

## 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, and welcome any feedback or suggestions on topics you would like to see covered in future editions.*

### Contact us

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

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

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

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### October 2021 – Issue 68

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# Key dates

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

<b>31 October</b>	If you hold a summer water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction wholly within the months of April to October), the Environment Agency will ask you to report your water abstraction return for summer 2021. You will have 28 days to send your return to the Environment Agency. ( <a href="#">GAEC* 2</a> )
<b>1 November</b>	The burning season for heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium is 1 November to 31 March for land not within an upland area (and 1 October to 15 April for upland areas). ( <a href="#">GAEC 6</a> )

## In case you missed them...

<b>15 September</b>	For any land located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), this is the start of the closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland. ( <a href="#">SMR** 1</a> )
<b>16 September</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high, readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to tillage land on shallow or sandy soils that have been sown with crops on or before 15 September. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )  The closed period does not apply to organic manures with a low, readily available nitrogen content (such as farmyard manure). However, please remember the <a href="#">Farming Rules for Water</a> and ensure applications do not exceed the needs of the crop or soil and do not give rise to a significant risk of agricultural diffuse pollution.

FAS has produced a handy, printable, one-page poster of all the cross compliance dates for 2021, which you can access and download [here](#).

<b>1 October</b>	You can burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land in upland areas from this date. ( <a href="#">GAEC 6</a> )
<b>1 October</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high, readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to tillage land on soils that are not shallow or sandy. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )  The closed period does not apply to organic manures with a low, readily available nitrogen content (such as farmyard manure). However, please remember the <a href="#">Farming Rules for Water</a> and ensure applications do not exceed the needs of the crop or soil and do not give rise to a significant risk of agricultural diffuse pollution.
<b>15 October</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying organic manure with a high, readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland on soils that are not shallow or sandy. ( <a href="#">SMR 1</a> )  The closed period does not apply to organic manures with a low, readily available nitrogen content (such as farmyard manure). However, please remember the <a href="#">Farming Rules for Water</a> and ensure applications do not exceed the needs of the crop or soil and do not give rise to a significant risk of agricultural diffuse pollution.

\* GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition

\*\* 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](#) page of GOV.UK.

# How can FAS help you?

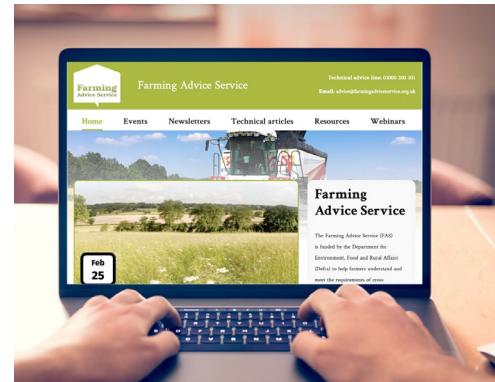
## Free and confidential advice

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).

FAS provides free, confidential advice on cross compliance requirements, some aspects of the Water Environment (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.

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@farmingadviceservice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadviceservice.org.uk). Our helpline team aims to respond to all telephone and email enquiries within one working day.

# National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides: Summary of consultation responses published

Following the consultation on the National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides, the summary of responses has been published and can be found [here](#). The consultation responses are being used to inform the revised National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. Defra aims to publish the revised plan later in 2021.



# Updates from the Future Farming blog and industry announcements

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) regularly adds updates to the [Future Farming blog](#) on GOV.UK.

In this article, FAS provides links to some of the recent posts and to other recent industry announcements.

- The [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#) is due to launch in spring 2022. For an overview of what it is, eligibility and how to apply, please click [here](#).
- Janet Hughes is the Director of Defra's Future Farming and Countryside Programme (FFCP). As part of a recent Farming Forum Q&A session, she answered questions from farmers about the Sustainable Farming Incentive. Part 1 is available to watch [here](#) and part 2 is available [here](#).
- During August and September, Defra held three information sessions about the Landscape Recovery Scheme. If you were not able to attend, the recordings are available to watch [here](#).
- Please remember that there is still time for you to [apply to receive free business advice](#) in the Future Farming Resilience Fund. Defra has published another blog clarifying key points about the scheme that you can read [here](#).
- The new industry-led Research and Development Partnership Fund launched on 20 October. For more information, please click [here](#).
- Defra provided an update on progress on the Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot [here](#), including the results of the application process, what was learnt and what will happen next.

