



**Farming**  
Advice Service

## Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

Thank you for continuing to subscribe to our monthly newsletter. We hope we are providing you with a valuable service, but welcome any feedback or suggestions on topics you would like to see covered in future editions.

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](mailto:bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk) with 'Register for newsletter' in the subject line. Alternatively, please visit [farmingadvice.org.uk](http://farmingadvice.org.uk) and enter your email address into the newsletter sign up box. Your details will not be shared with any third parties.

### Contact us

**FAS technical advice line: 03000 200 301**

[advice@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk)

[farmingadvice.org.uk](http://farmingadvice.org.uk)



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



Please contact us with any feedback or suggestions on topics you would like to see in future editions

## February 2021 - Issue 60

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# Key dates

Below are details of the key dates that you should be aware of.

<b>1 March</b>	You must not cut or trim hedges or trees from this date, but you can carry out hedge and tree coppicing, and hedge laying from 1 March until 30 April. Fruit and nut trees in orchards, or trees acting as windbreaks in orchards, vineyards, hop yards or hop gardens are not included in the ban. ( <a href="#">GAEC* 7a</a> and <a href="#">GAEC 7c</a> )
<b>18 March</b>	Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application window opens for 2021. ( <a href="#">BPS 2021</a> )
<b>18 March</b>	Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship revenue claim submission period opens for 2021. ( <a href="#">GOV.UK</a> )
<b>31 March</b>	If you hold a water abstraction licence, expect to receive your annual bill (or first part charge if you hold a two-part tariff agreement) for the forthcoming financial year. ( <a href="#">GAEC 2</a> )
<b>1 April</b>	You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land, other than in upland areas, from this date. The burning season for land not within an upland area is from 1 November to 31 March. ( <a href="#">GAEC 6</a> )
<b>1 April</b>	If you hold a winter or all-year-round water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction outside the period April to October), the Environment Agency will make actual abstraction return forms available to you from 1 April. You then have 28 days to send your readings to the Environment Agency. ( <a href="#">GAEC 2</a> )
<b>16 April</b>	You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium in upland areas from this date. The burning season is from 1 October to 15 April for uplands and from 1 November to 31 March for land not within an upland area. ( <a href="#">GAEC 6</a> )

\* GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition

In case you missed them...

<b>16 January</b>	If you are in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), then from this date you can apply manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland and tillage land if conditions are suitable. This is subject to the <a href="#">Farming Rules for Water</a> being complied with and there is agronomic justification. ( <a href="#">SMR** 1</a> )
<b>1 February</b>	If you are in a NVZ, then from this date you can apply organic manure with a high, readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland and tillage land on all soil types if conditions are suitable and you adhere to the quantity restrictions for applying the manures. This is subject to the <a href="#">Farming Rules for Water</a> being complied with and there is agronomic justification. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )
<b>9 February</b>	Countryside Stewardship 2021 application window opens for higher tier, mid-tier and wildlife offers for agreements starting on 1 January 2022, and for capital grant agreements starting in 2021. The new Woodland Creation and Maintenance Grant also replaces the Woodland Creation Grant from this date. ( <a href="#">GOV.UK</a> )
<b>28 February</b>	If you are in an NVZ, this date marks the end of the quantity restrictions for applying organic manures with a high, readily available nitrogen content. This is subject to the <a href="#">Farming Rules for Water</a> being complied with and there is agronomic justification. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )

\*\* SMR = Statutory Management Requirement

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, please visit the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2021](#) and [BPS 2021](#) pages of GOV.UK.

# How can FAS help you?

## Free and confidential advice

FAS provides free, confidential advice on cross compliance requirements, some aspects of the Water Framework Directive (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (such as silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil (SSAFO), and waste exemptions) and regulations on the sustainable use of pesticides. The cross compliance rules apply to you if you are a Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship claimant.

FAS updates the farming sector on relevant government farming policy that is applicable in England and the actions that can be taken to help farmers to be compliant with regulations.

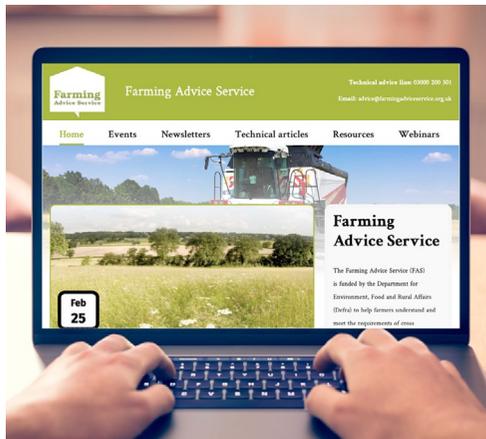
England's domestic farming legislation requires an advisory system that covers cross compliance, water protection and aspects of pesticide use. In England, this is provided by the Farming Advice Service (FAS). The advice given to individual farmers must be **confidential** – that is, FAS **must not** disclose any personal or individual information, or data it obtains during its advisory activities.

