



IOM Pesticide biomonitoring project

Summer Newsletter, July 2012



Hello and Welcome

Welcome to the third newsletter of the project '*Biological monitoring of pesticide exposures in residents living near agricultural land*'. This newsletter updates you about our progress during 2012.

The project team has been incredibly busy with recruitment and data collection in Kent, Norfolk and East Lothian. In addition, the project team has recently presented on methodological issues of this project at UK conferences.

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

Karen Galea

Dr. Karen Galea (Project leader)

Overview

Extreme weather patterns (as we are all too aware) have dominated the current growing season across the UK. This has resulted in numerous challenges for farmers. Weeds and various diseases have been difficult to control as it has not always been possible to apply the necessary pesticides on the crops at the best times to make them most effective.

The project team has been overwhelmed with the response from both farmers and residents to participate in the study. Sample and data collection has been progressing extremely well throughout 2012.

Kent (orchards)

It has been reported that the 2012 growing season has been particularly bad for infestations although the reasons for this are not clear. The extended wet weather is likely to have caused more Scab related (fungal) problems than usual.

Heavy rain and varied weather earlier in the season has caused some blossom wilt, especially on cherry crops. However, there have been warm spells at the right time for some crops during the blossom phase and the heat at the end of May – early June came at the right time for the apples and pears. The fear now would be heavy hail which damages the fruit. By this stage in July most spray activity center on nutritional feed.

We are very pleased with the continued enthusiasm of the 124 recruited residents in the Kent area and help from the nine recruited orchard farmers throughout 2012.

Norfolk and East Lothian (arable)

The adverse weather conditions have also presented numerous challenges for arable farmers in the East Lothian and Norfolk areas. Whether this year's yields in wheat and barley (the two crops of primary interest to the project) will fair any better than those in 2011 will not be known until harvest time. Southwesters and other storm gear are certainly becoming the common summertime fashion of Norfolk in 2012!

Five enthusiastic farmers and 92 residents agreed to participate in the study in Norfolk. Some 44 residents and 5 farms in East Lothian were invited to participate in the project during 2012. In both areas we have collected a great deal of useful information and data.

Ongoing plans for all study areas

Sample collections in all three study areas have progressed extremely well and we have now temporarily suspended our weekly sample collections in most areas. Sample collections will resume later in the year (exact period to be decided) for 3 weeks although our community researchers may ask participants to provide a few additional samples beforehand.

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

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.

Urine sample analysis will continue throughout 2012.

Publications / conference presentations

Our study protocol is now publically available and can be obtained from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/11/856>.

We have presented at the following UK conferences during 2012.

- 6th UK and Ireland Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology meeting, London, 22nd March 2012
- 7th International Conference on the Science of Exposure Assessment (X2012), Edinburgh, 2-5th July 2012

At both of these conferences we discussed our experiences of using community researchers on the project.

Copies of our conference presentations can be found on our website: www.pesticidebiomonitoring.org

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.

Contacts for further information

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Project website

www.pesticidebiomonitoring.org