



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA

Government response to the Consultation on  
Restrictive measures on the use and sale of plant  
protection products containing the  
active ingredient Metaldehyde in Malta

*8th February 2021*

*Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights  
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# Executive Summary

## Introduction and overview

### 1. A brief introduction about the subject.

The Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority has been approached by the Animal Health and Welfare Department with information on regular animal poisoning which has been reported using the plant protection products which contain the active substance Metaldeyde.

The active substance is very important for the agricultural industry since slugs and snails are pests which have negative impact on the agricultural produce in Malta. Slugs and snails use slime to travel. A humid environment makes it ideal for them since they need to secrete less slime to travel. As a result, slugs and snails prefer to travel after rainstorms, after irrigation and during the night. Slugs and snails thrive in climates where the humidity is 65% or higher. The average annual percentage of humidity in Malta is 76.0%, thus making the climate an ideal one for them.

Numerous incidents have been reported where plant protection products containing the active substance metaldehyde were used to poison domestic animals such as dogs and cats. When these animals ingest the pellets, toxicity develops very quickly. Signs of poisoning typically include vomiting, as a result of the metaldehyde irritating the lining of the stomach. Following such symptoms, the animals may become anxious and suffer from a fast heartbeat, increased breathing rates, salivation, tremors and ultimately organ failure.

Such incidents have taken place in public areas such as parks and streets. Pets have been poisoned during a walk or outing by the owners when ingesting metaldehyde pellets which would have been scattered in the different areas. Other incidents occurred also on stray animals, where food was spiked with metaldehyde pellets. Most of such incidents result in a long and painful death for the animals.

In addition, to the high risk imposed on pets and stray animals as a result of the misuse of these plant protection products, consideration should be taken that such uses could result in accidental poisoning of children. This is especially because most of the incidents happen in parks or other public areas. Young children tend to pick up things from the ground and place them in their mouths. Such practice may result in the ingestion of the pellets and eventual accidental poisoning of the child.

### 2. The public consultation date.

Include the objective and purpose of the public consultation.

On 6th January 2021, the Government published a consultation paper setting out proposals to restrict the sale of plant protection products containing metaldehyde only to dealers certified by the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCAA) and the use of plant protection products containing metaldehyde only by professional users certified by MCCAA.

3. This consultation sought views on:
- Restricting the distribution and sale of plant protection products containing metaldehyde to distributors certified by MCCA.
  - Restricting the use of plant protection products containing metaldehyde to professional users of plant protection products certified by MCCA.

## Responses to the consultation and process used to seek stakeholder views

This document is the Government Response to this consultation and sets out the Government's decisions on these matters.

4. The closing date of the public consultation. Which methods were used to receive the feedback. The total amount of responses. From whom you received the feedback.

The consultation closed on 8 February 2021. The consultation document and the reply form were available online and responses were accepted electronically. In total, there were 93 responses. These were received from across local authorities, NGOs and individuals. A list of respondents can be found at Annex A.

5. Include (if any) meetings with stakeholders and list who the stakeholders were.

An advisory meeting was held with the Pesticides Control Board who advised in favour of the implementation of the restrictions proposed.

## Summary of responses and decisions

The following is a summary of the consultation responses received. We would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to the consultation and participate in stakeholder meetings around the consultation exercise.

6. Statistics.

- Total feedback received: 93
- Total feedback received by individuals: 88
- Total feedback received by organisations: 5
- Total feedback received through email: 1
- Total feedback received through online form: 92
- Total feedback received by post: 0

7. Summary of feedback received.

All feedback received were in favour of the restriction of the plant protection product containing metaldehyde. Many respondents were of the opinion that the product should be completely banned. A respondent was concerned about the control of slugs and snails in small gardens. Suggestions that a register containing details and quantities purchased by users should be maintained were also received.

8. Your assessment and the Government's decision (list the Government's decisions).

Having reviewed the evidence on the severity and regular incidents of poisonings, and the negative impact of slugs and snails in the agricultural industry our assessment remains that:

- Sale and distribution of plant protection products containing metaldehyde should be restriction to dealers certified by MCCA.
- Use of plant protection products containing metaldehyde should be restricted to professional users certified by MCCA.

Our updated assessment indicates that the maintenance of a database by certified dealers containing the details of the professional users should further reduce the poisoning incidents.

In view of this and the evidence and opinions from the consultation exercise, the Government has decided to take the decisions as summarised below.

- Sale and distribution of plant protection products containing metaldehyde should be restriction to dealers certified by MCCA.
- Distributors of plant protection products containing metaldehyde shall maintain an up to date register containing the details of the professional user purchasing such products.
- Use of plant protection products containing metaldehyde should be restricted to professional users certified by MCCA.

## Implementation

9. When you intend to implement the decisions

MCCA intends to implement decision as from 8th February 2021, with the aim of the changes coming into force with immediate effect.

## Contact Details

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact:

[consultations.mccaa@mccaa.org.mt](mailto:consultations.mccaa@mccaa.org.mt)

## Annex A: List of respondents

<b>Organisation</b>
Animal Welfare Council
Environment and Resources Authority
Nature Trust
Time for change
Real Animal Rights Foundation
Private Individuals (88)