



**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 with 'Register for newsletter' in the subject line. Alternatively, please visit 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

farmingadvice.org.uk



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** about the new layout of the FAS newsletter

January 2021 - Issue 59

Key dates

How can FAS help you?

Cross compliance and Basic Payment Scheme – what's new in 2021?

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Reducing and managing on-farm ammonia emissions with Tried & Tested

Sign up to FAS services

Key dates

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

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1 February | If you are in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (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. (SMR* 1) |
| 28 February | If you are in an NVZ, this date marks the end of the quantity restrictions for application of organic manures with a high readily available nitrogen content. (SMR 1) |

In case you missed them...

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 15 January | Ecological Focus Area (EFA) cover crops must be retained until at least this date. (BPS** 2020) |
| 16 January | If you are located in an NVZ, then from this date you can apply manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland and tillage land if conditions are suitable. (SMR 1) |

* SMR = Statutory Management Requirement

** BPS = Basic Payment Scheme

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, please visit the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2021](#) and [Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2020](#) pages of GOV.UK.

FAS new website and important information

On 8 December 2020, FAS launched its [new website](#). It will have all of the previous content, including newsletters, technical articles and event resources, and is where we will upload the recordings of our webinars.

Please be aware that due to the change in website platform, the 'Read more' links contained in the emailed version of the newsletter before October 2020 will no longer link directly to the article in the newsletters. The links will take you to the newsletter page on our new website [here](#), where you can read and download previous newsletters



How can FAS help you?

Free and confidential advice

England's domestic farming legislation, including regulations derived from EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), require 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). 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 activities.

FAS updates the farming sector on relevant EU policies, and policies for England from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It explains the requirements and objectives of domestic national legislation and policy, CAP and EU directives, and the actions that can be taken to help meet compliance.

FAS provides **free, confidential** advice on cross compliance requirements, some aspects of the Water Framework Directive Regulations (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.

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



Cross compliance and Basic Payment Scheme – what’s new in 2021?

As with previous years, the 2021 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) will run for the full calendar year (1 January to 31 December). Those who are intending to claim BPS payments for 2021 will need to comply with the BPS requirements for the entire year, despite the UK having left the European Union (EU). This article outlines some of the changes that will be introduced for the 2021 scheme year.

Cross compliance changes in 2021

[‘The guide to cross compliance in England 2021’](#) was published on 18 December 2020 by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). There are not going to be any changes to Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) or Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs). However, Table 1 details some operational changes that will be implemented.



Table 1: Cross compliance changes in 2021

Area of cross compliance	New in 2021
Inspections	Before an inspection of your farm takes place, an inspector will provide you with a list of records that will be checked. This will enable you to prepare for the visit. Where appropriate during an inspection, inspectors will now signpost farmers to guidance that they feel will help them meet the requirements of the cross compliance rules. This includes free telephone and email advice from the Farming Advice Service (FAS), and the suite of free resources available on the FAS website .
Simplification of the online guidance	Information and resources on GOV.UK will be simplified to minimise the duplication of existing guidance. The online version of the ‘Guide to cross compliance in England 2021’ will be amended to make it easier to understand the information provided and include links to where more information can be obtained.
Changes to penalties	A change in penalties will apply to farmers who apply to BPS in 2021 and/or whose Countryside Stewardship agreements start on or after 1 January 2021. For these farmers, penalties for non-compliances should be more proportionate. The penalty matrix will be updated to expand the range of penalties available to include 2% and 4% reductions. This will remove the assumption that most negligent breaches start at 3% and enable the RPA delivery team to determine what penalty to apply.
Extended scope of ‘early warning system’ (EWS) letters where there is no risk to public and animal health	This will mean EWS letters can be applied to a wider range of breaches where there is no risk to public or animal health.

For further help with the cross compliance rules, please contact the **FAS helpline** on 03000 200 301 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk.

Basic Payment Scheme changes in 2021

Unlike previous years, farmers **will not be required to meet the three greening rules** in the 2021 BPS scheme year (crop diversification, Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) and permanent grassland). However, it will be helpful if farmers familiarise themselves with the business and environmental benefits that come with retaining existing greening features. More information about this can be found in the [November 2020 FAS newsletter](#).

