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Canegrubs are the most significant economic pest of sugarcane in Australia and without effective control they can cause significant production losses. In 2000 and 2001 approximately one million tonnes of cane was lost to damage from canegrubs which, at current prices, would cost the industry in excess of \$50M.

Imidacloprid in products like suSCon Maxi Intel, Confidor Guard, and Nuprid for example, is our most effective tool for controlling canegrubs. Like all chemicals, it needs to be applied and managed correctly to ensure it continues to be effective and that canegrubs don't build resistance to it. Removal of imidacloprid would have significant economic consequences for the sugar industry.

SRA is investing in research to improve stewardship and find alternatives that reduce our reliance on this single chemical.

However, in the interim, the industry remains strongly reliant on imidacloprid and in order to ensure ongoing access to this essential canegrub control measure, we need to ensure that it is used in the most effective and compliant way.

A key challenge is that imidacloprid continues to be detected at water quality monitoring sites in a number of sugarcane areas.

The good news is that recent SRA research suggests that when imidacloprid is placed correctly using the right implement, levels in surface runoff are extremely low. Therefore, correct and precise application is important.

There are three key steps that we can take to improve our stewardship of imidacloprid:

- Ensure the product is used only in soils prone to canegrubs based on an infestation risk assessment (digging method, assessment of visual crop symptoms, or knowledge of field history and likelihood of canegrub infestation);
- Ensure correct product placement (rate, depth and consistency) to maximise efficacy and minimise the runoff risk; and
- Ensure we only use the product for canegrub control.

Given the importance of this issue, SRA is leading a new project aimed to ensure best practice use of imidacloprid for canegrub control. This project is a collaboration between SRA, the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, productivity services companies, CANEGROWERS, the Australian Cane Farmers Association, Bayer and NuFarm. It is funded through the Queensland Government *Enhanced Extension Coordination Training and Development* program.



The first step in this project is to work with growers to get their perspectives on this issue and to better understand what they do, why they do it and where things can be improved.

In coming weeks, staff from SRA and productivity services companies will be talking to a cross-section of growers in your region to get a better understanding of canegrub management.

You can help by getting involved in this project and help us achieve efficient and effective canegrub control based on best practice. Participation is completely voluntary, but we would appreciate your assistance in working with us on this important industry issue.

All individual information will be kept confidential, and aggregated data only will be used to review the effectiveness of current canegrub management, improve extension strategies and identify research gaps in relation to canegrub control.

If you have any questions, please contact me on imcbean@sugarresearch.com.au or (07) 4056 4530.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Ian McBean

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