

Farming
Advice Service

Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter Thank you for subscribing

If you do not already receive the Farming Advice Service (FAS) newsletter straight to your inbox, but would like to, please email bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk with 'Register for newsletter' in the subject line. Your details will not be shared with any third parties.

Contact us

FAS technical advice line: 03000 200 301

advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

www.gov.uk/government/groups/farming-advice-service

We will now be publishing the newsletter on a monthly basis rather than every other month. Please contact us with any feedback or suggestions on topics you would like to see in future editions.

*We would be grateful if you could spare a few moments to complete this **short survey** on the new layout of the FAS newsletter*

June 2020 - Issue 52

Key dates

How can FAS help you?

Livestock registration and identification

Coronavirus: information for

farmers, landowners and rural businesses

Farming Rules for Water: Rule 7 -

Protecting against soil erosion by livestock

Buffer strip management

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Water abstraction information

Environmental Land Management scheme consultation reopens

Sign up to FAS services

Key dates

Below are details of recent and forthcoming key dates that you should be aware of.

1 May	In addition to the closed period for cutting or trimming hedges or trees, which started on 1 March and ends on 31 August (inclusive), you must not carry out hedge or tree coppicing, or hedge laying between 1 May and 31 August (inclusive). (GAEC* 7a and GAEC 7c)
1 May	Ecological Focus Area (EFA) period for nitrogen fixing crops begins (until 30 June). (BPS** 2020)
15 June	The deadline for submitting BPS applications, without penalty, was midnight on 15 June. (BPS 2020)
15 June	The deadline for making a claim for Countryside Stewardship (CS), Environmental Stewardship (ES) and woodland legacy revenue payments, without penalty, was midnight on 15 June. (BPS 2020)
30 June	The deadline for requesting an online application pack for Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier. (GOV.UK)
30 June	The deadline for making amendments to BPS applications submitted by midnight on 15 June, without penalty , is midnight on 30 June. (BPS 2020)
30 June	The deadline for making amendments to a claim for CS, ES and woodland legacy revenue payments submitted by midnight 15 June, without penalty , is midnight 30 June. (BPS 2020)
10 July	The final deadline for making amendments to BPS applications submitted by midnight on 15 June, with penalties , is 10 July. (BPS 2020)
10 July	The final deadline for making amendments to a claim for CS, ES and woodland legacy revenue payments, submitted by midnight on 15 June, with penalties , is 10 July. (BPS 2020)

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, please visit the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2020](#) and [Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2020](#) pages of [GOV.UK](#).

* GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions

** BPS = Basic Payment Scheme

How can FAS help you?



Free and confidential advice
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) regulations require an advisory system covering cross compliance, greening, water protection and aspects of pesticide use. In England, this is provided by the Farming Advice Service (FAS). Under these regulations, the advice given to individual farmers must be **confidential** – that is, FAS **must not** disclose any personal or individual information, or data it obtains during its advisory activity.

FAS updates the farming sector on relevant EU and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) policies. It explains the requirements under and objectives of CAP, EU directives, national legislation and policies; and the actions that can

be taken to help meet compliance. FAS provides **free, confidential** advice on cross compliance and the greening requirements, some aspects of the Water Framework Directive (such as silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil (SSAFO) and waste exemptions) and the Sustainable Use (of pesticides) Directive.

The cross compliance rules apply to you if you are a Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship claimant.

Getting in contact with the advice line

Farmers requiring telephone advice from FAS can contact the **Rural Services Helpline** on **03000 200 301** Monday to Friday between **08:30** and **17:00**. In light of the current situation, please be assured that our helpline will be operating as normal and we will continue to support farmers.

The Rural Services Helpline provides a single number for all **FAS, Rural Payments Agency, Animal and Plant Health Agency, Natural England and forestry** enquiries. By providing a single point of contact, the Government aims to make it simpler for farmers to access technical guidance on a range of topics, including cross compliance, greening, CAP payments and animal health inspections.

You can also email enquiries to advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Livestock registration, identification and movements

If you keep cattle, sheep or goats, you are required to record certain information about them, such as date of birth, identification details and movements onto or off your holding. This is done to help control the spread of disease and enable them to be traced, and is required as part of cross compliance Statutory Management Requirement (SMR) 7 (cattle identification and registration) and SMR 8 (sheep and goat identification).

Livestock top tips

FAS has produced top tips to address the most common non-compliances identified during cross compliance inspections:

- SMR 7: [Top tips for compliance with cattle identification](#);
- SMR 8: [Top tips for compliance with sheep and goat identification](#).

