



Ban Pyrethroid Sheep Dipping!

Press release – ****Embargoed** until Monday 18 July 2005**

Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust today called for the banning of prophylactic sheep dipping. Synthetic pyrethroids (primarily Cypermethrin) used in sheep dip are causing extensive and unacceptable damage to our ecosystems.

There are two areas of growing concern, the poisoning of rivers, as an incidental result of their routine use, and the damage to terrestrial ecosystems when they are 'disposed of'.

Synthetic pyrethroids are replacing the older organophosphate dips because of health concerns, but the new chemicals are 1000 times more toxic to wildlife than the organophosphates. Even a tiny amount of the chemical dripping from a wet sheep into a stream will kill all the invertebrates for up to 10 kilometres downstream, with knock-on impacts for fish, the rest of the aquatic ecosystem and fishing businesses.

Data from the Environment Agency and SEPA show that there has been a rapid increase in the number of recorded sheep dip water pollution incidents, from 12 in 2002 to 46 last year.

Buglife estimates that at least 1,500 km of rivers are ecologically destroyed by sheep dip pollution every year and fears that 2005 could be even worse, as drought reduces the amount of water available to dilute any synthetic pyrethroid that gets into a river.

"These chemicals are deadly to aquatic life, the current systems to safeguard our environment have failed. Only by banning the practice will we be able to halt this unacceptable environmental damage" said Matt Shardlow, Conservation Director of Buglife.

The cypermethrin sheep dip, as well as generally damaging the environment, is also driving species towards extinction. Last year 5,000 White-clawed crayfish (an internationally endangered species) were killed by sheep dip pollution in Cumbria's River Mint; and the very rare caddisfly *Glossosoma intermedium*, once found in three little rivers, is now only found in one, apparently as a result of poisoning by sheep dip.

Every year over 400 million litres of sheep dip have to be thrown away. The second problem surrounds disposal, this is basically carried out by spraying the sheep dip onto

fields. Cypermethrin is used as an agricultural pesticide and hence causes persistent damage to the populations of invertebrates in the 'sacrificial' fields. While the disposal of sheep dip must be licensed by the Environment Agency or SEPA, neither organisation considers the impact on terrestrial wildlife when licensing disposal.

"The Government is not facing up to the impacts of sheep dip disposal in the countryside. We are convinced that this dumping of a vast volume of poison onto fields will destroy populations of endangered invertebrate species, will reduce the availability of food for breeding birds and will knock out the insects needed to pollinate flowers. Further research is unnecessary as we know that cypermethrin has been developed to kill invertebrates and therefore that this method of disposal is bad for biodiversity." - Matt Shardlow, Conservation Director.

Notes to Editors:

Buglife-The Invertebrate Conservation Trust is the first organisation in Europe devoted to the conservation of all invertebrates, and is actively engaged in saving Britain's rarest bugs, slugs, snails, bees, wasps, ants, spiders, beetles and many more fascinating invertebrates. It was set up in 2000 and has six members of staff working on diverse projects including a national bumblebee survey and riverfly conservation. For more information on what you can do to help these amazing animals visit www.buglife.org.uk

No. recorded incidents (EA and SEPA data)

	England and Wales	Scotland	GB
2002	7	5	12
2003	12	6	18
2004	43	3	46

"Since August 2003, there have been 57 sheep dip related incidents in Wales alone, affecting 29 catchments. Most of these incidents have arisen from apparent routine use of cypermethrin" (EA data)

"Sheep dip chemicals cause around one third of all freshwater Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) failures with between 39 to 70 failures in the period 2000 – 2003. Failures occur most frequently in areas of sheep rearing (Wales, Northumbria, Kent and in areas associated with the processing of fleeces (West Yorkshire)." (EA data)

Water Framework Directive risk assessment work estimates that around half of Wales is at risk of failing to meet the WFD objective of Good Ecological Status because of sheep dip." (EA data)

Synthetic pyrethroid sheep dip is often mixed with slurry before it is 'disposed of' this can result in four times as many faecal coliform bacteria and pathogens being sprayed onto the agricultural land.

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