

UK National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS)

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The NSTS was launched in the UK in 2003. Base on the scheme launched in 1997 by the AEA. NSTS was launched as part of the UK's Voluntary Initiative (VI) – a range of measures agreed with Government to reduce the effects of pesticides on the environment.

The NSTS is an annual independent inspection of spraying and application equipment, undertaken by a qualified examiner to an agreed protocol and applies to both new and machines in use. The protocol has been devised following discussion by machine manufacturers, farming unions and contractors as well as other stakeholders involved with the VI. The protocol also takes into consideration the requirements of EN13790 although does not mirror all requirements.

Since launch NSTS has become a requirement of the UK crop assurance schemes and major supermarket protocols. Requiring all farmers and growers selling produce through either have to have the sprayers tested by NSTS.

Since launch NSTS has carried out over 60,000 tests on application machinery. The annual number accounts for machines covering 85% of the sprayed area of the UK. The majority come from arable farming, although a significant numbers of machines working in horticulture and amenity are also tested. NSTS majors on vehicle mounted machines.

NSTS has recently devised protocols for machines applying granular pesticides, fogging machines and slug pellet applicators.

NSTS has 568 qualified machine examiners working out of 334 registered UK based test centres. The NSTS test is also carried out in Germany, Denmark and Netherlands by those manufacturers supplying the UK market. NSTS tested machine are also working in many countries worldwide.

All NSTS tests are entered onto a database which holds details of the machine, owners name and address, faults found and rectified. Crop assurance certification bodies have access to this database for verification purposes.

For further details of NSTS and a full list of test centres visit: www.nsts.org.uk