



Rural Payments
Agency

Hedgerow management rules

Protecting hedgerows on or
next to agricultural land

Why are hedgerows important?

- Hedgerows are important ecological building blocks across our landscapes and vital features of the English countryside.
- They provide habitat, food for birds and other species, create shade for animals and are home to beneficial insects which predate crop pests and support an integrated pest management approach.
- They can also act as wildlife corridors, linking areas of woodland and other habitat so species can move from one habitat to another.
- Hedgerows also offer wider environmental benefits, such as slowing soil erosion, reducing water run-off, storing carbon and improving resilience to climate change impacts.

Which hedgerows are affected?

The regulations apply to hedgerows that are on or next to land used for agriculture that are:

- a continuous length of 20 metres or more
- less than 20 metres but meets another hedgerow at each end

‘Agriculture’ includes land used for horticulture, seed growing, dairy farming, breeding and keeping livestock (including horses and ponies), grazing land, market gardens, nursery grounds and allotments.

Farmers, landowners and contractors are the largest group affected by these regulations.

However, it is important to note that the rules could apply to any person responsible for the hedgerow. This includes owners and tenants and anyone employed, engaged or otherwise acting on behalf of those responsible.

The rules apply if a hedgerow is growing on, or next to, land used for agriculture. This could include hedgerows which are on agricultural land which borders other land such as golf courses and village halls.

What do the regulations mean for me?

Cutting and trimming rules

You must not cut or trim a hedgerow from **1 March to 31 August** (inclusive). This is to protect active bird nests during this time.

Buffer strip rules

You must establish and maintain green cover in a 2-metre buffer strip measured from the centre of the hedgerow. You must not cultivate or apply pesticides or fertilisers within this buffer strip. This is to prevent harm to the structure and health of the hedgerow caused by the cultivation of land or the spraying of chemicals.

Exemptions from the rules

There are some exemptions from the rules. You can find more information about exemptions on GOV.UK

The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024

The regulations came into force on 23 May 2024 to strengthen the protections on hedgerows. The rules now protect all hedgerows on or next to agricultural land in England.

RPA is the regulator for these rules.

More information

You can find more information about the rules, when exemptions apply and what you need to do, on the [Hedgerow management rules: cutting and trimming](#) and [Hedgerow management rules: buffer strips](#) pages on GOV.UK

What is RPA's regulatory approach?

We will provide advice and guidance to help people comply with the rules and prevent harm to the environment.

Where advice and guidance does not result in compliance, we will take proportionate, consistent and risk-based approaches to enforce the regulations using the legal powers available to us. There may also be some circumstances where advice and guidance alone is not appropriate.

To find out more about RPA's regulatory approach and use of civil sanctions, read [Regulatory approach and use of civil sanctions for the Management of Hedgerows \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) on GOV.UK

Contact RPA:

Rural Payments Agency
PO Box 69
Reading
RG1 3YD

Please note that this address is for enquiries only and should not be used for the return of forms or any other supporting evidence.

Email: ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk
RPA helpline: 03000 200 301
Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm