

June 2025

Glyphosate Frequently Asked Questions:

What is glyphosate?

Glyphosate is the active substance in many herbicides (weed killers) and is widely used around the world. It is a non-selective, systemic herbicide /weedkiller and was first used in the UK in 1976. Glyphosate is effective in controlling most weed species including perennials and grasses in many situations including amenity, forestry, aquatic and industrial situations. It is used by lots of people from farmers to foresters to gardeners to biologists trying to control invasive exotic plants.

Since it is approved for use in many countries, it has been subject to extensive testing and regulatory assessment in the EU, USA and elsewhere, and by the World Health Organisation.

Is glyphosate an organophosphate?

In pure chemical terms glyphosate is an organophosphate in that it is an organic molecule and contains a phosphyl group. It is however, very similar in structure to glycine which is an essential amino acid hence its chemical name N-(phosphonomethyl) glycine. It does not affect the nervous system in the way that other, now restricted organophosphate anticholinesterase, chemicals do, and does not cause the same effects on human health.

Is the use of glyphosate banned in the United Kingdom?

As part of the EU, the UK was included in a process that was reviewing the current European licence for use of glyphosate as this is due to expire in Dec 2022. Leaving the EU has resulted in the Health and Safety Executive remaining the principal regulator for Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). As part of the EU exit, regulations granted a 3 year extension to any licence which expired within 3 years of the transition. This has resulted in glyphosate being licenced for use in the UK until 15 Dec 2025.

Is glyphosate harmful to Human Health?

The widespread adoption of glyphosate-based products is due not only to their effectiveness and extensive economic and environmental benefits, but also due to the strong safety profile of the products. When it comes to safety assessments, glyphosate is among the most extensively tested pesticides on the market. Evaluations spanning more than 40 years, and the overwhelming conclusion of experts and regulators worldwide, support the safety of glyphosate and that glyphosate does not cause cancer. Experts from

World Health Organisation (WHO) and 27 of the 28 EU member states (pre UK exit) have concluded that Glyphosate does not pose a carcinogenic risk when used in accordance with its label instructions or from exposure through diet. However, this is a debate that continues after US courts ruled against a glyphosate producer.

The diluted use of glyphosate applied in accordance with the label instructions and licence conditions is generally considered to be very low risk.

Is glyphosate harmful to Animals?

Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide, meaning it will kill most plants. It prevents the plants from making certain proteins that are needed for plant growth. Glyphosate stops a specific enzyme pathway, the shikimic acid pathway. The shikimic acid pathway is necessary for plants and some microorganisms. This process does not exist in animals so the product is considered to have little or no impact when used in accordance with the directions.

We would however recommend that pets are not allowed to come into contact with freshly sprayed weeds until such time as the spray has dried. Excessive ingestion could lead to mild effects such as vomiting or diarrhoea but this is considered low risk at the diluted levels used for weed treatment in public areas.

Is glyphosate harmful to Honey Bees?

Glyphosate products have been extensively tested in the laboratory and in the field to evaluate potential toxicity to honey bees. This extensive testing has found that glyphosate products pose no acute or chronic adverse effects to honey bees. A comprehensive study in 2014 found no adverse effects on adult bee survival or bee brood survival or development in honeybee colonies treated with glyphosate at levels that exceed environmentally realistic exposures.

Weed spraying is only used on paved and hard surfaces for the management of weeds, such as footways. It is not used as a general treatment for highway verges except when a particularly invasive species requires management to protect our native verge plants.

Will there be any harm to the lizard population?

Whilst it is not considered that glyphosate would be harmful to lizards at the dilution levels used in public spaces, weed spraying is not used to treat vegetation on or next to the walls or other features that lizards populate. Manual methods are adopted to deal with these areas as they fall within a different area of maintenance requirements.

What controls are in place on the use of glyphosate in public spaces?

The risks associated with the use of pesticides in amenity areas such as parks are specifically considered as part of the UK authorisation process.

Legally enforceable conditions of use are imposed on the way products can be applied, to ensure the public are not exposed to levels of pesticides that would harm health or have unacceptable effects on the environment. It is important that users (or those who cause or permit others to use pesticides) not only comply with the authorised conditions of use but also use products in a responsible and sustainable fashion.

The responsible use of pesticides in amenity areas as part of an integrated programme of control can help deliver substantial benefits for society. These include: management of conservation areas, invasive species and flood risks; access to high quality sporting facilities; and safe public

spaces (for example, by preventing weed growth on hard surfaces creating trip hazards), industrial sites and transport infrastructure.

Why do we use quadbikes?

Quadbikes are used in the weed spraying process as this removes the need for our people to carry a heavy backpack containing the diluted weed treatment. We are required to consider the manual handling regulations and also look after the wellbeing of our employees. The quadbike also allows the teams to move easily between locations resulting in the work being completed in less time with less disruption to network users.

The spray is still applied by a hand lance controlled by the operator in a similar manner to a normal back pack spray system. Whilst the quadbikes may move quickly between locations, all spraying is required to be done at low speed to ensure direct application to the foliage of the weeds being treated. Blanket spraying is not appropriate or economically viable.

In some areas, it is necessary to use the quadbikes on footways or pedestrian areas. This is done in accordance with the legal provisions for such activity (Highways Act 1980 Section 300) and our crews are trained to do this in a way that is safe and considerate giving priority to footway users.

What product do we use?

We use Gallup Hi-Aktiv. This is a product that is available as a strong concentrate of glyphosate, normally 490g glyphosate per litre which means the active ingredient is already 50% diluted. As part of the application process, this product is mixed with water at a ratio between 2ml and 4ml per litre of water. This results in 2% or less of the applied spray being the active glyphosate ingredient.

Our specially trained teams conduct this mixing in a controlled way utilising all the necessary safety equipment.

When do we treat the weeds?

Our weed treatment is normally done 3 times a year in April, June and September and it takes approximately 3 weeks to complete each time. Spraying requires the correct weather, so treatment is limited during rain or windy conditions.

You can visit our website for more details about any of our services www.islandroads.com