Holding registers

There are blank sample holding registers available for cattle, and sheep and goats that will provide

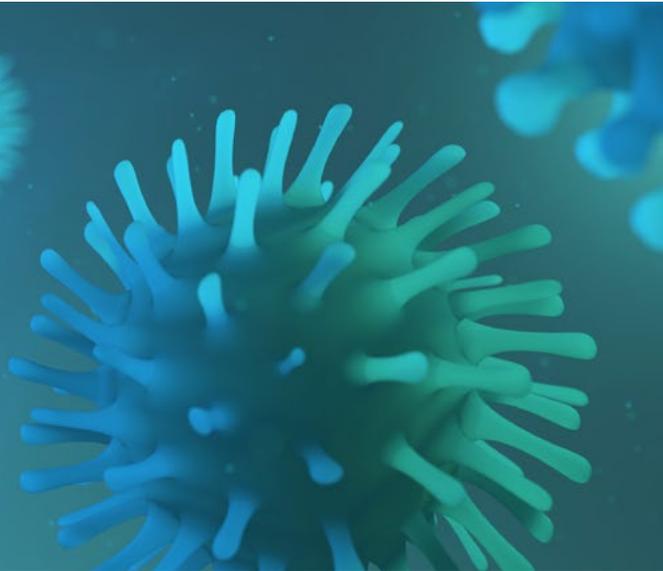
a clear template for capturing the information you require for your livestock records. You can use these as evidence at inspection that you have been compliant with the requirements.

- for cattle, please click [here](#);
- for sheep and goats, please click [here](#).

If you have any questions or require further support, please contact the FAS helpline by telephone 03000 200 301 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk.



Coronavirus: information for farmers, landowners and rural businesses



To find out what to do if you are self-employed, an employer, need to self-isolate, wish to travel or just want to find out more about the Government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19), you should visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). This page is updated regularly with the very latest information and guidance as it becomes available.

If you are worried about your health or the health of others, you can find medical advice on the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk).

To find out about social distancing at work and, in particular, in relation to visiting a farm for animal health and welfare reasons, please go to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has a dedicated page for COVID-19 on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) where updates are posted for farmers, landowners and rural businesses. It is important to check this page regularly.

The RPA has also produced a document available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) that provides information on how to submit applications, claims and supporting documents during the COVID-19 outbreak, and updates on scheme deadlines.

Contacting the RPA

In line with Government guidance, the RPA's offices remain closed and staff continue to work from home. To ensure you are following Government guidance on social distancing, **please do not visit RPA offices** (even if it is to hand in documentation). Instead, please use [online or electronic](#) options where you can. Please remember, the RPA can only accept emails from email addresses registered with the [Rural Payments Service](#). The subject line of your email should clearly state what your email is regarding and your Single Business Identifier (SBI) to ensure it gets to the correct department.

Recent updates for farmers, landowners and rural businesses

Below is a summary of some of the updates that have been provided by the RPA on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) as a result of COVID-19:

- **Farm visits and inspections.** On 1 June, a [phased return](#) was introduced for on-farm visits and site inspections, starting with Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship schemes.
- **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS).** CBILS supports farmers facing difficulties during this challenging period. For details on eligibility and how to apply, please go to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).
- **Bridging payments for Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship agreement holders.** These interest-free loans have now been issued by the RPA for Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship 2019

revenue claims to ensure farmers and land managers are paid for the important work they do to protect the environment. For more information, please go to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

- **New fund for the dairy industry.** England's dairy farmers will be able to access up to £10,000 each to help them overcome the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. Please read the press release on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for more information.
- **Temporary relaxation of dairy competition laws.** The Government will temporarily relax elements of UK competition law to support the dairy industry through the COVID-19 outbreak. Please go to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for more information on this.
- **COVID-19 and spreading slurry or milk on land, or storing slurry (Regulatory Position Statement C12).** If you are experiencing supply-chain disruption as result of COVID-19, and you need to spread slurry and milk produced on your farm to land, you must comply with certain regulatory requirements. For full details on eligibility, please refer to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).
- **Spreading or recycling treated sewage sludge (biosolids).** According to the latest advice from the World Health Organization (WHO) (April 2020), there is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus has been transmitted via sewage with or without wastewater treatment. Further guidance on best practice can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Please sign up [here](#) to receive email alerts when information changes on the RPA pages.

Farming Rules for Water: Rule 7 – Protecting against soil erosion by livestock

Since 2 April 2018, all farmers in England have had to comply with rules aimed at protecting water quality. The rules introduced an approach to regulating farm practices that, in time, might be rolled out to reduce other environmental impacts beyond water quality. There are [eight rules in total](#) (five about managing fertilisers and manures, and three on managing soils). We will be featuring an article on each of these rules at the relevant times of the year. This is the third article in the series and covers Rule 7. You can find information on Rules 3, 4 and 5 in the [May FAS newsletter](#), and information on Rule 1 in the [April FAS newsletter](#).

Rule 7 - Any land within 5 metres of inland freshwaters and coastal waters must be protected from significant soil erosion by preventing poaching (trampling) by livestock. The regulations define significant soil erosion as that which is at least 2 metres wide and 20 metres long.

