

Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

Thank you for continuing to subscribe to our monthly newsletter. We hope you find the content useful 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@farmingadvice.org.uk

farmingadvice.org.uk

July 2022 – Issue 77

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Key dates to be aware of

29 July	This is the deadline for Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier and Wildlife Offers starting on 1 January 2023. (GOV.UK)
1 August	If you have been granted a derogation by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), you may be able to cut or trim hedges throughout August for the purpose of sowing oilseed rape or temporary grassland during that month. (GAEC* 7a)
1 August	For any land located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (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 (except where crops will be sown on or before 15 September). (SMR** 1)

In case you missed them...

1 May	You must not carry out hedge or tree coppicing or hedge laying from this date. (GAEC 7a and GAEC 7c)
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* GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition

** SMR = Statutory Management Requirement

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, visit

[Guide to cross compliance in England 2022](#) and [Rural Payments Agency \(RPA\) key dates 2022](#) at [GOV.UK](#).

How can we help you?

Free and confidential advice

The FAS is funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). We provide **free, confidential** advice to help farmers in England understand and meet the cross compliance requirements. These requirements apply to you if you are a Basic Payment Scheme, Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship claimant.

We update the farming sector on relevant government farming policy that is applicable in England, and on the actions that can be taken to help farmers comply with applicable regulations. Our newsletter also provides articles on topics that are complementary to cross compliance, such as practices to benefit the wider environment and wellbeing support.

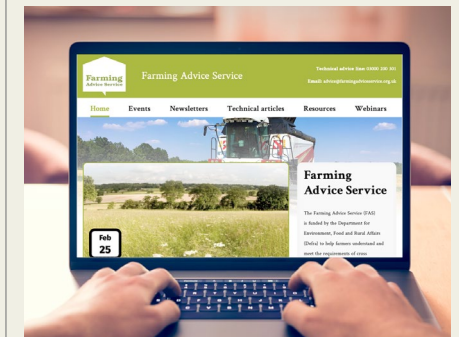
[Our website](#) hosts our previous newsletters, as well as technical articles and webinars that cover various topics in more detail.

Contacting the advice line

Farmers requiring telephone advice can contact the **FAS technical advice line** on 03000 200 301, Monday to Friday, between **08:30** and **17:00**. The Rural Services Helpline provides a single number for all **FAS, RPA, Animal and Plant Health Agency, Natural England and forestry** enquiries.

You can also email enquiries to advice@farmingadvice.org.uk. Our helpline team aims to respond to all telephone and email enquiries within one working day.

The advice given to individual farmers is **confidential** – we do not disclose any personal or individual information or data obtained during advisory activities.



Farming Advice Service to launch online training portal

Two online training modules will be available through the new Farming Advice Service Training Portal in August. **Look out for details in the August newsletter**

The modules on 'Cross Compliance' and 'Net Zero Emissions in Agriculture' will be open to anyone who wishes to register and registrants qualify for two BASIS CPD points for completing the end-of-module quiz. Modules on 'Farming Rules for Water' and 'Nitrate Vulnerable Zones' will be open soon, with additional modules to follow later in the year.



Need extra support?

We understand it can be difficult to keep up with all the changes affecting the farming industry at the moment, and that the amount of information available can be daunting. The [FAS](#) is here to help and you can also find the most up-to-date information on grants and payments at [GOV.UK](#).

If you are feeling overwhelmed and are not sure where to turn, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution ([RABI](#)) and the Farming Community Network ([FCN](#)) offer support services by email and phone. A range of other organisations also offer complementary forms of support for the farming community; [click here](#) to view support organisations by topic.

The FCN receives between 100 and 150 calls from farmers each month and they have now produced an article highlighting the learnings from these calls. For information on their top 10 observations from these calls please [click here](#).

Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts

**Farming
Advice Service**

If you missed any of our previous webinar sessions from earlier in the year, you can watch the recordings by clicking on the links below:

- [Cross compliance update for 2022](#)
- [Future support schemes](#)
- [Steps to reduce ammonia emissions on farms](#)
- [Livestock movements and identification](#)
- [Planning for change – how to navigate farming support schemes in 2023](#)

We have also interviewed expert speakers on a range of topics. You can listen to these podcasts on Audioboom or Spotify by clicking on the links below:

- [Cross compliance with Andrew Wells](#)
- [Supporting farmers through resilience with Suzy Deeley](#)
- [Reducing ammonia emissions on farms with John Morgan](#)
- [Livestock movements and identification with Ian Cairns](#)

Technical articles available on the FAS website

The FAS has produced a number of technical articles covering a range of topics, from farming practices to cross compliance. To access these articles, please click on the links below:

- [Reducing agricultural emissions of ammonia](#)
- [Supporting farmers to become resilient](#)
- [Net zero in agriculture](#)
- [Cross compliance inspections – common breaches and guidance](#)

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs): Closed period reminders and useful resources to help you with the rules



In this article, the FAS provides reminders on the closed periods for spreading organic manure and manufactured fertiliser, and gives links to useful documents to help you understand the rules relating to NVZs.

There are established closed periods for NVZs that apply to certain types of organic manure (those with more than 30% readily available nitrogen, such as poultry manure and liquid organic manure) and manufactured fertilisers. If any of your land is located within an NVZ, you must not spread during the dates shown in Table 1 and Table 2 (all dates inclusive).

There are exceptions to the rules for the closed periods; more information can be found at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

There are restrictions on applications of manure with high readily available nitrogen outside the closed period.

Guidance on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) specifies that you must not spread more than 30 m³/ha of slurry or 8 tonnes/ha of poultry manure in a single application from the end of the closed period until the end of February. You must allow at least three weeks between each individual application.

The poultry manure limit remains the same but the slurry limit has been reduced from 50 m³ to 30 m³.

In addition to the closed periods, the [Farming Rules for Water](#) require farmers to match nutrient applications to the needs of crops and soil. Nutrient management planning reduces the risk of pollution that may occur through applying excessive amounts of manure and fertiliser that can't be utilised by the crop. Please contact the [Environment Agency](#) for advice and guidance if you are unable to meet these requirements.

Useful resources

Most of the queries the FAS receives relate to NVZs. To help you understand the NVZ rules, here are some links to useful guidance:

- The FAS has produced an article summarising the NVZ requirements. You can read it [here](#).
- A handy record-keeping guide has been produced by Briony Burge of Creedy Associates Ltd, commissioned by the Catchment Sensitive Farming partnership and Wessex Water. The guide aims to simplify the recording requirements in an NVZ and includes guidance on risk maps, spreading rules and more. The guide can be accessed [here](#).

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

Table 1: Closed periods for organic manure

	Grassland	Tillage land
Sandy or shallow soils	1 September to 31 December	1 August to 31 December
All other soils	15 October to 31 January	1 October to 31 January

Table 2: Closed periods for manufactured fertiliser

Grassland	Tillage land
15 September to 15 January	1 September to 15 January

The Farming Rules for Water: Rule 6: Reasonable precautions to prevent soil erosion

The [Farming Rules for Water](#) have been in place since 2018, and all farmers in England must comply with them. These rules aim to protect water quality by regulating farming practices. There are eight rules in total. This article provides an overview of Rule 6, which sets out the requirements to prevent soil erosion by livestock.



Rule 6 states that you must take reasonable steps to prevent soil loss caused by horticultural and farming activities. This is important because soil loss can result in erosion and allow pollutants to enter a watercourse.

You must take reasonable precautions when carrying out activities such as:

- applying organic manure or manufactured fertiliser;
- creating farm tracks or gateways;
- establishing seedbeds, polytunnels or tramlines;
- cleaning out ditches;
- installing drainage or irrigation;
- irrigating crops;
- spraying crops with pesticides, herbicides or fungicides.

Examples of precautions to mitigate soil erosion include:

- planting crops in early autumn and in dry conditions;
- planting headland rows and beds across the base of sloping land;
- undersowing or sowing a cover crop to stabilise soil after harvest;
- breaking up compacted soil;
- establishing grass buffer strips in valleys and along contours, slopes, field edges and gateways.

To find out what will be checked during a compliance visit, please visit [GOV.UK](#). The Environment Agency has provided further guidance called [Applying the Farming Rules for Water](#), which provides insight into how the Environment Agency enforces the Farming Rules for Water.

