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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: 0845 345 1302

Email: advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

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

**Farming
Advice Service**

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Soil Protection Review – what you will be required to do in 2014

As you may be aware, the current Soil Protection Review (SPR) 2010 was designed for use only between 2010 and 2013. The Soil Protection Review is currently being reviewed and new arrangements will be implemented from 2015. The current requirements will therefore apply in 2014. Given that there will be no space to complete an annual review for 2014 in the current booklet, The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will be issuing a continuation sheet to extend the life of the current SPR booklet for 2014.

In line with what is happening with cross compliance guidance, the continuation sheet will primarily be available online. However, as set out in Defra's Digital Strategy 2012, it is committed to providing alternatives for those who are genuinely unable to access the Internet. Users of the SPR online system may continue with their annual review online as before.

Full details of the arrangements for 2014, including details of the **continuation sheet** and online arrangements, will be rolled out later this year.

Slurry stores in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

This message applies to livestock farmers whose land is designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ). If your land has been designated **since 2009 or earlier**, you should have met the requirements for storing slurry and solid manures **by 1 January 2012**, (or 2013 in 'deferred slurry storage areas'). If you farm in a new NVZ, you have until the **autumn of 2015** to complete any new storage, but these projects can take a long time.

Adequate storage will help you to -

- Maximise yields through best use of the N, P and K value of slurry;
- spread less often and in better conditions to protect soils and save fuel;
- reduce the risk of prosecution for causing pollution;
- reduce the risk of an uninsured environmental liability claim.

If your farm is non-compliant and comes to the attention of the Environment Agency, you will be expected to produce and follow an action plan to come into compliance. If this is not done, appropriate enforcement action will be taken, which might include prosecution.

Non-compliance with any of the NVZ Regulations is also a breach of the Cross Compliance rules, and so you are liable to a reduction in your Single Payment. The Environment Agency will normally report any breach of the NVZ Regulations to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), which can be expected to result in a reduction in payment. However, the Environment Agency has some discretion in this, and where construction work has already begun, or where the Environment Officer recognises a genuine unavoidable reason for the delay, reports will be unlikely. It should be noted that the Regulations allow the RPA very little discretion in this way, and any breaches found by RPA inspectors will normally result in a reduction in payment.

If you do not yet comply with the rules, or you are uncertain about whether you are complying, then you should start taking action. Seeking professional advice may be the best first step. FAS can put you in contact with an independent adviser, who can offer free and confidential telephone advice. Please call 0845 345 1302 or email advice@farmingadvice.service.org.uk

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones – grassland derogation

The application period to apply for the grassland derogation in 2014 opened on 1 October 2013 and will close on 31 December 2013. Further details, including a link to the online application form for the 2014 derogation, can be found on the [GOV.UK website](http://gov.uk).

Please note, derogation applications can only be made [online](#) or via the Environment Agency derogation helpline number: **0845 603 3113**.

There will be no provision for paper / postal applications for the grassland derogation for 2014.

Water abstraction – returns reminder

If you hold a summer abstraction licence (authorising abstraction wholly within the months of April to October), the Environment Agency will make actual abstraction return forms available to you from 31 October. You then have 28 days to send your readings to the Environment Agency.

If you hold an abstraction licence that contains a time limit and you want to continue abstracting, make sure you submit an application to renew your licence at least three months before it expires, but the sooner you do this the better. Most licences expire on 31 March, so applications must be sent to the Environment Agency by the end of December at the latest. For further information, please refer to the Environment Agency's [website](#).

You can also find information under GAEC 18 in [The Guide to Cross Compliance 2013](#).

Increasing requirement for sulphur in fertiliser programmes

The following information has been taken from 'RB209 Fertiliser Manual', which can be downloaded from the [GOV.UK website](http://gov.uk).

'Sulphur is an important plant nutrient and plants need about the same amount of sulphur as of phosphorus. Historically, the crop's requirement for sulphur has been met from fertilisers that contain sulphur (e.g., ammonium sulphate) or contained sulphur as a co-product (e.g., calcium sulphate is a co-product in single superphosphate but not in triple superphosphate or ammonium phosphates). Many of these sources containing sulphur are no longer widely used. Additionally, in the past, large amounts of sulphur were released into the atmosphere from industrial processes and this sulphur was deposited on land. However, atmospheric deposition has declined greatly in recent years and levels in 2007 were only about 10% of those in 1980. Consequently, crops should be monitored for signs of sulphur deficiency.

