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## Pesticide Awareness Information

A Chara,

Leitrim County Council would like to bring to your attention some important information regarding the use of pesticides (also known as Plant Protection Products). There has been an increase in the number of public drinking water supplies affected by pesticides in recent years. Products such as MCPA and Glyphosate are being detected in drinking water and Irish Water have reported 81 pesticide exceedances across Ireland in 2020, an increase of 5 from 2019.

While the HSE has advised that the levels of pesticides seen in water do not represent a threat to public health, such detections are very undesirable in a drinking water supply.

Contamination of water by pesticides can only be managed by prevention and therefore it is very important to be mindful of their effect and aware of best practice.

The access route for pesticides (which include herbicides, fungicides, insecticides) is through drains, streams and rivers that feed the drinking water supply and ground water aquifers. Additionally, spraying of hard surfaces, paths and carparks can result in the runoff of sprayed products.

The accidental disposal of very small amounts of product into a drain connecting to a stream is enough to cause exceedances in drinking water limits. A single drop of herbicide can breach the drinking water limit in a small stream for 30km!

Extreme vigilance is required with how you spray, clean equipment, and dispose of unwanted pesticide products and containers. **But in the first instance you are strongly urged to always consider alternatives to spraying with pesticides and in each case, if pesticides are needed at all.**

You are urged to consider alternatives (manual/mechanical - hoeing, cutting, brushing and scuffle, strimming, hand-pulling, rotavating, weed suppression, mulching) instead of pesticides. See the Green Gardening document for hints and tips.

<https://www.mywaste.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SRWMO-Greener-Gardening-Booklet-Onscreen-Use-AW.pdf>

Please note that leaving areas unsprayed can help native flowering plants to grow and support a wide range of insects including bees and other vital pollinators. One third of Ireland's bee species are threatened with extinction and by helping the bee population to survive and thrive you are also



protecting precious water resources. For more information on practical ways to help bees and other pollinators, check out the *All-Ireland Pollinator Plan* at [www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie).

Pesticides should only be used if absolutely necessary. If pesticide use is necessary, **you must read and follow the instructions on the product label and make sure that you are aware of all nearby water bodies (ditches, streams, ponds, rivers, lakes, springs etc.)**. Only a DAFM-registered professional user can apply Plant Protection Products that are authorised for Professional Use.

Where pesticide application is considered the **last resort** users must follow best practice in application and particularly near water including any drain, stream, lake, river or drinking water source.

**Best Practice:**

- Know the location of any nearby drinking water sources and abstraction points.
- Ensure strict compliance with **Safeguard No-Use Zones** around abstraction points.
- Read and follow the product label and product instructions.
- Determine the right amount to purchase and use.
- Be sure to choose the right pesticide product.
- Only apply chemical control when the target weed is growing.
- Store pesticides in a secure dry manner that will not result in accidental releases.
- Take extreme caution during mixing and preparation of pesticides to avoid spills/dripping and to reduce washings and wastewater from the handling area.
- Note it is illegal to fill a sprayer/ equipment directly from a watercourse.
- Don't spray if the target area is wet or heavy rain is forecast within 48 hours.
- Don't apply pesticides during windy conditions.
- Don't discard washings from application equipment down a drain or onto an area from which they can readily enter a waterbody.

Your consideration of this matter is greatly appreciated. Should you wish to discuss this any further, please do not hesitate to contact this office 071 9620005 ext Environment.

Yours sincerely,

**Sinead Ní Thiarnáin**

Staff Officer/Environmental Awareness Officer  
Environment Department