The BPS guidance for 2021 will be published later in the year. Details on the main changes for this year are in Table 2.



Table 2: Basic Payment Scheme changes in 2021

What is changing?	Details of the change	How it affects farmers
Removing greening requirements	From 2021, the crop diversification, Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) and permanent grassland rules will be removed. This will not affect the overall payment received. Instead, the greening money will be added to BPS entitlement payments.	The 'land use' will still be declared on applications, but there is no requirement to meet any greening rules. Please remember, rules still apply to permanent grassland in Natura 2000 sites and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) rules for other permanent grassland remain in place.
Extending force majeure	The period of time to inform the RPA of force majeure or exceptional circumstances and supply evidence has been extended from 15 days to 8 weeks. This applies to farmers who apply to BPS in 2021 and/or whose Countryside Stewardship agreements start on or after 1 January 2021.	There will be more time to provide evidence to the RPA to apply for force majeure .
Removing entitlement usage rules	The entitlement expiry usage rules will be removed.	There will no longer be a requirement to use entitlements once every 2 years to avoid losing them. This does not apply retrospectively.
Extending the period for submitting supporting documents and amending applications	The RPA will accept supporting documents and amendments to applications until 11 June 2021, without reductions in payments being made or penalties being applied. Supporting documents will not be accepted after 11 June.	There will be more time to provide supporting documents and amend applications without reductions in payments being made or penalties being applied.
Introducing a reduction in payments for all claims	Over the next 7 years, the RPA will gradually reduce payments. Details on the progressive reduction plan are on GOV.UK .	The highest percentage reductions will be applied to those in higher payment bands.

Please visit [GOV.UK](#) for more information on the changes to BPS in 2021, the changes to Countryside Stewardship in 2021 and a booklet from the RPA that details the BPS progressive payment reduction plan.



Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (2021 to 2024)

The Environment Agency recently concluded its 4-yearly review of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) for the period 2021 to 2024. It advised the Secretary of State that there has been no substantive change in patterns of nitrate pollution in England, concluding the NVZs should remain the same as the final zones for the previous 2017 to 2020 cycle. The Secretary of State has agreed with this recommendation and the relevant maps will be updated shortly to reflect the new time period. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will be contacting affected farmers in writing to advise them of this and the process going forward.

The Secretary of State recently announced Defra's intention for a reformed regulatory regime for agriculture following the agricultural transition. From 2021, Defra will start looking at how to improve the way existing rules and processes are managed, including those covered by the nitrates regulations. Defra will be consulting on this new regulatory approach early in the agriculture transition, working in partnership with the sector to achieve regulations that are fair, clear and effective.

If you would like to learn more about the recent agricultural transition period announcement, please read the [November FAS newsletter](#).

FAS has produced useful resources for NVZs, including a [recording of a recent webinar](#), a [NVZs back to basics](#) article and answers to common queries to the FAS helpline that you can read in the [December 2020 FAS newsletter](#).

Coronavirus information for farmers, landowners and rural businesses

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has a dedicated page for Coronavirus (COVID-19) on [GOV.UK](#) where updates will be posted for farmers, landowners and rural businesses. It will be important to check this page regularly. The RPA is committed to maintaining its service to customers, but has made changes to adapt to the current emergency. In line with Government guidance, the RPA has closed most of its offices and staff are now working 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.

If you are worried about your health or the health of others, you can find medical advice on the [NHS website](#).

To read more about the Government's response to COVID-19, please visit [GOV.UK](#).

Farming Rules for Water – are you familiar with them?



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.

The rules apply to many farming or horticultural practices (such as the use and storage of organic or manufactured fertiliser), planting and harvesting, soil management (such as ploughing or planting cover crops) and managing livestock. They introduce 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 about managing soil).

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. Please also read our article on silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil (SSAFO) storage requirements in the [September 2020 FAS newsletter](#).