## 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**. Our helpline is operating as normal and we 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, agricultural payment schemes and animal health inspections.

You can also email enquiries to [advice@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk)



# Preparing for change with the Farming Community Network

*In October 2020, the Farming Community Network (FCN) launched 'Time to Plan' – an initiative providing a wealth of information and resources to help the agricultural community prepare for change.*

Content includes articles, case studies, checklists and top tips. FCN also signposts to sources of further information for managing change successfully. Monthly themes include:

- planning for the unexpected;
- diversification and finance;
- the new post-Brexit support regime;
- succession and retirement;
- wellbeing and safety.

## Support if you need it

FCN has groups of local volunteers; a free, confidential national helpline (03000 111 999), which is open every day of the year from 07:00 until 23:00; and an e-helpline ([help@fcn.org.uk](mailto:help@fcn.org.uk)). FCN encourages those in the farming community who are facing hardship or have things on their mind to get in contact. You can also visit [the website](https://www.fcn.org.uk) to access free information about personal and business resilience, mental and physical wellbeing, and successfully managing change.



# Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in agriculture

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. [Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition \(GAEC\) 6: Maintaining the level of organic matter in soil](#) states what you must do to comply with the relevant EIA regulations\*. If you claim under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship and you do not comply with these rules, it could affect your payments.



Uncultivated land is land that has not been cultivated in the last 15 years by physical means (such as ploughing or an activity that breaks the soil surface) or chemical means (such as adding fertilisers 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 a 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, including:

- increasing the productivity of land for agriculture;
- restoring semi-natural grassland or semi-natural heathland;
- altering field boundaries;
- working on separate projects that are on the same landholding if they exceed an area of 2ha overall – the 2ha threshold.

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

## Applying for an EIA screening decision

You must apply for a screening decision before changing the use of rural land that is equal to or over the 2ha threshold, or meets the [criteria](#) under the 2ha threshold. You must provide an environmental screening report (ESR) with your application. Natural England has produced templates for an EIA screening decision and ESR that can be downloaded for free [here](#). Depending on the type of project you are planning to do, you may be required to complete an assessment on landscape, biodiversity and/or archaeology – details on these are on [GOV.UK](#).

In line with Government guidelines, Natural England offices are closed, so please email your completed forms to [eia.England@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:eia.England@naturalengland.org.uk). Depending on the complexity of your proposal, Natural England will take between 35 and 90 days to let you know if you are able to proceed or if you need to apply for consent to carry out the work. A [consent decision](#) is required if your proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

A screening decision is valid for 3 years.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the EIA team at Natural England on 0800 028 2140 or [eia.England@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:eia.England@naturalengland.org.uk).

\* [The Environmental Impact Assessment \(Agriculture\)\(England\)\(No 2\) Regulations \(2006\)](#) and [The Environmental Impact Assessment \(Forestry\)\(England and Wales\) Regulations 1999](#)

# Forthcoming hedge and tree-cutting closed period – are you prepared?

*The closed period that places a ban on cutting and trimming hedges and trees between 1 March and 31 August (inclusive) is a cross compliance requirement under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition ([GAEC 7a: Boundaries](#) and [GAEC 7c: Trees](#)).*



If you are a Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship claimant, then you must adhere to these requirements on land being used for agriculture, which may include woodland (e.g. when used for grazing), or you could receive a reduction in your payment. Please remember that members of the public can report a breach of cross compliance rules to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), which may lead to an inspection and a reduction in your payments.

Please note, fruit and nut trees in orchards, and trees acting as windbreaks in orchards, vineyards, hop yards or hop gardens are not included in the ban.

You can apply to the RPA in writing for a derogation to cut or trim a tree in a hedgerow during the closed period. This includes derogations to cut or trim a tree in a hedgerow during the month of August for the purposes of sowing oil seed rape or temporary grassland during the same August. If you are applying for a derogation, you will need to state whether this is related to BPS or a Countryside Stewardship agreement. This is because a Countryside Stewardship agreement may impose more restrictions on hedges.

You should wait for written permission before carrying out any work.

The RPA can be contacted by email ([ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk)) or by post (Rural Payments Agency, PO Box 52 Worksop, S80 9FG). All correspondence should be marked with 'cross compliance derogation' to ensure it is directed to the correct team. Please note, in line with Government guidelines, the majority of RPA staff are now working from home, so email correspondence is strongly recommended.

