

July 2014 - e-news issue 15

Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

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

We hope you find the information in this issue helpful. If you have any comments or ideas for topics you'd like us to cover, please let us know.

FAS technical advice line:

Telephone: 0345 345 1302

Email: advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Website: www.defra.gov.uk/farming-advice

**Farming
Advice Service**

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Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) update: greening and cross compliance

From 2015, 30% of Pillar 1 payments to farmers will be linked to greening measures that must be undertaken to benefit the climate and environment. One of the requirements that farmers must meet is to ensure that 5% of their land is set aside in an Ecological Focus Area (EFA). The greening rules include crop diversification and EFAs for arable land. Details for EFA options were announced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in June.

The package of EFA options gives farmers flexibility over how they comply with the rules. Farmers who need to have EFAs will be able to

choose how to meet the requirement from a list which includes land lying fallow, buffer strips, 'catch and cover crops' used to manage soil fertility and quality, Nitrogen Fixing Crops such as legumes and hedgerows. More information will be published on these new greening rules in mid-August.

To receive CAP payments, farmers must continue to meet cross compliance requirements. To reduce the burden on farmers, Defra has cut these measures from 17 to 11.

For the latest guidance and press releases on CAP reform, please visit www.gov.uk/cap-reform

E-reporting database for sheep

Since April 2014, sheep and goat keepers in England have been able to use a new [Animal Reporting and Movements System \(aRAMs\)](http://www.aRAMs.co.uk) to report their animal movements electronically.

You too can use the service to:

- enter and report moves electronically with a click of a button;
- set up moves and print your own movement documents;
- save yourself from having to write out repetitive information for each move; and
- choose to use a free electronic holding register due to be launched during the summer

Visit www.aRAMs.co.uk for more information.

New guidance on identifying and recording sheep and goats in England was sent to all registered sheep and goat keepers in March. You can view or download it from the [GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk) website.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The aim of the EIA rules is to take into account the environmental importance of uncultivated land and semi-natural areas, and the impact of forestry-related projects. Failing to comply with the rules will constitute a breach of cross compliance (GAEC 5).

The rules state that you should not begin or carry out an 'uncultivated land project', which affects an area of two or more hectares¹, unless you have obtained permission from Natural England. An uncultivated land project is a project that aims to increase the productivity for agriculture of uncultivated land or a semi-natural area.

Land that has not been cultivated in the last 15 years, involving either physical cultivation, such as ploughing and sub-surface harrowing, or chemical cultivation, such as application of fertilisers, is classed as 'uncultivated land'. 'Semi-natural areas' include bracken; species-rich hay meadow; fen, marsh and swamp; bog; semi-natural scrub; dwarf shrub heath; wet grassland in coastal and river flood plains; unimproved grassland; and standing water.

If your land falls within the definition above, you will need to contact the Natural England Environmental Impact Assessment team prior to undertaking work to increase the productivity of the land. The team can be contacted on 0800 028 2140 or eia.england@naturalengland.org.uk

Similarly, you should not begin or carry out any afforestation on agricultural land or any deforestation project on existing woodland, regardless of area, unless you have obtained permission from the Forestry Commission. For details of your local Forestry Commission office, visit www.forestry.gov.uk or call the Forestry Commission helpline on 0117 372 1070.

Further information can be located under GAEC 5 in [The Guide to Cross Compliance 2014](#).

1. In some instances Natural England may consider that a project which falls below the EIA thresholds will none the less have a significant effect on the environment and should therefore be subject to EIA. In such cases Natural England have the power to issue a screening notice that removes one or more of the thresholds and requires a screening application to be made.



Bovine Electronic Identification

A new EU Regulation for the identification and traceability of bovine animals (that is, cattle, bison and buffalo) came into effect in July. It will enable the use of official electronic identification (EID) tagging for bovine animals, which will be similar to that used for sheep and goats. Member States have been given up to five years to set up their systems to run a bovine EID system. Each country can decide to make it compulsory to use an electronic identifier, but they must have consulted their industry fully before making the decision. Although the five years commences from July 2014, the next necessary stage is for the European Commission to agree with Member States the exact technology for EU bovine EID and to publish it.

What does all this mean for UK cattle, bison and buffalo farmers?

First, there will be no major alterations to current procedures immediately. Cattle, bison and buffalo will still have to have a visible tag in each ear, with the same number on each, which gives the animal its unique, lifetime identity – just the same as they do now. This will be the case until the five year transition period comes to an end. This is because all Member States must have the same deadline for moving to EID, and some countries would require more changes to their IT systems. Even after bovine EID comes in, cattle, bison and buffalo would still have to have one visible tag, along with one electronic identifier. The EU list of potential official electronic devices includes

tags, ruminal boluses and ‘injectables’. One of the decisions that will need to be made during the transition period is which of these devices would be approved for use. Again, that question will be part of a full industry consultation. In the meantime, the current selection of unofficial EID tags will continue to be available.

