



## NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2021

### 1 Asulam EA Application

- 1.1 The EA Application for the 2022 bracken control season was submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021.
- 1.2 NE, NatureScot and UPL are providing additional information, which will be submitted in January.
- 1.3 After some discussion, NI will be included in the application. A small amount of Asulam was used in NI in 2021 and agri-environment schemes are in place that specify continuing use of Asulam.
- 1.4 The application will be considered by the ECP on 8 March 2022.
- 1.5 The application process will include a review of:
  - 1.5.1 The width of the aerial spraying buffer zone against surface water bodies will be reviewed as part of the application process. A reduction from the previous width of 90m is hoped for.
  - 1.5.2 Duration of any EA Approval. To provide more certainty and ease the bureaucratic burden, a pitch has been made to extend any approval, beyond a single season.
  - 1.5.3 Restrictions on ground-based application of asulam. Removal of the restrictions that only allow ground-based application on designated sites has been requested. This is linked to the view taken about the suitability of amidosulfuron for widespread ground-based application (more detail in Briefing No.14 – see para 3.2).

### 2 Bracken Control Records

- 2.1 It is clear that accurate information of the amount of bracken controlled with pesticides is required to support the applications for future use.
- 2.2 A good start has been made with records in 2020 and 2021, but the completeness of these records must be improved. Support from all parts of the bracken control industry is required to achieve this. If we cannot provide accurate records it is much less likely that pesticide approvals will be granted in future.
- 2.3 Lessons learned from 2021 will be collated so that improvements can be made in 2022.

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### **3 Research**

- 3.1 Reprise reports from the National Bracken Chemical Control Trials have been published on the BCG website. These set out the effectiveness and impact of a range of different pesticides on different sites that formed part of these trials.
- 3.2 BCG Briefing No.14 (Asulox vs Amidosulfuron – Interim Findings) has been updated to provide a summary of the effectiveness and concerns surrounding the use of these two pesticides. This is interim information, as more evidence will be available next year, after the surveying of the trial plots established in 2021 at Lowna on the North York Moors.
- 3.3 An ongoing research programme is under consideration to address such issues as the benefits from the use of adjuvants, the impact of follow-up treatments (pesticide / physical).
- 3.4 Through the Drone Stakeholder Group, established by HSE, the BCG is supporting the development of drones for bracken control.
- 3.5 The BCG is keen to support the wider use of hand-held equipment for pesticide treatment of small areas of bracken or for secondary, follow-up operations. Work on this is planned for 2022.
- 3.6 The area of bracken cover within the UK is not clearly defined. Further work is proposed to provide the best possible data about coverage and trends.

### **4 Conservation Agencies Bracken Control Strategy**

- 4.1 The BCG is offering to set up a discussion about developing a UK approach to bracken control between the four UK conservation agencies.

### **5 Livestock Exclusion**

- 5.1 The approval for the use of asulam has contained a requirement to exclude stock from the treated area for a period of one month after treatment. This restriction is connected to concerns about asulam entering the food chain.
- 5.2 Exclusion is difficult to achieve, or is totally impractical, in many areas, particularly on large areas of land which has many graziers, such as crofting or common land.
- 5.3 It is proposed to consider different management options that could be considered to offer an acceptable level of assurance that asulam would not enter the food chain, as a result of stock grazing on treated areas.
- 5.4 A task group formed from BCG supporters with appropriate experience is proposed to develop this concept.

### **6 Integrated Pest Management**

- 6.1 It is proposed to develop a short protocol to set out a decision-making process to select the most appropriate form of bracken control in each location.