



Snuffles Hedgehog Rescue
Four Oaks
Tel: Claire Hunt on 07889770958

Snuffles Hedgehog Rescue - Alternatives to slug pellets
Fact sheet 2 – Nematodes



What are they?

Nematodes are the most abundant creatures living in soil. A handful of soil will contain thousands of these microscopic worms, many of them acting as parasites on insects, plants or animals. Gardeners that are concerned about using toxic products because of the impact on wildlife will often use nematodes to control garden pests.

How do they work?

If you apply nematodes to the pest - either in the soil or on the plant - the nematode ejects bacteria inside the pest's body. These bacteria multiply and cause blood poisoning, leading to death. The host tissue is then fed on by the nematodes, and as they feed they multiply, and immediately start searching for a new host.

This is a biological, none chemical form of slug management and does not involve highly toxic poisons. It also has the advantage of being reasonably specific to the target pest, so that other wildlife are not affected. You need to choose the right nematode for the issue you are tackling. Nemaslug is a commonly used product that specifically targets slugs. Nematodes aren't the cheapest option of slug management but using them will reduce the number of painful deaths of hedgehogs, birds and other wildlife as a result of eating slugs killed by conventional slug pellets and slug management techniques. Nematodes come with detailed instructions, which need to be precisely followed.

How to use nematodes

It is important to choose the correct nematode for the right type of pest. They also need to be used in the right conditions. Thus is usually when the soil is above 5C (and will remain so) and when pests are active. Nematodes are also light sensitive, so use them early morning or dusk, when light levels are low.

Nematodes usually arrive in a sachet suspended in a paste. It is best to use them straight away, however you can store them in the fridge for up to a few weeks (do not freeze). Mix the paste with a small amount of water to make a slurry, before

adding the rest of the water. Stir the solution once again before applying. If you use a watering can, use a coarse rose, to make sure that the nematodes don't get stuck in the holes.

Keep the soil moist and warm for at least a few weeks, to make sure that the nematodes remain active. You may have to make repeat applications - especially when treating slugs.

How Long Does It Take To See Results?

Results can be seen usually within 3 to 7 days, with maximum effect occurring over 2 to 4 weeks. Nematodes tend to disintegrate the pests from the inside out, so you will not see so many dead bodies as you would with conventional chemical products.

How Often Should Nematodes Be Applied?

Nematodes are recommended for use whenever slugs are present and re-application at intervals is recommended as per instructions.

Benefits of using nematodes

- Totally organic and environmentally friendly.
- Completely harmless to children, pets, birds, and wildlife.
- Perfectly safe to use around food crops.
- The slug retreats underground before it dies, so you aren't left with an abundance of dead slugs on the surface.
- Dead slugs eaten by other creatures are non-toxic.
- Impossible to over-apply.
- Works well in wet weather; *exactly* the conditions where slugs are most active and destructive, and *exactly* the conditions that render poison pellets less effective.
- Compatible with most garden chemicals – including fertilisers – although it's best to apply them at different times.
- You're not introducing foreign entities into your garden; simply 'topping up' the good microbes that are already there.
- You get the same benefits that commercial growers have been enjoying for over twenty years.

Where can I get Nematodes?

Nematodes generally have to be bought from a supplier online www.nematodesdirect.co.uk One source in the West Midlands is at Ryton Organic Gardens in Coventry www.gardenorganic.org.uk/nematodes

Garden Organic, Ryton Gardens, Wolston Lane, Coventry, Warwickshire CV8 3LG
Tel: 02476 303517