Please be aware that a **derogation to cut a tree within a hedgerow** would need to be considered under:

- GAEC 7a: Boundaries – with respect to the hedgerow that the tree is a part of;
- GAEC 7c: Trees – with respect to the tree itself.

This mirrors the situation where, if a licence has been issued to fell trees in a hedge, permission will also be required from your local planning authority under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 if it is proposed to remove part of the hedgerow. It is advisable to apply early if you think you will require a derogation from this requirement.

Full details of the requirements can be found in [GAEC 7a: Boundaries](#) and [GAEC 7c: Trees](#).

# Farming Rules for Water:

## Rule 8 – position of livestock feeders

Since 2 April 2018, all farmers in England have had to comply with rules introduced to help improve water quality by reducing diffuse pollution. The rules standardise good farming practices that prevent manure, fertiliser and soil from entering watercourses. There are [eight rules in total](#) (five about managing fertilisers and manures, and three on managing soils). This article is about Rule 8.

Rule 8 requires you to make sure you prevent livestock trampling (poaching) soil within 5m of an inland freshwater or coastal water.

You must not place livestock feeders:

- within 10m from inland freshwaters or coastal waters;
- within 50m of a spring, well or borehole;
- where risk factors (see below) mean there's a significant risk of pollution.

### Assessing pollution risks

You must take into account the risks of runoff and soil erosion from the following factors when deciding where to position livestock feeders:

- the angle of slopes, in particular if the angle is greater than 12 degrees;
- the amount of ground cover;
- distance to inland freshwaters, coastal waters, wetlands, springs, wells or boreholes;
- soil type and condition;
- presence and condition of land drains.

It is important that you identify the risks that apply to your land and activities.

FAS has produced a technical article about the rules that you can read for [free on our website](#). The article includes information on the purpose of the rules, how to comply with them and how they are enforced. FAS also recently hosted a webinar on how to comply with the rules. If you missed the live event, you can watch it for [free on our website](#). A document with responses to the questions asked during the webinar will be uploaded to the website soon.

Below are links to articles about the Farming Rules for Water that have featured in previous FAS newsletters:

- [Rule 1 – Requirements for nutrient applications](#) – it is essential that you plan your nutrient applications so you don't use more than your crop or soil needs;
- [Rule 2 – Storing organic manures](#);
- [Rules 3, 4 and 5 – Application of manures and fertilisers](#);
- [Rule 6 – Reasonable precautions to prevent soil erosion](#);
- [Rule 7 – Protecting against soil erosion by livestock](#).

For further help with the Farming Rules for Water requirements, please contact the FAS helpline on 03000 200 301 or email [advice@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk). Please also read our article on silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil (SSAFO) storage requirements in the [September 2020 FAS newsletter](#).





## Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs) – volunteer for the landscape recovery component

*The ELM scheme's tests and trials team is looking for volunteers to take part in the Landscape Recovery component of the scheme.*

Landscape Recovery will support the delivery of landscape and ecosystem recovery through long-term, land-use-change projects – including restoring wilder landscapes in places where that is appropriate, large-scale tree planting and restoring peatland projects. These projects can deliver a wide variety of environmental benefits and support local environmental priorities while making an important contribution to national targets.

Tests and trials are vehicles for engaging with a wide range of farmers, land managers and stakeholders to harness their ideas and conduct research towards understanding how parts of the ELM scheme will work in a real-life environment.

The closing date for applications is Friday 30 April. For more information, please visit [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk).

## Have your say on the proposals to eradicate bovine tuberculosis

*On 27 January 2021, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a consultation on the next phase of the Government's strategy to eradicate bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in England by 2038.*

As part of this consultation, Defra is calling for views on possible measures to accelerate the eradication of bTB in England (for example, improving testing, encouraging an increased uptake of farm biosecurity measures and supporting responsible cattle movements). Bovine tuberculosis is one of the most difficult and intractable animal health challenges that England faces today. In the last year, over 27,000 cattle in England have been slaughtered in an attempt to tackle the disease, causing significant distress to farming communities.

The consultation document can be accessed [here](#). Once you have read it, you are invited to participate in a survey to provide your views on the proposed changes to aspects of bTB policy. The consultation survey closes on 24 March 2021.



# Water abstraction reminders

## River flows and refilling reservoirs

*River flows are typically above normal or normal in most catchments, reflecting the wet winter. The latest information on river flows at sites that the Environment Agency monitors can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Most reservoirs should be full or close to full. However, where this isn't the case, please take every possible opportunity to top up winter storage reservoirs ready for the start of the irrigation season.*

### **Irrigation prospects and dry weather management**

The Environment Agency will be releasing its initial irrigation prospects (which are good) at the end of February and we will publish details on the [FAS Technical Articles page](#). For information about dry weather management – including reviewing your abstraction licence needs for next summer – please read the [November 2020 FAS newsletter](#).

