particularly active in finding alternative ways of managing pesticides without resorting to a pesticide tax, and this has recently evolved into the Pesticides Initiative.

This scheme aims to train and educate those supplying and using pesticides with the specific aim of reducing the environmental impact of crop protection products.

A recent facet of this scheme is the Pesticide Retrieval Scheme outlined elsewhere in this issue.