Water abstraction reminders

Managing your water abstraction licence online

You can create an account to manage your water abstraction licence online on [GOV.UK](#). As part of the sign up process, the Environment Agency will post a security code to the registered address of the licence to protect your data. By creating an account, you can view your licence information and submit abstraction returns online. The Environment Agency will be adding new features to the service so you will be able to manage more aspects of your licence online.

River flows and refilling reservoirs

The latest information on river flows at sites that the Environment Agency monitors can be found on [GOV.UK](#). When river flows are normal or higher, please take every possible opportunity to top up winter storage reservoirs ready for the start of the irrigation season. The Environment Agency will be releasing its initial irrigation prospects at the end of February, which will be published on the [FAS Technical Articles page](#).

For information about dry weather management – including reviewing your abstraction licence needs for the summer – please read the [November FAS newsletter](#).



Abstraction licensing strategies

The Environment Agency will be publishing new abstraction licensing strategies (ALS) to inform all customers and stakeholders of water availability throughout England. To date, four have been published. In the [Water abstraction plan 2017](#), the Environment Agency was tasked with developing and trialling new initiatives to improve access to water, while reducing the impact on the environment. The trial areas were called [priority catchments](#) and the updated ALS summarise the results of this work.

What's different?

The aim is to put the 'catchment' back into the heart of the ALS. There is more local information and more focus on approaches to tackle unsustainable abstraction. There are also examples of how a 'catchment-focused' approach to managing water resources can lead to better outcomes for the environment and customers. An example of this can be found in the [East Suffolk ALS](#). Chapter 5.2 outlines [FRESH4C's](#)¹, an EU project co-funded by the Interreg 2Seas programme 2014-2020 and the European Regional Development Fund. Project partners in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands are trialling novel technologies to improve access to fresh water. As part of this project, the Environment Agency is collaborating with a wide range of catchment stakeholders to help local farmers gain access to up to 600,000 cubic metres of water per year, which would otherwise be discharged into the sea. Instead, it will be pumped into on-farm reservoirs and a managed aquifer recharge trial via a new 12km pipeline. This is just one of many initiatives presented in the ALS.

The Environment Agency is also trialling publishing the ALS in an HTML format. This will make it more accessible and means it can be easily read online using any computer or mobile device.

What's next?

The ALS demonstrate the challenges of adopting a catchment-based approach (a community-led approach that engages people and groups from across society to help improve our precious water environments) and, more importantly, the rewards. The first four documents set a new standard and the Environment Agency aims to publish updated ALS covering the whole of England by 2027.

You can explore the other new ALS by following the links below:

- [Witham abstraction licensing strategy](#);
- [Idle and Torne abstraction licensing strategy](#);
- [Cam and Ely Ouse abstraction licensing strategy](#).

Water abstraction poster

FAS has produced a poster on water abstraction, which you can access [here](#). The poster includes a map of England with the percentage of time water is available and solutions to help businesses become more drought resilient.

EU-funded Felixstowe Peninsula project: freshwater currently pumped into the Deben estuary damaging saltmarsh will be transferred to on-farm reservoirs.



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FRESH4Cs

¹The funding is secure for the lifetime of the project (Sep 2022) despite the UK leaving the EU. Farmers who own the infrastructure and abstraction licences may of course wish to continue to operate them beyond this time.

Farming Advice Service 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. Details of the webinars can be found below. 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. To reserve your place, please click on the relevant link below and complete the booking form. You will need to do this for each session that you wish to attend. 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 webinar sessions in December and January, you can watch the recordings by clicking 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 – existing farm support schemes

Alice De Soer and Janet Hughes

In November 2020, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) published 'The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024', which sets out the path for post-Brexit agricultural policy in England during that period. During this session, Janet Hughes, Programme Director for the Future Farming and Countryside Programme at Defra, will give an overview of the agricultural transition plan. The main part of the session will then be led by Alice De Soer from Rural Response Ltd, a recognised industry expert having spoken at numerous conferences, and worked on the Agriculture Bill and post-Brexit farm support scheme policy. Alice will talk you through the existing farm support schemes (such as the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) – including 2021 applications and simplifications), the phasing out of direct payments, 'delinking' and lump-sum payments, and this year's Countryside Stewardship applications.