### **Abstraction licence charges**

During February, the Environment Agency will be calculating supplementary charges for licence holders with a two-part tariff agreement.

Supplementary charges are being calculated for winter and all-year abstractions for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 and summer abstractions for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 October 2020. Bills will be sent towards the end of February/beginning of March. This is later than usual for winter and all-year abstractions. The delay is a consequence of restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

If a return has not been received, the supplementary charge will be calculated on the basis that the full authorised quantity of water has been abstracted.



# FAS webinar programme



The Farming Advice Service (FAS) invites you to attend a series of free webinars. They started in December and are running through to early 2021.

Each online event has a different theme and will last for one hour, including an opportunity to put questions to our expert speakers. Information about the final webinar is in this article. If you are unable to attend any of the live broadcasts, a recording of each one will be made available on the [FAS website](#).

Booking is essential – reserve your place by clicking on the link at the end of this article and then completing the booking form. BASIS points will be available. You will receive a notification email with joining instructions a couple of moments after booking. If this does not come through, please check your spam or junk folder.

## Links to previous webinars

In case you missed our previous webinars, you can watch the recordings by clicking on the links below:

- [Farming Rules for Water](#);
- [Nitrate Vulnerable Zones](#);
- [Cross compliance and greening update – what's new for 2021?](#);
- [Heading towards net zero emissions in agriculture](#).

## The agricultural transition – future farm support schemes Thursday 4 March, 17:00 to 18:15

Alice De Soer and  
Janet Hughes



During this webinar, Alice De Soer from Rural Response Ltd and Janet Hughes, Programme Director for the Future Farming and Countryside Programme from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will provide information about future farm support schemes and funding under the agricultural transition plan 2021-2024. They will look at the three components of Environmental Land Management (including the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)), productivity grants under the Farming Investment Fund and other available support under the agricultural transition plan.

**Click here to book your place at this event:**

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/88534417614761986>

# Preparing an Integrated Pest Management plan

*Now is the time to start planning your pest management for this coming season and beyond. An easy and proven way of doing this is to use an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan.*

A carefully considered IPM plan will help you maximise measures to keep pests in check and enable you to consider all your options – including alternatives to pesticides. This can reduce your input costs, and make your pesticide use more efficient and have less impact on the environment. Keeping, and referring to, a detailed record of your pest control practices is likely to improve crop protection results year on year.

The Voluntary Initiative (VI), in partnership with the NFU, has updated its IPM plan templates for [Broad Acre and Grassland Crops](#). The new plan will help to develop users' IPM practices and inform Government policy. Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF) also provides [guidance](#) on how to develop an IPM plan that is tailored to your farm. Both styles of IPM plan are accepted by the Red Tractor scheme.



The logo for Farming Advice Service is a white speech bubble with a pointed bottom, containing the text 'Farming Advice Service' in a green, serif font. The background of the entire page is a solid green color.

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## Summary of recent FAS highlights

*Here are links to some of the recent articles that have featured in FAS newsletters that you may find useful.*

Please note that these articles will have links to the Guide to cross compliance in England 2020. However, while the rules haven't changed, you should refer to the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2021](#) to ensure you read the most recent version.

You can access all previous FAS newsletters on [our website](#). You are also welcome to get in touch ([advice@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk)) with suggestions for topics based around cross compliance that you would like us to cover in future newsletters.

- **[Livestock registration, identification and movements](#)**

This article provides information about cattle and sheep, and includes links to our technical articles on top tips for avoiding common cross compliance breaches found during inspections.

- **[Soil management requirements](#)**

This article provides a summary of the three Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) that are related to soil management.

- **[Animal welfare reminders](#)**

This article details some of the key requirements under Statutory Management Requirement (SMR) 13: Animal welfare. If you keep animals on your holding, it is important to familiarise yourself with these requirements.

- **[The agricultural transition plan](#)**

The article provides information about what the transition period (2021–2027), announced by the Government in November 2020, means for farmers.

- **[Using greening features on your farm in 2021](#)**

In this article, there is information on how you can retain existing greening features on your farm to benefit your business and the environment.

- **[Nitrate Vulnerable Zones – common queries through the FAS helpline](#)**

This article provides answers for a few of the common queries FAS receives.

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## Sign up to FAS services



### Get the latest updates by following FAS on Twitter

Follow us on [@DefraFAS](https://twitter.com/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](mailto:bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk) with '**Register for newsletter**' in the subject line. Alternatively, please visit [farmingadvice.org.uk](http://farmingadvice.org.uk) and enter your email address into the newsletter sign up box.

In line with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018, 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/](http://www.farmingadvice.org.uk/events/privacy/)