What is the difference between ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ EID?

Official electronic devices will be programmed with an identification number in the format used across the whole of the EU (yet to be agreed). ‘Unofficial’ EID tags, used widely in many EU countries including the UK for management purposes, are programmed with codes decided by the individual manufacturer, even though the tag reader may show the UK official tag number. Once ‘official EID’ is enabled, all official tags with electronic transponders will have to be programmed with the EU format. Farmers will still be able to use management tags if they wish to.

Implementation of animal health policy in the UK is a devolved matter. Therefore, each administration will lead on consultation with its industry and implementation of the new Regulation in its territory. However, Defra, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive will work together to bring in the new procedures to ensure a smooth transition. It is most likely that the numbering databases will need to be upgraded first to enable the EID numbering agreed in the

forthcoming EU technical standards. The current style of tag number may have to change as a result. At the same time, we will be working with tag suppliers to enable the production of electronic tags under the new standards. Farmers will be able to use official electronic tags on a voluntary basis as soon as they are approved, and they will be invited to give their opinion as to whether and how their use should become compulsory.

The new Regulation makes other changes too. There will be discussion with farmers about whether or not to keep the ‘cattle passport’, or to move completely away from paper documents in favour of electronic identification. The new Regulation lets a Member State decide whether or not passports are needed within their own country (they will still be needed for export to other Member States). Also, once the databases are upgraded it will be possible for those farmers registered to use the online service and who use electronic reporting to use the Cattle Tracing System (CTS) Online in Great Britain, or the Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS) Online in Northern Ireland, in place of keeping a separate holding register.

So, the new EU Regulation opens up a lot of opportunities for change, once the final details have been agreed, moving away from paper and making possible much more use of electronic technology.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) reminders

Closed periods for organic manures with a high readily available nitrogen (N) content

The Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations establish 'closed periods' for the application of organic manures that contain high readily available nitrogen i.e. contain more than 30% of the total N content. These manures (i.e. slurry, poultry manure and liquid digested sludge) present a significant risk of polluting water if spread on the land at the wrong time of the year. If your land is located within an NVZ you must not spread these manures during the following dates:

	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

The following are the exceptions to the rules for the closed periods -

- If you are in an NVZ that was designated for the first time in 2013, you do not have to comply with the closed periods until after July 2015.
- If a crop is sown on sandy or shallow tillage land on or before 15 September, you may apply organic manure between 1 August and 15 September inclusive.
- If you are an organic farmer, or you are formally converting to organic status, applications up to a maximum rate (150 kg N/ha) will be permitted during the closed period to:
 - winter oilseed rape and grass – applications are permitted between the start of the closed period and the end of October;
 - asparagus; brassica; overwintered salad onions; parsley; and bulb onions. Applications can be between the start of the closed period and the end of February;
 - other crops on the basis of written advice from a Fertiliser Advisers Certification and Training Scheme (FACTS) qualified advisor.

The closed period does not apply to organic manures with a low readily available N content, which may include the following:

- farmyard manure (FYM);
- duck manure produced by birds on straw or wood shavings (but you are expected to demonstrate a low level of readily available N by sampling and analysis).

Applications of manure with a low readily available N content must still comply with the non-spreading conditions and areas -

You must not spread organic manure:

- when the soil is waterlogged, flooded, snow-covered, or frozen for more than 12 hours in the previous 24 hours;
- less than 50 metres from a spring, well or borehole;
- within 10 metres of surface water, except
 - on land managed for breeding wader birds or as species-rich semi-natural grassland and under certain circumstances (see page 36 and 37 of [Guidance on complying with the rules for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones in England for 2013 to 2016](#)); or
 - when you are using precision manure spreading equipment to apply slurry, sewage sludge or anaerobic digestate, in which case you may spread manure 6 metres or more from surface water.

For further details about the organic manure closed periods and your requirements, please refer to **chapter 8** of the [NVZ guidance document](#)

Slurry storage – prepare for winter

Slurry and poultry manure are also subject to a minimum storage capacity as set out in the regulations.

You must have sufficient facilities to store all slurry produced on the holding, and all poultry manure produced in a yard or building, during the following 'storage periods':

- 1 October to 1 April (six months) in the case of pigs and poultry.
- 1 October to 1 March (five months) in the case of other livestock.