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

Protecting your soil post-harvest

It's important to consider the correct post-harvest management techniques to protect your soils. This will benefit the next crop and your business, and will also reduce compaction and soil erosion. The methods are detailed further in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) 5: [Minimising soil erosion](#).

Choosing the correct post-harvest management technique involves taking into consideration the weather, soil type and topography; the crop that has been harvested; and the next crop to be sown. Hot, dry conditions can cause soils to cap during harvest and when being cultivated. This can exacerbate runoff, especially if rainfall is heavy. To minimise the risk of significant runoff, care must be taken when deciding what and where to sow.

Ecological Focus Area (EFA) catch and cover crops are no longer a requirement if you are claiming under the BPS. However, you may consider planting a winter crop or a cover crop by early autumn, as they will help to:

- enhance soil organic matter levels;
- comply with [GAEC 4: Providing minimum soil cover](#) and the [Farming Rules for Water](#);
- improve workability;
- retain moisture and nutrient levels for further crop development needs;
- provide valuable soil protection from winter rains;
- prevent soil loss if sown by early October.

The GAEC 5 page on [GOV.UK](#) has more information on how to limit soil erosion from (for example) cropping practices, livestock and machinery.



For more information on the cross compliance soil management requirements, please refer to the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2022](#).

Details of payments available under the Sustainable Farming Incentive standards for 'arable and horticultural soils' and 'improved grassland soils' can be found on the [GOV.UK webpages](#).

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

Water abstraction reminders

The Environment Agency's guidance on water abstraction during prolonged dry weather and drought is available at [GOV.UK](#). This includes detail on how abstractors can get help during these conditions. The Environment Agency is working on how it can additionally support agriculture water resources during periods of prolonged dry weather and farmers should contact their local Environment Agency office to discuss possible options if they are struggling with abstraction problems.

The Environment Agency's [Water Resources Licensing Service \(WRLS\)](#) allows water abstraction licence holders to manage their licences online. Farmers can view their licences, delegate access to their account and submit information about how much water they have taken.

From April 2022, some licence holders started receiving Water Abstraction e-Alerts via the service. They inform licence holders and operators when hands-off flow restrictions have taken effect and enable the Environment Agency to advise when abstraction can resume following recovery of river flows or groundwater levels.

The latest three-month UK forecast from the Met Office can be viewed [here](#).

For more information, including the updated irrigation prospects, please read the [April 2021 FAS newsletter](#).



Animal welfare reminders

Anyone who keeps animals for agricultural purposes has a legal obligation to protect their welfare by ensuring that minimum standards of care and husbandry are met. It is against the law to neglect farm animals and to fail to meet their needs. This article provides an overview of some of the requirements under [Statutory Management Requirement \(SMR\) 13: Animal welfare](#).

The APHA carries out animal welfare inspections including those under the cross compliance rules. Causing unnecessary suffering to any animal under a person's care can carry a high severity rating and affect your payments under the BPS. Breaches can also affect payments under the Countryside Stewardship, Entry Level Stewardship, Higher Level Stewardship, woodland management plan grant and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme.

These requirements apply to any species kept for farming purposes. The full list of requirements can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

Regularly checking animals

Unlike other SMRs, if a breach of the animal welfare rules is found during an inspection by the APHA, the breach will not be scaled relative to the number of animals affected. If even **one animal** has not received appropriate care, this will be recorded as a breach. The breach is not necessarily only related to an inspector finding a sick or injured animal, but also to how animals are managed and treated.

You must make sure that:

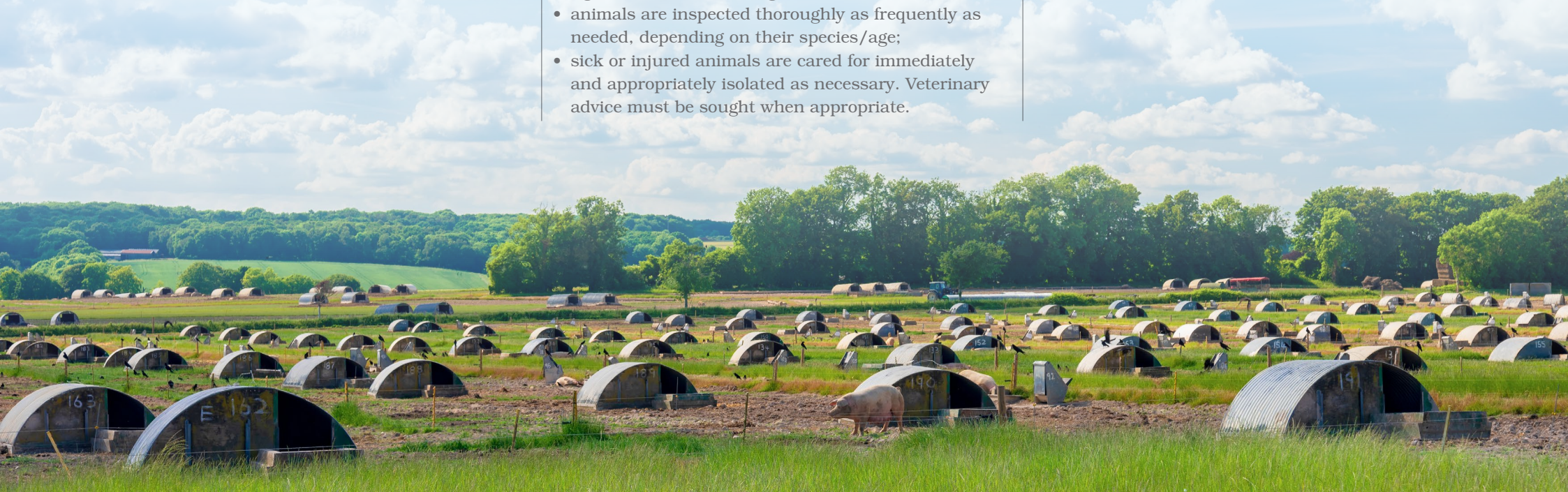
- animals are looked after by enough staff with the right skills and knowledge;
- animals are inspected thoroughly as frequently as needed, depending on their species/age;
- sick or injured animals are cared for immediately and appropriately isolated as necessary. Veterinary advice must be sought when appropriate.

On-farm records

Having incomplete farm records is a breach commonly found by APHA inspectors.

You must keep on-farm records for at least three years from the date of treatment/inspection and make them available to any authorised person at inspection. Examples of on-farm records that are required are:

- any medicinal treatment given to animals (including vaccination and wormers);
- the number of deaths found when the animals are inspected.



Appropriate accommodation must be provided

The basic requirements are set out below. However, different species have different requirements, so please refer to the relevant guidance in the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2022](#).

- Animals must have enough space so they can move freely in an environment that is clean and free from materials that can injure or cause harm.
- Buildings must be correctly ventilated and lit with artificial light if there is not sufficient daylight.
- If any animals rely on automated/mechanical equipment (e.g. for food, water, heating or ventilation purposes), this equipment must be checked at least once a day and any faults must be rectified immediately.

Suitable feed and water

- All animals must either have access to a suitable water supply and be provided with an adequate supply of fresh drinking water each day, or be able to satisfy their fluid intake needs by other means.
- Feeding and watering equipment must be designed, constructed, placed and maintained so that contamination of food or water and the harmful effects of competition between animals are minimised.
- Animals must be fed a wholesome diet that is free from substances that can cause harm and must not be provided with food or liquid that contains any substance that may cause them unnecessary suffering or injury.

Mutilations and breeding procedures

Do not:

- carry out any mutilation or intervention on animals, unless the action is classed as a 'permitted procedure' (more information on species-specific permitted procedures can be found in the SMR 13 appendix on [GOV.UK](#));
- carry out breeding procedures that are likely to cause harm (for example, breeding females when they are too young);
- keep animals for farming purposes if their normal breed characteristics (genetic and physical) mean this will cause damage to their health and welfare.

UK-wide review of the pig supply chain

On 15 July the Government launched a UK-wide [review of the pig sector](#). It will run until 7 October 2022 and invites all stakeholders involved in the pig supply chain to share their views.

Recent global pressures such as rising costs and labour shortages have caused substantial challenges for the sector. The review seeks all stakeholders' views on these issues as well as on the industry's transparency, price reporting, clarity of contractual terms and conditions, and market consolidation.

