

June 2013 – e-news issue 09

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**

In this issue

The Guide to Cross Compliance in England has been updated

Updated nitrates regulations

Improved environment information: Have your say

Forthcoming events

Register for text message updates

Get the latest updates by following FAS on Twitter

Key dates

The Guide to Cross Compliance in England has been updated

There has been an amendment to the Guide to Cross Compliance in England 2013 document to reflect regulatory changes that impact the following rules under Cross Compliance:

- GAEC 19 – No spread zones
- SMR 4 – Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ)
- SMR 7 – Cattle identification and registration

The amended rules are detailed on the [RPA website](#), which supersedes information previously provided, including those pages in The Guide to Cross Compliance in England (2013 edition) and all other guidance on the RPA website.

Updated nitrates regulations

A note has been issued by Defra to outline changes to the Nitrate Pollution Prevention (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and NVZ boundaries. The note can be viewed on the [GOV.UK website](#).

In addition, a Q&A document produced to explain the changes to the nitrate regulations can be viewed on the [FAS website](#).

Summary of changes to the NVZ rules

Details of the changes to the action programme are outlined on the [GOV.UK website](#) and there is a new [guidance document](#) produced to explain these changes in detail. However, a summary of the changes is provided below.

- **N max – crop group additions**
This change places an upper limit on fertiliser applications to most horticultural crops and will apply from 1 January 2014.
- **N max – other N-containing materials included in calculations**
Under the new regulations, crop-available nitrogen from sewage sludge (biosolids), compost or other organic manures not originating from farm livestock are also to count towards the N max limit. This will apply from 1 January 2014.
- **Crop-available nitrogen content**
From 1 January 2014 organic manure can only be applied to specified crop types or grass grown for production of chlorophyll or high protein fodder if the crop-available nitrogen content of the manure is known.

- **Livestock manure N**
From 1 January 2014, the N efficiency value for cattle slurry will be 40% (an increase of 5%) and for pig slurry it will be 50% (also an increase of 5%).
- **Construction of field manure heaps**
Farmers will have to ensure that field heaps occupy as small a surface area as possible and that heaps are not placed within 30m of a watercourse on land with a steep slope. The rules will apply from 16 May 2014.
- **Use of compost**
The organic manure field limit of 250kgN/ha/12 month remains, but a relaxation to this rule will now allow farmers to apply up to 1,000kgN/ha as compost mulch every 4 years to top fruit orchards (apples, pears, plums). The rules will also allow farmers to apply 500kgN/ha as compost every 2 years, which can be worked into the soil for other crops. This N load is instead of, not additional to the 250kg/ha, so for example where 500kg is applied as compost, no more organic manure may be applied within 2 years. The N that becomes available to the crop each year from this compost should be accounted for in your fertilisation plan.
- **Extended closed periods**
The closed period for spreading organic manure on medium and heavy soils will be extended by two weeks (i.e. to 31 January). Farms designated before 2013 must comply with this rule for the closed period starting this autumn. Farms designated for the first time in 2013 must comply with this rule starting in autumn 2015.
- **Slurry spreading after the closed periods**
The current rules limit slurry spreading to 50m³/ha at a time, with no repeat spreading within 3 weeks, between the end of the closed period and the beginning of March. This limit will reduce to 30m³ from January 2014.
- **Spreading near watercourses and precision spreading**
At present, slurry must not be spread within 10m of watercourses. This distance is reducing to 6m when precision slurry spreaders are used, such as shallow injectors, trailing shoe and trailing hose spreaders.
- **Record keeping**
Low intensity farms will now be exempt from some of the record-keeping requirements.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has defined 'low intensity' as applying to farms with:

- Greater than 80% grassland;
- Overall livestock manure N loading is less than 100kg/ha;
- Manufactured N applications of less than 90 kg/ha; and
- No importation of organic manure onto the holding.

Each of these conditions must be met for holdings to be considered 'low intensity'. Where farms meet the criteria, they will not need to keep detailed records of the amount of fertiliser they have spread on individual fields. Farmers will need to have a record of their calculation showing that they are a low-intensity farm.

Grassland derogation

Defra will be sending out letters to all farmers who have been granted an 'administrative approval' to confirm the approval and any new conditions that will apply **during June 2013**. Formal approval of your derogation will depend on you signing and returning a copy of the confirmation letter and conditions by the stated deadline.

If you are applying for the grassland derogation, by **30 June 2013** you should have recorded:

- a map of your farm (this can be your risk map)
- the agricultural area size of your holding and the area of grassland as of 1 January
- a description of your livestock housing and manure storage systems including the volume of manure storage available
- the expected numbers and types of livestock to be kept on your farm during 2013 and a calculation of the amount of manure nitrogen and phosphate these animals are expected to produce. This should include how much you expect to bring onto (import) or send off (export from) your holding during the year.

The date for submitting your fertilisation accounts to the Environment Agency (EA) remains as 30 April of the year following year following the derogation – in other words, you must submit your records for 2013 by **30 April 2014**.

Change to notification arrangements for silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil storage new builds or improvements

Regulation 9 of the Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil Regulations (SSAFO) has, up to now, required you to notify the EA when you have built a new store or improved or enlarged an existing one. This gave the EA a chance to inspect the store and ensure its fitness for purpose and, if necessary, request modifications needed before its first use. Last year's NVZ consultation responses supported a change to the Regulation to require farmers to notify the EA before irreversible decisions about site and construction plans have been made.