## Industry announcements

- At the start of October, Defra published its [Implementation Plan for the Healthy Bees Plan 2030](#). The plan sets out more than 50 actions that beekeepers, bee farmers, bee associations and Government will undertake to protect and enhance populations of honey bees.
- The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) is a national charity that provides local support to the farming community across England and Wales. On 15 October, it launched the [results from the Big Farming Survey](#) that covered the health and wellbeing of farmers in England and Wales. If you would like support from RABI, for example, to talk about the challenges you are facing, you can talk in confidence to a member of the helpline team on 0800 188 4444, or via email at [help@rabi.org.uk](mailto:help@rabi.org.uk).

# 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](#) (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 mean there's a significant risk of pollution.

## Assessing pollution risks

You must take into account the risks of runoff and soil erosion from these 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.



## Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designations and appeals 2021-2024

If you have land that has been designated as being in a [Nitrate Vulnerable Zone for 2021-2024](#), you will receive a letter from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) telling you how to appeal against this decision.

Letters are planned to be issued until January 2022 and you can appeal the decision **within 28 days of the date on the letter**. You have grounds to appeal if your land (or part of it):

- does not drain into water that has been identified as polluted;
- drains into water that should not be identified as polluted.

To appeal, please read the following guidance on [how to make an NVZ appeal](#), complete the notice of appeal form and send it to the [first-tier tribunal](#).

To check if your land is located in an NVZ, please use the interactive map [here](#). If you have difficulty checking the map, or would like a printed map, please call the Environment Agency (03000 203791).

# Water abstraction returns (summer 2021)

If you hold a summer water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction wholly within the months of April to October), the Environment Agency will ask you to report your water abstraction return for summer 2021. You will have 28 days to send your return to the Environment Agency. If you have a two-part tariff agreement and do not submit your return, you will be billed on the basis of having abstracted the full quantity your licence authorises you to abstract for irrigation.

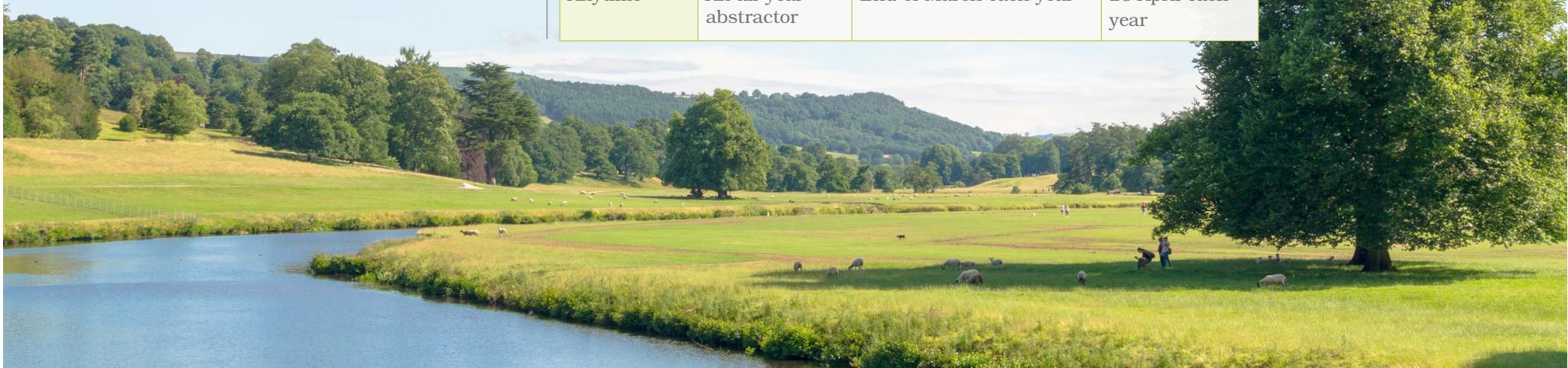
## Reporting water abstraction

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

Most farmers will need to submit an annual return (by the dates shown in Table 1) showing a weekly or monthly record of the actual amount of water they take. Even if no water is abstracted, it is important that a 'nil' return is submitted to the Environment Agency.

