

# THE GOOD NEIGHBOUR INITIATIVE

PULL OUT AND KEEP!

Spraying Responsibly – Best practice when spraying near to residential areas



Pesticides are potentially hazardous to human and animal health and the environment and so, understandably, some residents want to protect themselves and their families from exposure when pesticides are sprayed in their locality.

*There are a number of ways that you and your staff can assist local residents and this guide details some of the options to consider.*

## KNOWING YOUR NEIGHBOURS

A first step is to identify your neighbours, local residents and potentially sensitive uses of land eg schools. Where there are only a few neighbours this should be easy. It is more difficult when your land is adjacent to many properties. Working with local community groups might be effective in relation to those residents that cannot be identified by other means.

## COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURS:

- ✓ Develop a good relationship with them
- ✓ If asked, explain to them why you are spraying and at what times of year. If they request information on what pesticides are being used then there is no reason not to provide this information
- ✓ Listen to their concerns and try to agree practical measures that can be put in place to reduce their concerns.
- ✓ Consider hosting an open day, like Farm Sunday
- ✓ Communication, transparency and openness is the key to any productive relationship

*Approximately 500,000 houses are adjacent to farmland with an estimated 1-1.5 million inhabitants*

## What should you do?

Know the potential health and environmental risks from using pesticides and read the Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products.

Next, consider if spraying is likely to cause any concerns. Remember to take account of:

The fields which are adjacent to local residents property  
The crops grown in these fields and what pesticides may need to be applied  
The barriers there are between your fields and adjacent properties e.g. hedges, roads  
Any buildings such as schools, hospitals, retirement homes, public areas particularly areas where young children or infants might gather, or special groups such as beekeepers, pregnant women or those with pre-existing medical conditions, where special plans might be required.



## Conduct a risk assessment and look for solutions

These factors should all be considered as part of your farm COSHH assessment for spraying.

- ✓ Always check the label for each product to ensure legal compliance with the statutory conditions of use relating to any pesticides you intend to apply
- ✓ Always ensure you and your staff follow the code of practice for using plant protection products when spraying.
- ✓ Also check the product safety data sheets for information about the products you are using
- ✓ Train and encourage your operators to follow best practice at all times especially when spraying close to residential areas; make sure all operators are on the National Register of Spray Operators

(NRoSO) and undergo regular updating and training and that your sprayer is tested annually

- ✓ Be aware of all the potential exposure factors that could be involved for your local residents (eg. volatilisation/vapour lift off etc.)
- ✓ By law, those who produce food and animal feed must keep records of any pesticides they use. Therefore make sure you keep a record/diary of all spray operations including dates, times, weather conditions and product(s) applied. For further information on record keeping see the code of practice for using plant protection products
- ✓ If you use a contractor for your spraying operations, ensure they are fully informed of any sensitive areas alongside fields and that they have complete details of any agreements you may have reached with local residents.

## What if residents raise concerns?

Try to come to an agreement with them to address concerns. There are a range of options which can be considered.

- ✓ Make sure operators have a copy of the spray operator guide to use in discussion with any concerned residents, walkers or other bystanders
- ✓ Prepare your own field/operator card highlighting key issues/sites on the farm and any special measures you are taking e.g. unsprayed buffer zones around houses.
- ✓ Warning residents prior to any spraying can enable them to take any precautions that they feel necessary to try and reduce personal exposure and contamination of their property (e.g. bringing washing and pets indoors, closing windows etc.). One way to do this may be to drive around the headland prior to spraying. Other methods of notifying neighbours, as agreed with them, could be a phone call, letter, email or text. Always use the agreed method as arranged.
- ✓ Identify a time to spray when residents are most likely to be indoors or out at work, but always remember to follow any notification arrangements agreed with local residents to inform them prior to your spraying plans. If a field borders a school always try to spray it when the school is closed.
- ✓ Introduce 'no spray zones' around houses. These could either be non-cropped areas or areas which are cropped and not sprayed.
- ✓ Environmental schemes will contain options which can be used as buffers e.g. grass margins or conservation headlands. If applying for these schemes look at the location of houses when deciding on your options.
- ✓ Consider switching any set-aside or fallow to areas next to homes, schools, hospitals etc.
- ✓ If your farm is mixed and it is practical, consider switching any fields that are sprayed next to homes, schools, hospitals etc. with grassland fields, including those for grazing etc.



- ✓ In order to reduce or even eliminate pesticide use consider converting whole fields to organic production. For information on organic conversion contact the Organic Farming and Industrial Crops Division of Defra on 0207 238 5605
- ✓ Users of public footpaths or rights of way across fields could be notified by signs on site informing them of when pesticides will be applied and who to contact for further information including a contact telephone number
- ✓ Implement any additional measures you have identified as necessary and always follow any arrangements agreed with local residents
- ✓ Review the efficacy of any measures you take with your neighbours and local residents
- ✓ In case of enquiries from neighbours, local residents or from walkers or other bystanders. Always be calm, polite and professional and keep a written record of what the concerns are and what measures you have taken to try and address them.

## 10 tips to reduce spray drift

1. Have your sprayer serviced annually under the National Sprayer Testing scheme and regularly check the calibration – nozzle flow rates should all be within 10% of their specification.
2. Use nozzles which reduce drift wherever practical.
3. Check the local weather forecast and adjust work accordingly. Do not spray if wind speed and direction could cause drift onto neighbouring property or sensitive areas.
4. Ideal spraying conditions are a Force 2 light breeze (3.2 – 6.5 km/h) blowing away from sensitive areas. This would be a breeze strong enough to be felt on the face and to rustle leaves



5. Check the product label for spray quality recommendations, where practical choose coarser quality sprays as they reduce the risk of drift.
6. Always follow statutory product label advice on "no spray zones" and carry out a LERAP assessment to determine the no-spray zone required for each application.
7. In the field, check wind speed and direction and, if necessary, amend your plans.
8. Set the spray boom at the correct height and keep as low as possible without compromising the evenness of spray deposition.
9. Watch for changes in the wind speed and direction – if the wind speed increases or the direction changes then either stop spraying or move to another field.
10. Maintain a constant speed and pressure, particularly if the sprayer is fitted with an automatic volume regulator. Small increases in the speed result in large increases in pressure.

Consult the BCPC "Boom and Fruit Sprayers Handbook" or "Handheld & Amenity Sprayers Handbook" for further advice.

**There are more than 3.6 million children under school age, gardens and public areas will be their principal outdoor play area**



## Need more help?

Despite your best intentions sometimes agreement between parties cannot be reached. In the event this happens, help is available. Your farm adviser, an NFU group secretary or branch chairman may be able to help. Alternatively you may want to make use of a mediation service, these are often available through your local council or via <http://www.ukmediation.net/cms/> and <http://www.the-environment-council.org.uk>

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Laws and regulations governing pesticide use may be subject to change. Therefore, always check whether any new laws have been introduced which may have subsequently changed the legal requirements referred to in this leaflet.

This guidance was produced by the NFU in conjunction with the AEA, CLA, AIC, CPA and NAAC, and with advice from the UK Pesticides Campaign – November 2007.