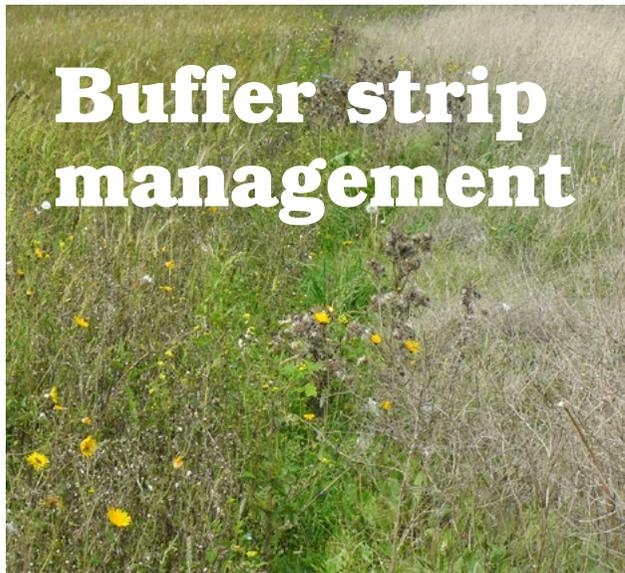
Examples on how to prevent this include:

- moving livestock regularly to prevent poaching and bankside erosion – find out [how inspectors check](#) you are complying with the rules;
- putting up fences to keep animals away from watercourses;
- out-wintering livestock on well-drained, level fields.

For detailed guidance on the Farming Rules for Water, please visit [GOV.UK](#).

FAS has produced a suite of resources to help you understand the Farming Rules for Water, including a [technical article](#) and a webinar recording, poster and Q&A document that can be accessed [here](#). All the FAS resources are free and if you require further support, please contact the FAS helpline by telephone 03000 200 301 or email advice@farmingadvice.service.org.uk





Under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) 1 (Establishment of buffer strips along watercourses) and GAEC 7a (Boundaries), cross compliance protection zones (also known as buffer strips or green cover) must be established and maintained to protect watercourses and hedgerows against pollution and runoff from agricultural sources. For watercourses, the buffer strip should measure 2 metres from the centre of the watercourse or field ditch, or 1 metre from the edge of the watercourse or field ditch to the landward side of the top of the bank. For hedgerows, the buffer strip should measure 2 metres from the centre of the hedge.

You must not cultivate or apply fertilisers or pesticides to cross compliance protection zones. While you must take all reasonable steps to maintain green cover on protection zones, you are permitted to 'top' the green cover or use pesticides for spot application to control the spread of certain weeds. Further information can be found in [The Guide to cross compliance in England 2020](#).

Public access on buffer strips

As a general rule, cross compliance does not prohibit public access to public rights of way (PROW) that are on cross compliance buffer strips. However, under relevant Countryside Stewardship options (e.g. [SW1: 4m to 6m buffer strip on cultivated land](#)), buffer strips cannot overlap a PROW, since these have been put there to protect important habitats and species or prevent run-off from agricultural operations. Public access can often result in damage, which reduces the intended environmental benefits.



Ecological Focus Area buffer strips and field margins

To count as an Ecological Focus Area (EFA), a buffer strip must be all of the following:

- next to a watercourse (or parallel with and on a slope leading to a watercourse);
- on or within 5 metres of arable land on the arable side of the watercourse;
- at least 1 metre wide (edge to edge).

To count as an EFA, a field margin must be:

- an uncultivated margin around the perimeter of fields against the permanent parcel boundary or surrounding internal landscape features within the land parcel;
- at least 1 metre wide (edge to edge);
- on or adjacent to arable land (or within 5 metres of it).

They must not be used for any crop production, although they can be grazed and/or cut as long as it is possible to tell the difference between the EFA buffer strip, EFA field margin and adjoining agricultural land.

If EFA buffer strips and field margins are claimed on in your BPS 2020 application, they should be maintained for the entire calendar year.

Farmers can use the same buffer strips to meet the greening and cross compliance rules. However, agri environment buffer strips (e.g. those in

a Countryside Stewardship agreement) cannot overlap with cross compliance buffer strips - they must be adjacent.

Some strips of temporary grassland are wider than 1 metre and meet the definition of an EFA buffer strip and EFA fallow land. In these cases, farmers can count the first metre as an EFA buffer strip. They could then count the extra width as EFA fallow land (as long as it is at least 2 metres wide). If this is done, it must be possible to tell the difference between the EFA buffer strip and the EFA fallow land during the fallow period (1 January to 30 June). This means at least one of the following must apply:

- they have different vegetation;
- the vegetation is of different heights;
- there is different land management (e.g. the fallow land has been cultivated).

The difference must be visible at an inspection.