The occurrence of sulphur deficiency

There is an increasing risk of sulphur deficiency in England and Wales in a

wide range of crops including cereals, oilseed rape, brassica vegetables, peas and grass. Oilseed rape and grass grown for silage are particularly sensitive to sulphur deficiency. As atmospheric deposition of sulphur continues to decline, it is likely that the risk of deficiency will affect an increasingly wide range of crops grown on many different soil types.

The best guide for assessing the risk of sulphur deficiency is soil type and field location. Sandy, shallow or medium textured soils that contain little organic matter are most susceptible to sulphur deficiency. Sulphate-S (SO_4^{2-} , the form of sulphur taken up by crops) is not retained in soil because it is soluble in water and is easily leached. Deep silty or clay soils, or fields that have received regular applications of organic manure and organic soils are less likely to show deficiency. Sulphur is retained in organic matter in the soil and can become available to plants, as nitrogen is, when organic matter is decomposed by soil microbes.

Diagnostic methods

Sulphur deficiency causes paling of young leaves and crop stunting that can easily be confused with nitrogen

deficiency (which usually affects older leaves first). In oilseed rape, middle and upper leaves can show interveinal yellowing, and flower petals are unusually pale.

Leaf analysis is a useful guide to diagnosing deficiency in cereals, oilseed rape and grass, but interpretative criteria have not yet been established for other crops. Although analytical results may be available too late to correct deficiency in the current crop, they can be useful for decisions on sulphur use for future crops. The procedures for plant sampling and interpretation of analytical results are given with each crop recommendation table. The malate/sulphate ratio test, developed for oilseed rape and cereals, can give a prediction of likely deficiency. Soil analysis for sulphate-S to a 90cm depth can help identify severely deficient soils, but in other situations it is not as reliable a guide as leaf analysis.'

If you have any queries regarding nutrient management on your farm, please contact FAS and we will put you in contact with an independent adviser. Call 0845 345 1302 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Defra inspection guidance

Defra has recently published a [farm inspection guide](#) in response to recommendations from the farming regulation task force.

The guide is intended to give you information about farm inspections in England. It will tell you about who may inspect your farm, what they are looking for and why they might visit you. Many inspections are carried out only on farms performing specific activities or receiving particular support, which means it is likely that you will only be subject to some.

Like any business, there are other checks that you might be subject to (e.g. the immigration status of your workers, tax and particular types of vehicle). There is information in the [business section](#) of GOV.UK on these more general checks.



FAS events



Increase grass production to increase profit margins

Thursday 17 October at Criftins Village Hall, Criftins, Dudleston Heath, Ellesmere, Shropshire, SY12 9LE

The event will take place from **10.00am - 3.30pm**. The morning will comprise a workshop session at the village hall and after a light lunch the group will visit a farm for a practical demonstration.

Mark Tripney (FAS Adviser) will lead the event, providing guidance on how to get the best out of your grassland by managing nutrients, soil structure and pH. By getting these things right then you can increase grass production and make more money.

BASIS and NRoSO CPD points are available for attendees.

Get up to date with Cross Compliance in 2013 (Farm walk)

Wednesday 30 October at Broford Farm, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9JH, courtesy of Mr Guy Thomas Everard

Tuesday 5 November at Frenchbeer Farm, Chagford, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 8EX, courtesy of Mr and Mrs Malseed

The walks will take place between **11.00 am - 1.00pm** and **2.00 - 4.00pm**. Please state when booking which session you would prefer.

The walk will cover Cross Compliance issues, with an emphasis on helping you avoid penalties for non-compliances. Key areas covered will be livestock ID and registration, animal welfare, the Soil Protection Review (SPR), Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) and the requirements for nutrient management, including GAEC 19 requirements for 'No-Spread Zones' and risk maps.

Improve business competitiveness and meet cross compliance requirements (workshops)

Wednesday 30 October at The Swan Inn, High Street, Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire, GL56 0LL

Thursday 31 October at The Red Lion, High Street, Avebury, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 1RF

Wednesday 6 November at Goring & Streatley Golf Club, Rectory Road, Streatley-On-Thames, Berkshire, RG8 9QA

Monday 11 November at Ellesmere Centre, Ley Road, Stetchworth, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 9TS

The workshops will take place between **10.00 am - 12.30pm** and **1.30 - 4.00pm**. Please state when booking which session you would prefer.