The new requirement is for you to notify the EA at least **14 days** before starting work on new stores or refurbishment of existing storage, specifying its type and location. The EA will then be able to determine whether an inspection or any modifications to your construction plans might be required. As before, you are advised to speak to the EA as early as possible, to help avoid any delays or unnecessary costs. The new notification arrangements will apply to any silo, slurry or fuel oil storage system whose construction starts on or after **15 June 2013**. If you are already planning work to commence soon, it is recommended that you discuss this with EA staff as soon as you can, as they will be happy to help you. The EA can be contacted on 03708 506 506 or email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Important dates in 2013 and 2014

The following table details the timeframe of implementation:

- **17 May 2013**
Amended nitrates regulations came into force, including revised NVZ boundaries reflecting the outcome of appeals up to 12 February 2013.
 - **31 May 2013**
Final date for application for a 2013 grassland derogation.
 - **Mid June 2013**
Expected conclusion of outstanding appeals. Final NVZ boundaries are expected to be confirmed in July through amending regulations and updated maps.
 - **15 June 2013**
Planned new builds or improvements starting from this date will be subject to revised notification arrangements through amendment of the Silage, Slurry, and Agricultural Fuel Oil Regulations by the new nitrates regulations.
 - **30 June 2013**
By this date, required information for farms with a derogation during 2013 must have been recorded.
 - **October – December 2013**
Application period for grassland derogations in 2014.
 - **1 January 2014**
Start date for a number of new or amended NVZ rules.
 - **16 May 2014**
New requirements for construction of field manure heaps apply.
- If you have any questions regarding the updated nitrates regulations, please contact the Farming Advice Service for free, confidential advice on 0845 345 1302 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Improved Environment Information: Have Your Say

Natural England is working with Defra and other regulators to review **environment guidance** and all the **environmental information** required from businesses to make sure it is really needed and used. The review includes all information **farmers** need to provide to Defra and its regulators. This work is responding to recommendations made by the **Farming Regulation Task Force** which asked government to ensure all information obligations are necessary, and to avoid duplicated information requests wherever possible.

To have your say, go to Defra's interactive website guidanceanddata.defra.gov.uk where businesses, stakeholders and the public are asked to give their views on how guidance and information obligations can be made more straightforward.

The closing date for feedback is 5 July 2013.

Forthcoming events

FAS will be continuing with a programme of free events. These will cover topics such as Cross Compliance (including Soil Protection Review, NVZs, livestock identification and movements), nutrient management and water efficiency. The following events are already confirmed.

Less is more - benefit from strip cultivation

Wednesday 26th June at EaRTH, Home Farm, Bicton College, East Budleigh, Devon EX9 7BY

The walk will take place between 10.30am – 2.00pm and a free lunch will be provided

The Farming Advice Service, UpStream Thinking and Catchment Sensitive farming invite you to a strip cultivation of maize event. Demonstration sites show the potential benefits of StripCat cultivation. Site one has seen the maize drilled directly into a standing crop of forage rape. Site two is conventionally established maize following a grass ley. Site three is maize drilled directly into a grass ley. There are several spray treatments across the sites.

StripCat involves very little soil disturbance which has many advantages;

- much of the organic matter of the soil is preserved;
- reduced N loss to the atmosphere (mineralization due to ploughing);
- existing crops can help protect the soils in early development;
- better/more robust soil structure at harvest time; and
- quicker establishment of post maize crops, to protect vulnerable soils in the autumn/winter period.

Walk - Look after your soils, your wildlife and your pocket!

The following walks are free events supported by FAS, Catchment Sensitive Farming and the Campaign for the Farmed Environment

The farm walks will focus on:

- Managing soils to; improve yield, promote soil nutrient uptake and improve field drainage management.
- Cross compliance and new NVZ regulations – remain compliant.
- Incorporating agri-environment options into soil management and resource protection.
- Good practice with pesticides.

Events will run from 10.00am – 1.00pm on the following dates:

24th June

Wickham Hall, Bishop's Stortford, Herts, CM23 1JG

27th June

Black Notley Hall Farm, Black Notley, Braintree, Essex, CM77 8LF

28th June

Home Farm, Nacton, Suffolk, IP10 OEU

1st July

Lark Rise Farm, Barton, Cambridgeshire, CB23 7AW

9th July

Lee Farm, Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire, MK44 1LH

11th July

Arminghall Settlement Farm, Arminghall, Norfolk, NR14 7DU

A free lunch will be provided for delegates

Please call **0845 345 1302** or email bookings@farmingadvice.service.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.

All of the FAS events are advertised on our website, so please keep an eye on the [events page](#) as this will be updated when further events have been organised.



Register for free text message updates

We use text messages to get relevant information to farmers quickly. We send them as a reminder of approaching key dates or in response to current events (e.g. flooding). To register for text message updates, please call 0845 345 1302 or email bookings@farmingadvice.service.org.uk with 'Register for text updates' in the subject line, and include your name and mobile phone number in the message. Your details will not be shared with any third parties.



Get the latest updates by following FAS on Twitter

FAS has joined Twitter. Follow us on [@DefraFAS](https://twitter.com/DefraFAS) for up-to-the-minute updates on publications, events and industry information.



Subscribe to the free FAS Newsletter

To receive further copies of the FREE quarterly FAS newsletter, please call 0845 345 1302 or email bookings@farmingadvice.service.org.uk with 'Register for newsletter' in the subject line.

Key dates

17 May	New NVZ regulations came into force
1 August	You can cut or plough vegetation on agricultural land that 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 (e.g. 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)

