

April 2013 - issue 08

Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

This issue includes guidance on how to make water abstraction returns, changes to the requirements for electronic reporting of cattle births; deaths and movements; information about the forthcoming changes to NVZ rules; and details about how to sign up for FAS services.

We hope you find the information in this issue helpful. If you have any comments or ideas for topics you'd like us to cover, please let us know.

If you would like to sign-up to receive the FAS newsletter straight to your inbox, please email bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk with 'Register for newsletter' in the subject line. Your details will not be shared with any third parties.

FAS technical advice line:

Telephone: 0845 345 1302

Email: advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Website: www.defra.gov.uk/farming-advice

**Farming
Advice Service**

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Water abstraction licences

Reporting water abstraction

Farmers who hold abstraction licences are required to record the amount of water they abstract and submit the information to the Environment Agency (EA).

Records of abstraction are generally referred to as 'returns'. Your return can be, for example, water meter readings or actual volumes abstracted. Depending on their licence conditions and the quantity of water that they are allowed to abstract, most farmers will need to keep weekly or monthly records of the actual amount of water they take and submit annual returns as shown in Table 1.

Ways of submitting a return

- **Paper form** – the EA sends out a paper form to abstractors. When completed with the details of water abstracted, the form is sent back to the EA.
- **Generic Operator Returns (GOR) [online](#) reporting system** – water abstraction returns can be submitted online by completing the web screens or using the water resource GOR spreadsheet application.

Paper forms and online returns are pre-populated with information about your return, making it quicker for you to complete your submission. If you are a winter/all-year abstractor, you should have received a paper form for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013, unless you have requested to use the online service.

If you are interested in using the online service for your November 2013 and/or April 2014 submission, please e mail WR_Systems_Team@environment-agency.gov.uk quoting your abstraction licence number.

Table 1: Water abstraction return dates

When can you abstract water?	This means you are referred to as a...	When does the EA ask you for your return?	When do you need to submit returns by?
Wholly between 1 April and 31 October	Summer abstractor	End of October each year	30 November each year
Not wholly between 1 April and 31 October	Winter/all-year abstractor	End of March each year	30 April each year

How returns are used

Once submitted, the information is used for:

- charging;
- checking compliance with licence conditions; and
- resource management

Charging (two-part tariff)

Returns are used for two-part tariff billing. If you abstract water for irrigation, you may be able to get a reduction in your annual bill by applying for a two-part tariff agreement. If your application is successful you will, for example, get 50% off your bill per year if you do not abstract any water and submit a 'nil' return.

Compliance

Water abstraction licence conditions are set to manage the balance between human use and environmental needs. The EA assesses compliance with the conditions and prefers to work with licence holders to resolve compliance issues. However, if licence conditions are breached, further action can be taken to protect the environment and other water users. Abstractions for spray irrigation fall under Cross Compliance Good Agricultural Environmental Condition (GAEC) 18 – Water Abstraction. The EA can use the returns you submit to report compliance issues to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA).

Resource management

Information on abstracted volumes is used to assess the impact that abstraction has on river flows or wetland sites, helping to manage water resources across England and Wales. Returns also help the EA and partners to assess present and likely future demand for water.

If you have any enquiries regarding your water abstraction licence or returns, please contact the EA on 03708 506 506 (Mon-Fri, 8am – 6pm) or email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Opportunities to partner with FAS

To minimise demands on farmers' time, FAS actively seeks to partner with other providers of farm advice to ensure activities are well coordinated and integrated where possible.

If you would like to discuss the provision of free expert speakers to groups and events in England, please e-mail bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk. Please give the subject of the presentation (e.g. 'Competitiveness') and details of the event (date, time, address).

Updated Cattle Identification Regulations

Following a successful national pilot on the extension of electronic reporting of cattle births, movements and deaths to the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has amended the Cattle Identification Regulations 2007. Now, if you electronically report the death of an animal, you do not have to complete the details in the passport, but the passport itself must still be returned to the BCMS within 7 days of the death.

The only exception is for animals slaughtered on a farm and are subsequently transported to a slaughterhouse for dressing. In such cases, farmers need to complete the death details in the passport and send it with the animal to the slaughterhouse.

Farmers can report cattle births, movements or deaths using one of the following methods:

- CTS Online;
- farm software approved by the Secretary of State;
- CTS Self Service Line – an automated telephone service;
- via an agent; or
- in writing.

More information is available in the [BCMS Cattle Keeper's Handbook](#).

If you do not have a copy, you can download one from the [RPA website](#) or request a hard copy from BCMS by calling the helpline on 0845 050 1234.

Review of environmental advice, incentives, partnership approaches for the farming sector in England

Defra has issued a final report setting out plans to deliver a more streamlined framework of advice, incentives and partnership approaches for farmers and land managers. This work is in response to Defra's 2012 – 2015 Business Plan and Natural Environment White paper commitments. The report can be located on the Defra [website](#).

Put your tractors on a diet!

Is your tractor using too much diesel? Are escalating fuel prices eroding your profit margins? If so, are you really doing all you can to improve your fuel efficiency? Over the last year, farmers and foresters from across Europe have been exploring simple ways to reduce their diesel consumption, and have achieved savings of up to 25% for specific field work. Their findings, published as a set of case studies by the Efficient20 project, illustrate how economies can be achieved by ordinary farmers and not just by those working under research or laboratory conditions.

While the fuel-saving techniques that were tried, such as reducing tyre pressures for field work, reducing engine rpm, adjusting ballast and changing tyre size are far from revolutionary, many farms don't take the time to fully apply these and, hence, miss out on making real savings.

Copies of the [Put Your Tractors on a Diet!](#) case studies and [Efficient20's fuel saving guide](#) are available via the Efficient20 website <http://uk.efficient20.eu>



NVZ record keeping – are you up to date?

If you are in an NVZ, then by 30 April each year you must have the following records in place:

- the area of the farm;
- the number of livestock kept on your farm during the previous calendar year and calculations of the amount of nitrogen that they produced during this period ([leaflet 5](#));
- the number and type of livestock in a building or hard standing during the previous storage period ([leaflet 4](#));
- imports/exports of slurry or poultry manure during the previous storage period; and
- the dates and location of any field sites used for storing solid manure ([leaflet 4](#)).

Further information on record-keeping requirements can be found in the current [NVZ guidance documents](#).

NVZ changes in 2013

The rules that you must follow in NVZs are changing in May 2013. This is also the time that the changes to NVZ designations will apply from. The latest information on the introduction of new NVZ regulations and the grassland derogation can be viewed on the [GOV.UK website](#).

A guidance booklet to set out the latest NVZ rules will be available from the 15 May 2013 when the new regulations are expected to come into force.

FAS events

All of the FAS events are advertised on our website, so please keep an eye on the [events page](#) as this will be updated when further events have been organised.



Register for free text message updates

We use text messages to get relevant information to farmers quickly. We send reminders of approaching key dates or updates in response to current events (e.g. flooding). To register for FREE text message updates, please call 0845 345 1302 or email bookings@farmingadvice.service.org.uk with 'Register for text updates' in the subject line. Don't forget to include your name and mobile phone number in the message. Your details will not be shared with third parties.



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Key dates

16 April	You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium in upland areas from this date. (GAEC 10)
30 April	You must have recorded the number of 'specified' livestock kept on your farm during the previous calendar year and calculated the amount of nitrogen they produced. You must also record the number and type of livestock in a building or hard standing during the previous storage period. (SMR 4)
1 May	You must not carry out hedge-laying or coppicing of hedgerows from this date. (GAEC 15)
15 May	New NVZ regulations come into force and new guidance material available (SMR4)