Further information on the management of buffer strips and field margins under EFA can be found from page 42 of [Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2020](#).

If you have any questions or require further support, please contact the FAS helpline by telephone 03000 200 301 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

What you are required to do to comply with the EIA regulations is covered by cross compliance rules under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) 6: Maintenance of soil organic matter. The EIA regulations protect rural land in England, which is uncultivated or semi-natural, from changes in agricultural activities that might cause damage by increasing productivity and/or physically changing field boundaries. This includes preventing ploughing, cultivating or intensification to protect and maintain levels of organic matter and carbon in soils.

Uncultivated land is land that has not been cultivated in the last 15 years by physical means (e.g. ploughing or an activity that breaks the soil surface) or chemical means (e.g. adding fertiliser or soil improvers).

Semi-natural land includes [priority habitats](#), heritage or archaeological features, or protected landscapes. It's usually land that has not been intensively farmed, such as unimproved grassland or lowland heath.

When to get permission to change the use of rural land

Natural England must decide if your proposal to change the use of uncultivated or semi-natural rural land is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. You must [apply for this decision](#), known as an 'EIA screening decision', before you change the use of rural land in several ways including:

- increasing productivity of land for agriculture;
- restoring semi-natural grassland or semi-natural heathland;
- altering field boundaries.

Please visit [GOV.UK](#) for more details.

To assist land managers and agents in submitting applications for a screening decision under the EIA regulations, Natural England has developed training materials that can be accessed [here](#). The materials consist

of a handbook and a webinar, and cost £20 (plus VAT).

When you pay for the training, you also get access to an Environmental Screening Report template compiled by Natural England (also available on [GOV.UK](#)). This will guide you through your applications and ensure that you have included the appropriate information. There is also a standardised consultation letter to issue to relevant consultees for your application. This has been developed in conjunction with the relevant archaeological consultees and Local Environmental Record Centres. Finally, Natural England also provides a checklist that can be used to ensure that all the required information has been provided.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the EIA team at Natural England on **0800 028 2140** or protectedareas@naturalengland.org.uk.



Water abstraction information

May 2020 was the driest on record (and the fourth driest spring on record) in England, with below average rainfalls recorded across the country. More information on this can be found on [GOV.UK](#). The dry conditions will be having a significant impact on crops and grass. For more information on this, please read the Environment Agency's irrigation advice in 'Making your business resilient to drought' and 'What can Irrigators do' sections of the Environment Agency's [updated irrigation prospects](#).

Please visit [GOV.UK](#) to read more on the Environment Agency's approach to handling requests to abstract during prolonged dry weather.

New Authorisations (previously exempt abstraction activities)

The deadline for applications for previously exempt activities (including trickle irrigation) closes on 30 June and will not be extended. Any abstraction undertaken after that date will be unlawful unless the Environment Agency receives a valid abstraction licence application by the deadline.

If a valid licence application has already been made, then abstraction can continue while the determination process is undertaken, but only up to the maximum daily and annual volumes abstracted during the qualifying period 2011-2017. Any volumes required in excess of these historical quantities will require [a new application](#) to be made before the additional abstraction can commence. For more information, please visit [citizen space](#).

For information on water abstraction and coronavirus (COVID-19), please read the [April FAS newsletter](#).

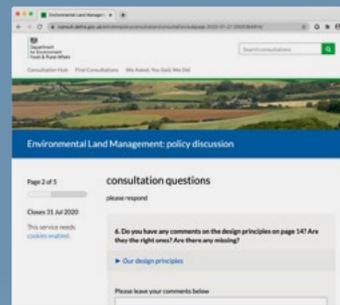
If you have any questions or require further support, please contact the FAS helpline by telephone **03000 200 301**

or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk



Environmental Land Management scheme consultation reopens

The Environmental Land Management (ELM) Policy Discussion Document was published on 25 February and you may be interested to know that a consultation for the ELM scheme has reopened and is [available here](#) until 31 July.



The consultation sets out the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) initial thinking for the ELM scheme design, and provides an update on progress and an overview of high-level design options. It asks for stakeholder views and evidence on key questions. The responses received will help to inform the detailed design for the ELM scheme, which starts in 2024, and the start of the National Pilot in late 2021.

Throughout July, Defra is running free, interactive, online webinars for farmers and land managers to discuss what the proposals mean for them. Please [click here](#) for information on dates and how to register.





Sign up to FAS services



Get the latest updates by following FAS on Twitter

Follow us on [@DefraFAS](#) for up-to-the-minute updates on publications, events and industry information.



Subscribe to the free FAS Newsletter

If you don't already receive the FREE monthly FAS newsletter, please email bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk with '**Register for newsletter**' in the subject line.

In line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), FAS has updated its privacy policy to explain how your data is kept safe.

To view the policy, please visit

www.farmingadvice.org.uk/events/privacy/