Farming Ministers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all acknowledged the unique challenges facing the pig sector.

A package of measures has already been introduced to support the pig sector including temporary work visas, Slaughter Incentive Payments (SIP) and Private Storage Aid (PSA) schemes. Ministers encourage everyone involved in the industry to have their voices heard by engaging with [the consultation](#).

Once analysed, a summary of these responses will be published outlining key findings and proposing action.



For more information on animal welfare, please visit [GOV.UK](#) where you can access welfare codes for all livestock types.

If you would like to read about the welfare of calves, please read the [July 2020 FAS newsletter](#). If you would like to read about the welfare of pigs, please read the [September 2020 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.service.org.uk).

Updates from the Future Farming blog and industry announcements

Defra regularly updates the [Future Farming blog](#). Please [subscribe to the blog](#) to ensure you receive all the latest news.

- [The Sustainable Farming Incentive is now open for applications](#). The scheme is available to all farmers who currently receive Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments. It is designed to be accessible, and will reward sustainable practices that support food production and benefit the environment. Our new application service is designed to be quicker and more straightforward for farmers. It includes some new functionality that allows us to automate the checks we need to do and process applications much more quickly than we've previously been able. There is no 'application window' and no deadline by which farmers must apply, so farmers can apply throughout the year at a time that works best for them. We'll be rolling out the new functionality through July in a controlled and careful way, so we can make sure we're able to offer everyone the right level of service and support during this initial phase.

That means that while all BPS-eligible farmers can apply for the SFI, during the first few weeks of rollout there will be different ways into the service:

- Those in BPS only, can apply directly now through the Rural Payments service.
- Those in BPS with an existing Countryside Stewardship (CS) or Environmental Stewardship (ES) agreement, or farming commons, will be asked to contact the RPA who will support you to apply.

This is the initial rollout of the scheme. It will be expanded over the next three years as Direct Payments are reduced. The full set of standards will be in place by 2025.

- Applications for [Funding for Sustainable farm-based proteins](#) opened on 25 July. Farmers, growers, foresters, businesses and researchers can apply for a share of £12.5 million to focus on the research and development of sustainable farm-based proteins. This might be achieved by mitigating emissions or reducing the environmental impact of proteins to reduce biodiversity loss and ease pressure on land and water. A whole range of projects will be funded – in feasibility and industrial research categories - from traditional livestock production and plant production to novel animal feeds/supplements, agroforestry and bioeconomy.
- In [Soil health: A UK-wide discussion](#), Defra shares a summary of the second meeting of the UK Agriculture Partnership (UKAP). It was held at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise in Northern Ireland. The topic of the meeting was soil health. The day's discussions were addressed by the following themes:
 - threats to soil health in the UK;
 - priorities and initiatives;
 - soil carbon and natural capital;
 - research and evidence.

- [Advance payments issued to farmers](#) – BPS advance payments are now being issued to farmers and will reach bank accounts in the coming weeks, the Rural Payments Agency announced on 19th July. In May, Environment Secretary George Eustice announced that payments would be made in two instalments each year for the remainder of the agricultural transition period to help farmers with their cashflow. Around 50% of the overall payment will be issued from July with the remaining balance expected from December.
- The Government has committed to maintaining the farming budget for England at £2.4 billion per year throughout this Parliament. It will be gradually reducing spending on Basic Payments each year over the next six years. Instead, the Government will make this money available to farmers through one-off grants for capital investment in equipment and technology, and ongoing payments for environmental actions and related advice and support. Farmers will be able to be paid for a combination of actions they can choose to suit their farm business, food production and the environment. [This blog post on basic payments](#) provides further information.
- The [Forestry Commission also has a blog page on GOV.UK](#), where it posts information and advice about trees and woodlands. [Sign up to the Forestry Commission's e-alerts](#) to stay up to date.
- If you are a farmer, land manager or contractor who uses slurry or manure, [we invite you to take part in this survey](#) to provide your views on practices to reduce ammonia emissions. The survey is being delivered by Ricardo Energy and Environment. If you have any questions, please contact Aim-Health@ricardo.com.

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Alternatively, please email bookings@farmingadvice.service.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.service.org.uk/events/privacy/.