

SLUGS

WHAT IS THE ISSUE FOR GROWERS?

Slugs are a major pest of agricultural and horticultural crops. When left unchecked they can cause devastating damage to emerging crops.



SLUG CONTROL

WHAT IS THE ISSUE FOR WATER COMPANIES?

Metoldehyde, one of the two active ingredients available to control slugs, is very difficult and expensive to remove from water that is subsequently used for drinking.

HOW TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF SLUG CONTROL ON WATER QUALITY

An Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to slug control is more effective than relying solely on slug pellets. It will also help ensure maximum protection of the environment and boost crop productivity.

WHAT DOES AN IPM APPROACH TO SLUG CONTROL INVOLVE?

- 1** Identifying and analysing potential risk factors for slug damage
- 2** Considering the most suitable cultural controls to reduce slug habitats and overall pressure
- 3** Trapping and understanding of thresholds to help ensure treatment decisions are justified
- 4** Choosing the most suitable method of biological or chemical control
- 5** Monitoring crops while they are most vulnerable and assessing if further applications are required
- 6** Keeping records and forward planning to improve IPM programmes for next year

CULTURAL SLUG CONTROLS

There are various cultural controls that growers should consider, as part of an IPM approach to slug control, to help reduce slug habitats and overall pressure.

- ✓ Maintaining a fine, consolidated seedbed
- ✓ Using a stubble rake to disturb crop debris
- ✓ Introducing beetle banks to support beetle populations
- ✓ Rolling seedbeds reduces slug activity by making it harder for them to move around and reducing the availability of safe resting places
- ✓ Ploughing to bury surface trash
- ✓ Minimum tillage reduces slug populations compared to direct drilling

BIOLOGICAL SLUG CONTROLS

Biological control of slugs is particularly suited to organic systems. *Phasmarhabditis hermaphrodita* is a nematode parasite of slugs that is commercially available as a biological molluscicide.

CHEMICAL SLUG CONTROLS

There are two chemical control options currently available to growers.

→ Metaldehyde

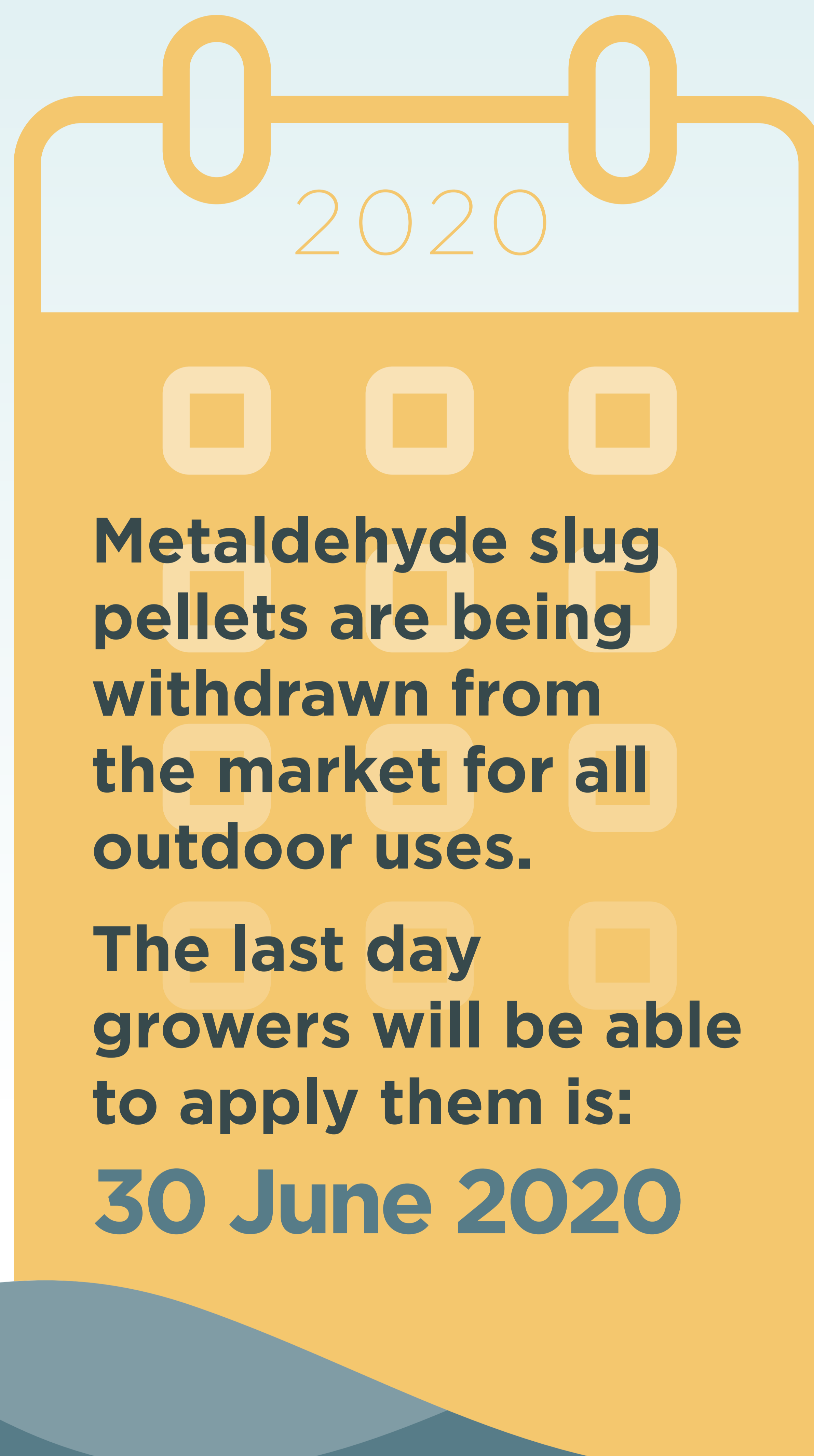
Metaldehyde slug pellets leach metaldehyde which is very difficult and expensive to remove from water that is subsequently used for drinking.

They should therefore be used responsibly, as per the Metaldehyde Stewardship Group (MSG) guidelines.

→ Ferric phosphate

Ferric phosphate slug pellets do not impact water quality.

The active ingredient causes slugs to quickly stop feeding; they then become less mobile and go underground to die within 3–6 days.



DRINKING WATER SAFEGUARD ZONES

Drinking water safeguard zones are designated areas in which the use of certain substances, which can include pesticides, must be carefully managed to prevent the pollution of raw water sources that are used to provide drinking water.

How can I find out if my farm is in a drinking water safeguard zone?

 Visit the Environment Agency (EA) website: environment-agency.cloud.esri.uk.com/farmers

 Visit magic.defra.gov.uk

 Ask your agronomist