**Table 1: Water abstraction return dates**

When can you abstract water?	This means you are referred to as ...	When does the Environment Agency ask you for your return?	You need to submit returns by
1 April to 31 October	A summer abstractor	End of October each year	28 November each year
1 November to 31 March	A winter abstractor	End of March each year	28 April each year
Anytime	An all-year abstractor	End of March each year	28 April each year



You can submit your return online. To do this, you will first need to register with the Environment Agency's online service – [Manage your water abstraction or impoundment licence](#). To register, you will need your email address and licence number(s). For those managing returns on a licence holder's behalf, you will need the licence holder to register then grant you permission to submit returns online by adding you as a user on their account. For help with the service or returns, please contact the [Environment Agency general enquiries](#) on 03708 506506 or email [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk) and you will be directed to the relevant team.

## Two-part tariff agreements

Returns are used for two-part tariff billing. If your abstraction licence schedule authorises specific quantities of water to be abstracted for irrigation, you may be able to apply for a two-part tariff agreement. For example, if your application is successful, you will get a 50% reduction in your bill per year if you do not abstract any water and submit a 'nil' return. If you have a two-part tariff

agreement and do not submit a return, you will be billed on the basis of having abstracted the full quantity your licence authorises you to abstract for irrigation.

## Water abstraction – dry weather management advice

For more information on how to make longer term changes to your licence to meet your business needs, including for drought and dry weather resilience, please visit [GOV.UK](#). The Environment Agency is currently experiencing a large backlog of abstraction licence applications, so it is encouraging applicants to apply as early as possible. If you are concerned about the timing on determination of a licence to help qualify for a water resources funding grant (e.g. a reservoir), please make sure you clearly mark on the application form or covering letter that the application relates to the grant. The Environment Agency will then be in touch to discuss timescales.

You might also find it useful to see the Met Office's 3-monthly forecast [here](#), which is updated towards the end of each month.

## Water abstraction consultation

On 29 September, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a consultation on water abstraction to seek views on amending the Environmental Permitting Regulations, to include abstraction and impounding licensing and subsequent amendment to existing water resources legislation, including the Water Resources Act 1991 and the Water Act 2003. This will bring the majority of environmental permits under one legal framework and allow people to manage all their permits in one place. The consultation and supporting information can be accessed [here](#).

**The consultation closes on Wednesday 22 December.**



# The importance of knowing your soil

Achieving good soil health is essential for productivity, sustainability and profitability. Understanding your soil's chemical, physical and biological properties is key to understanding the current state of your soil and the actions you can take to improve and maintain its health.

Soils are most commonly tested for **chemical** properties, including the primary nutrient content of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), 'micronutrients' (such as sulfur, magnesium, cadmium, iron, aluminium and zinc) and the soil pH level. These results provide farmers with valuable information for effective [nutrient management](#), there is also guidance for creating and using a nutrient management plan on [GOV.UK](#). Having a good understanding of existing and required soil nutrition levels can support farmers to make good decisions, saving money and time, and reducing the impacts on biodiversity, water and air quality by:

- increasing crop yield and quality;
- matching the amount of artificial and organic fertilisers used to the needs of the crop and soil;
- minimising nutrient waste.

**Physical** properties (such as structure, texture, porosity and colour of the soil) often vary considerably. They depend on factors such as underlying bedrock, crop type and rotation, frequency and type of machinery used, livestock type and stocking density, and the weather. Structural assessments can be conducted visually and carried out annually. Improving soil structure:

- improves resilience to surface capping, slumping, waterlogging and drought;
- reduces soil compaction and improves soil workability.

Soil **biology** should consist of a high diversity of organic matter. Soil organic matter is made up of plant and animal matter that release nutrients into the soil as they decompose. Farmers can improve organic matter by adding organic manures and incorporating plants or crop residues. Reducing drainage and the cultivation of soil will slow the decay of organic matter.

Increasing organic matter:

- improves soil fertility, and the biota structure;
- reduces the risk of capping, compaction and erosion.

This article has been produced in association with industry initiative Tried and Tested. For further support on soil testing, [find a laboratory here](#).

Championing the Farmed Environment (CFE) has recently published UK soil health initiative guides that provide targeted guidance for a range of farming systems. The guides can be downloaded for free [here](#).

## Sign up to FAS services



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Alternatively, please visit [farmingadviceservice.org.uk](http://farmingadviceservice.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.farmingadviceservice.org.uk/events/privacy/](http://www.farmingadviceservice.org.uk/events/privacy/)