FAS specialists will provide the latest information on farm profitability forecasts and farm business analysis. This will include top tips for business efficiency. The latest information on CAP reform and cross compliance, including key action points will also be covered. The event is offered as either a morning or afternoon session (with refreshments provided). Please state when booking which session you would like to attend.

Places are limited so please book now to avoid disappointment.

Best practice management of nutrients and soils on intensive grassland farms - walk

Tuesday 5 November at Park Farm, Cholmondeley, Malpas, Cheshire, SY14 8HN. The walk will take place from **10.15am until 1.15pm** (refreshments will be served)

The event, led by independent advisers Joe Winstanley & Mark Tripney, will cover:

- An NVZ update, with emphasis on the Nitrogen planning requirements, the NVZ Grassland Derogation and key areas of inspection failure.
- Best practice slurry spreading techniques.
- Identifying and treating soil compaction in grassland, including a practical demonstration of a SUMO grassland sub-soiler.

Nicola Hall, Cheshire Campaign for the Farmed Environment Coordinator will provide an update on the industry-led Campaign. Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) will also be on hand to provide information on the grants and services available to farmers in CSF areas.

Places are limited so please book now to avoid disappointment.

Nutrient management and Soil Protection Review workshops

The aim of these workshops is to prepare a nutrient management plan and complete the Soil Protection Review to meet the requirements of a Rural Payments Agency

cross-compliance inspection. Brendan O'Connor and Derek Knight from FAS will be running the workshops.

Workshops will take place between **10.00am and 12.30pm** at the following locations:

For farmers **inside an NVZ**

Date	Venue
Tuesday 5 November	Kilham Village Hall, Church Lane, Kilham, East Yorkshire, YO25 4RG
Wednesday 6 November	Skirlaugh Village Hall, Benningholme Road, Skirlaugh, Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire, HU11 5EA
Thursday 7 November	Northallerton RFC, Brompton Lodge, Northallerton Road, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL6 2PZ
Tuesday 12 November	Minskip Village Hall, Main Street, Minskip, York, North Yorkshire, YO51 9HZ
Wednesday 13 November	Bullcroft Memorial Hall, Chestnut Avenue, Carcroft, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN6 8AP
Thursday 14 November	The Downe Arms, Main Road, Wykeham, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO13 9QB
Tuesday 19 November	Slate House Farm, Redbourne Road, Hibaldstow, Brigg, Lincolnshire, DN20 9NN

For farmers **outside an NVZ**

Date	Venue
Wednesday 20 November	Sneaton Castle, Sneaton Castle Centre, Whitby, North Yorkshire, YO21 3QN
Tuesday 26 November	The Friends Meeting House, High Street, Great Ayton, Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire, TS9 6BJ
Wednesday 27 November	The Buck Hotel, Reeth, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL11 6SW
Thursday 28 November	Dales Countryside Museum, Station Yard, Burtsett Road, Hawes, North Yorkshire, DL8 3NT
Tuesday 3 December	Skipton Auction Mart, Gargrave Road, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD231UD
Wednesday 4 December	Todmorden Cricket Club, Burnley Road, Todmorden, West Yorkshire, OL14 7BS
Tuesday 10 December	Durker Roods Hotel, Meltham, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, HD9 4JA

Cross compliance and NVZ refresher workshop

Thursday 5 December at Testwood Lakes Nature Reserve, Brunel Road, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 3WX (sat nav postcode)

Did you know that the failure rate for cross compliance on cattle records is over 30%? Come and find out where the failures are occurring and how they can be avoided.

Topics covered at the workshops will include livestock identification and registration, animal welfare, Soil Protection Review, good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC) 19 requirements for 'no-spread zones' and risk maps and NVZs.

The workshop will take place between **9.30am and 12.30pm** and will be repeated between **1.30 and 4.30pm**. When booking, please state which session you would like to attend.

Please call **0845 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 the autumn/winter, 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 0845 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

15 October	Start of closed period for applying organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (e.g. slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland on soils that are not shallow or sandy. (SMR 4)
31 October	If you hold a summer water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction wholly within the months of April to October), the Environment Agency will make actual abstraction return forms available to you from 31 October. You then have 28 days to send your readings to the Environment Agency. (GAEC 18)
1 November	You can burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land, other than in upland areas, from this date. (GAEC 10)
30 November	If you have a two-part tariff agreement for your water abstraction licence, expect to receive your second part charge after 30 November. (GAEC 18)
1 December	You need to carry out your annual inventory of sheep. (SMR 8)
31 December	All new Soil Protection Reviews/annual updates to be completed. (GAEC 1)