Thursday 25 February, 17:00 to 18:15

Link to book on this event: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5353712742944206350>

The agricultural transition – future farm support schemes

Alice De Soer and Janet Hughes

Following on from the session on 25 February looking at existing farm support schemes. During this webinar, Alice and Janet will explain 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.

Thursday 4 March, 17:00 to 18:15

Link to book on this event: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8853441761476198668>

Using riparian buffer zones to tackle agricultural pollution



In 2021, greening will no longer be a requirement under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS).

However, there are ways you can retain your existing greening features, such as buffer strips, to reduce pollution from agriculture. A recent study by the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission explored this further. The study considered how the design and management of riparian buffers (those next to a water source) could be improved to reduce water pollution and provide a range of other outcomes for the environment (such as storing carbon, creating new habitats and providing flood management benefits).

For diffuse pollution control, the study found that establishing riparian woodland buffers scored highest and grass-vegetated buffers scored lowest. Problematic sites with high pollutant pressures would need greater intervention, such as more engineered buffer designs. This could include incorporating ridges, swales or mini wetlands.

The study also looked into three-dimensional buffer zones and how they can intercept pollution below, across and above ground. Introducing three-dimensional buffers zones is a measure that can provide diverse benefits for the environment. It is hoped that this study will form the scientific basis for their widespread use in the future.

To view the full study, please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

For more information on how to retain your greening features to benefit your business and the environment, please read the [November FAS newsletter](#)

Reducing and managing on-farm ammonia emissions with Tried & Tested

In November 2020, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a consultation to gather views on reducing ammonia emissions from solid urea fertilisers used to grow crops. As ammonia emissions are predominantly from agriculture (87%) and around 8% are from the use of solid urea fertilisers, the recent consultation highlighted concerns about on-farm ammonia emissions.

Ammonia emissions impact the natural environment and human health once converted into particulate matter, and represent a loss of valuable nitrogen to UK farms, estimated to be worth £8/ha per year. By implementing actions to reduce ammonia losses derived from manure and fertiliser application, farmers and landowners can improve the efficiency of nutrient use, save money and reduce environmental risks.

Some of the methods to reduce ammonia losses from manure and fertiliser application, and the on-farm benefits that could be achieved are described here.

- **Nutrient management.** Adopt a Nutrient Management Plan to balance grass and crop nutrient requirements with manure and fertiliser applications. Efficient use of manures and additional nitrogen fertiliser improves overall nitrogen-use efficiency, reduces farm costs, and lessens the risk of losing ammonia and other forms of nitrogen. Download the free Tried & Tested [Nutrient Management Plan](#) for a step-by-step guide to creating annual field and farm nutrient plans.
- **Spreading slurry and manure.** Reduced contact between slurry and air keeps ammonia emissions low and ensures nitrogen is available for crops.

This can be achieved through low-trajectory slurry application methods such as injection, trailing shoe or dribble bar. Ensure manures that are spread onto bare soil are incorporated as soon as possible after application (12 hours at most). You can download the free Tried & Tested [Think Manures](#) guide for more information on manures.

- **Spreading nitrogen fertilisers.** Measures that can be taken to cut ammonia emissions include switching from urea-based fertilisers to ammonium nitrate later in the season, only spreading urea in January to March under cool and windless conditions, irrigating and injecting or incorporating urea into soil or using urea with a urease inhibitor.

[Tried & Tested](#) is an initiative of the agricultural industry that aims to help farmers improve nutrient management planning through the following FREE resources and guidance:

- [Tried & Tested USB memory stick](#);
- [Nutrient Management Plan guide and template](#);
- [Farm and Field Record Sheets](#);
- [Think Manures guide](#);
- [Feed Planning guide for Sheep and Cattle](#);
- [NVZ record keeping guide](#).

For more information, including a library of resources and case studies, please visit the [Tried & Tested website](#).



Sign up to FAS services



Get the latest updates by following FAS on Twitter

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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 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/