



IOM Pesticide biomonitoring project

Winter Newsletter, Dec 2011



Hello and Welcome

Welcome to the second newsletter for our project '*Biological monitoring of pesticide exposures in residents living near agricultural land*'. This newsletter updates you about our progress during 2011.

Once again I would like to say a big thank you to all the farmers and householders who have, and continue to, participate in the study. We really appreciate your willingness and enthusiasm to be part of this project.

As the festive season is nearly upon us, the community researchers and I would like to take this opportunity to pass on our best wishes to you and your family. We look forward to discussing the project with you again in 2012.

Karen Galea
Dr. Karen Galea (Project leader)

East Lothian

Harvest was a late affair in East Lothian this year with farmers challenged by wet ground conditions. However, good yields for cereals were achieved despite the wet weather. Potatoes and root vegetables have now been lifted and most fields have been ploughed. Farmers use crop rotation in their fields, which means they do not always sow the same crop on a field to maximize soil goodness and maintain its nutrients for the following crop. At the moment, winter wheat, winter barley and oil seed rape are being sown. Other crops will be sown in the spring.

Farmers have to be very vigilant at this time of the year once the new crop has been sown. They are on the lookout for any weeds or pests that thrive in mild autumn weather like we have been enjoying this year. They may be advised to use a herbicide or a pesticide to control the problem.

Some 86 residents and 9 farms in East Lothian participated in the project during 2011 and we have collected a great deal of useful information.

Plans for East Lothian area in 2012

We will continue data collection in East Lothian during 2012. However, due to the expansion of the project into Norfolk and the need to maximize available resources we will focus our sample collection only in selected areas in East Lothian. For this reason not all current participants may be invited to participate in 2012. Your local community researcher will be in touch to advise how you can continue to help with our project.

Kent

Fruit picking in Kent was generally around 11 days earlier this year due to the early blossom season. Some orchards offering 'Pick Your Own' fruit may still have fruit on the trees at the time of writing (last week of November) even as the leaves are dropping.

Once the picking is completed the farmers apply a foliar feed. This helps to strengthen the spring flowers to resist bad weather. During this period farmers also remove dead trees from the orchards and plant new ones. A herbicide may be applied around the fruit trees to suppress weeds that thrive in mild autumn weather.

We are very pleased with the enthusiasm of the 47 recruited residents and continued help of the 5 orchard farmers throughout 2011. Again a great deal of information has been collected that we are currently processing.

Plans for 2012

We will continue and expand our sample collection for selected areas in Kent. Any fruit farmers as well as residents living near orchards in the Kent area who are not already taking part in the study, but are keen to be involved or want to know more about the study, are very welcome to contact us. We are keen to recruit orchards and residents in East Kent and particularly in the areas around Gravesend and Tonbridge.

Norfolk

We will extend our study in 2012 to include Norfolk and are delighted to welcome our community researchers Sue Attwood and Tim Hogg to the team.

Susan and Tim aim to recruit about five arable farms and around 25 households living near agricultural land. Recruitment of both farms and households will commence early 2012, with data collection continuing throughout 2012. Any farmers and residents living near farms in Norfolk who are interested in the study or would like to know more about the project are very welcome to contact us.

What's happened to the urine samples that have been collected so far?

Urine samples have been collected from residents throughout 2011 to coincide with the main spraying season. In addition, samples were also collected during periods when little or no spraying occurred to assess background pesticide levels in the population.

Urine samples collected following key pesticide spray events, as well as a number of background samples are currently being analysed by the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) in Buxton.

Updates on project progress

Your local community researcher will continue to keep you informed on how you can help with our project, as well as on further developments in our work. Remember to visit our project website for future regular news updates:

www.pesticidebiomonitoring.org

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