If you have any slurry on your farm, you must store it in a tank, lagoon or other suitable facility. These requirements are set out in the Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations 2010. If you are building a new store or substantially altering or enlarging your slurry storage facilities you must notify the Environment Agency at least 14 days before you start any construction work. To contact your local Environment Agency team who will assess and advise you on your proposal, email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk or telephone 03708 506 506. Expect to be asked to provide further details about the location, design, and capacity of your proposal.

For further details see **chapter 10** of the [NVZ guidance document](#) under "Construction standards for manure stores".

Slurry stores must have the capacity to store, in addition to the slurry:

- rainfall expected to enter the store during the storage period;
- any wash water or other liquids that enter the store during that period.

If you have poultry manure or other types of solid manure, you must store them:

- in a vessel;
- on an impermeable base, with appropriate collection and containment of runoff;
- in a roofed building;
- in an appropriately located temporary field heap

For further details about the storage requirements, please refer to **chapter 10** in the [NVZ guidance document](#)

FAS activity

It has been a busy couple of months for the FAS programme. During June and July we organised a series of adviser events on CAP reform in partnership with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). There were eight events in total, covering each region of England. The presentations included:

- CAP update and implementation: Greening rules - crop diversification and (Ecological Focus Areas) EFA's - RPA
- CAP impacts for farm businesses: Practical implications of the crop diversification and EFA rules including action plans, scenarios and examples – FAS
- Adding value to basic EFAs – Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE)

- Cross Compliance changes for 2015 – FAS
- CAP Information Service: Information on the new online CAP system – Defra/RPA

The events provided a good summary of the information that is currently available about the changes taking place next year. Most of the events were over-subscribed so we also arranged a webinar containing a condensed version of the presentations from the adviser workshops.

We have already started planning events for farmers to cover the CAP 2015 changes – all events are advertised on our [website](#) so keep an eye out for forthcoming events in your region.

Forthcoming FAS events

CAP implementation and cross compliance 2015 update

Thursday 21 August at Victoria Inn, Roche, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 8LQ

This event will start at **7.30pm** and finish at **9.30pm**.

The workshop will be run by an independent advisor to provide the latest information on:

- CAP 2015 update and implementation;
- greening rules – crop diversification and EFAs;
- impacts for farm businesses – example scenarios;
- cross compliance changes for 2015.

BASIS continuing professional development (CPD) points are available for attendees.

Places are limited so please book now to avoid disappointment.

CAP implementation 2015 update – FAS and the Exmoor Hill Farming Network

Tuesday 9 September at The Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross, Minehead, Somerset TA24 7DL.

The event will be offered as two sessions – **10.00am to 12.30pm** and repeated between **1.30pm and 4.00pm**.

When booking, please state which session you would prefer to attend.

Topics covered at the event include:

- CAP 2015 update;
- the latest information on the CAP greening rules including:
 - crop diversification;

- EFAs;
- permanent pasture.
- a brief update on the expected changes to cross compliance from 2015.

Refreshments will be provided.

BASIS CPD points are available for attendees.

Places are limited, so please book now to avoid disappointment.

CAP implementation 2015 update

Thursday 11 September at Beaminster Cricket Pavilion, The Memorial Ground Playing Field Hogshill Street, Beaminster, Dorset DT8 3AE.

The event will be offered as two sessions – **10.00am to 12.30pm** and repeated between **1.30pm and 4.00pm**.

When booking, please state which session you would prefer to attend.

Topics covered at the event include:

- CAP 2015 update;
- the latest information on the CAP greening rules including:
 - crop diversification;
 - EFAs;
 - permanent pasture.
- a brief update on the expected changes to cross compliance from 2015.

BASIS CPD points are available for attendees.

Places are limited, so please book now to avoid disappointment.

Please call **0345 345 1302** or email bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk to book your place at the FAS events listed above. Please remember to include the event name, date, session that you wish to attend, your name, company name and contact details.

FAS will be running an events programme during 2014, which will cover most regions. The events will be advertised on our website, so please keep an eye on the [events page](#).



Register for free text message updates

We use text messages to get relevant information to farmers quickly. We send reminders of approaching key dates or updates in response to current events (e.g. flooding). To register for FREE text message updates, please call 0345 345 1302 or email bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk with 'Register for text updates' in the subject line. Don't forget to include your name and mobile phone number in the message. Your details will not be shared with third parties.



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Key dates

1 August	You can cut or plough vegetation on agricultural land which is not in agricultural production from this date. (GAEC 12)
1 August	You can cut hedgerows from this date. (GAEC 15)
1 August	Start of 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 4)
1 September	Start of 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 shallow or sandy soils. (SMR 4)
1 September	Start of closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to tillage land. (SMR 4)
15 September	Start of closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland. (SMR 4)
16 September	Start of 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 which have been sown with crops on or before 15 September. (SMR 4)