



Welcome to the Farming Advice Service (FAS) newsletter

Thank you for continuing to subscribe to our monthly newsletter.

We hope you find the content useful and we 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

You can view a text-only version of the August Newsletter [by clicking this link.](#)

August 2023 – Issue 90

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Key dates to be aware of...

31 August	This is the deadline for making certain changes to a Countryside Stewardship (CS) revenue claim declaration that was submitted before midnight on 15 May (without reduction). If you missed the deadline for CS revenue claim declarations or Environmental Stewardship (ES) revenue claims without reduction on 15 May, 31 August at 11:59pm is also the deadline for late CS revenue claim declarations and ES revenue claims (with reduction). (GOV.UK)
1 September	You can cut or trim hedges and trees from this date. (GAEC*7a and GAEC*7c)
1 September	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 grassland on shallow or sandy soils. (SMR** 1)
1 September	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to tillage land. (SMR**1)
15 September	Extended deadline for Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier and Wildlife Offers applications (GOV.UK)
15 September	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the start of the closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland. (SMR**1)
16 September	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. (SMR**1)
18 September	SFI (Sustainable Farming Incentive) application window opens. Farmers can register their interest from 30 August through the online Rural Payments Service .

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, visit the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2023](#) and the [Rural Payments Agency key dates 2023](#) pages of [GOV.UK](#).

In case you missed them...

1 August	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 (except where crops will be sown on or before 15 September). (SMR**1)
1 August	If you have been granted a derogation by the Rural Payments Agency, you may be able to cut or trim hedges throughout August, to sow oilseed rape or temporary grassland. (GAEC*7a)

* GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions
 ** SMR = Statutory Management Requirements

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 (BPS), CS or ES 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 the relevant regulations. Our newsletter also provides articles on topics that are complementary to cross compliance, such as practices that 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, Rural Payments Agency (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.



Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) closed period reminders

In this article, the FAS provides reminders on the closed periods for spreading organic manure and manufactured fertiliser in an NVZ.

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 are inclusive).

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

There are some exceptions to the rules for the closed periods. For more information, please visit GOV.UK.

Please remember that, regardless of the NVZ closed periods, the [Farming Rules for Water](#) require all farmers (whether they have land located in an NVZ or not) to plan applications of organic manures or manufactured fertilisers. This is so that applications do not exceed the needs of the soil or crop, or give rise to a significant risk of diffuse pollution.

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

Sustainable Farming Incentive webinars in September

The Farming Advice Service and the Future Farming Resilience Fund delivered by Ricardo are offering all newsletter recipients free attendance at a series of webinars focusing of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) offers for their farm business sector:

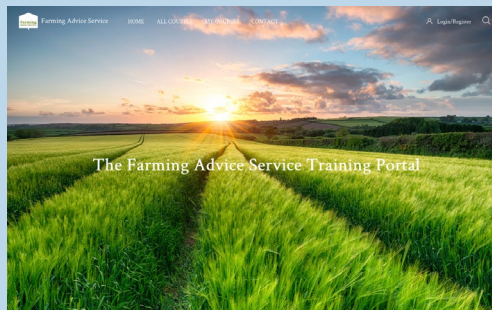
- [Monday 18 September: 7pm to 8.30pm – SFI update for upland farms](#)
- [Tuesday 19 September: 7pm to 8.30pm – SFI update for grassland farmers](#)
- [Monday 25 September: 7pm to 8.30pm – SFI update for arable farmers](#)
- [Tuesday 26 September: 7pm to 8.30pm – SFI update for mixed farms](#)

FAS online training portal

A new module on Animal Health and Welfare is currently under development and will be available online shortly, in addition to the current modules:

- Cross Compliance
- Net Zero Emissions in Agriculture
- Farming Rules for Water
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs)

The training modules are open to anyone who wishes to [register](#); registrants qualify for two BASIS CPD points for completing each end-of-module quiz.



Technical articles available on the FAS website

The FAS and its partners have 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:

- [Nutrient management and farming rules for water](#)
- [Reducing agricultural emissions of ammonia](#)
- [Supporting farmers to become resilient](#)
- [Environment Agency updated prospects for irrigation – forecast for 2023](#)

Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts

If you missed any of our previous webinar sessions from earlier this year, and also those from last year, you can watch the recordings by visiting the [Webinars webpage](#).

You can also listen to **podcasts** with expert speakers on the [FAS website](#), as well as through Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts, by clicking on the links below:

- [The Future Farming Resilience Fund with Sarah Starkey](#)
- [Nutrient Management with Mel Holloway](#)
- [Mental Health in Farming with FCN & RABI](#)
- [Meet the Farming Advice Service Helpline Team](#)

Annual health and welfare review of livestock – a reminder

Farmers who keep cattle, sheep and pigs can receive funding to pay for a vet to visit their farm and carry out an [annual health and welfare review](#).

The review will help:

- reduce endemic diseases and conditions
- increase animal productivity
- improve animal welfare

The review is optional. It is not an inspection and it will not be used for compliance or monitoring purposes.

Please see the application guidance on [GOV.UK](#) to find out:

- if you're eligible
- how much funding you can get
- what you must ask the vet to do when they visit your farm

Please see the claim guidance on [GOV.UK](#) to find out:

- what information you'll need to share when you claim
- what evidence you'll need to keep



Feed silo survey

Defra is asking all cattle farmers to [participate in a short survey on feed silos](#).

The survey consists of seven short questions and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.



The aim is to enable the application for BSE negligible risk status, as recognised by the World Organisation for Animal Health. This will help facilitate international trade in British beef products.

Defra needs to assess how many silos, or similar loose feed containers, that predate the 1996 reinforced feed ban are still in use or are still on farm. Defra is asking farmers to complete the survey even if they do not have a silo that was in use before 1 August 1996, as it needs to achieve a response rate that is representative of the whole cattle farm population.

The information is being requested on a voluntary basis and is subject to data protection legislation.

Water abstraction reminder

For those farmers who are invited by the Rural Payments Agency to apply for a full Water Management Grant by October 2024, please see last month's [water abstraction advice](#) regarding associated abstraction licence applications.

As we move into the end of the irrigation season please review your water requirements well ahead of next year and, if necessary, [apply for](#) or [change, revoke or transfer](#) a water abstraction or impoundment licence ([www.gov.uk](#)). Please make sure you are in a position to begin refilling winter storage reservoirs at the start of the licence season, by checking the physical integrity of pumps and equipment (including liners) now so you can maximise abstraction of river flows.

The Environment Agency is working with the United Kingdom Irrigation Association to refresh the guide to planning, building and commissioning an irrigation reservoir; [5187 – Water Reservoir Brochure \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#). This will include advice on where to find information about water availability in your area, and an update on how to navigate the abstraction licensing process, including details of the Environment Agency's new, enhanced [pre-application service](#). The EA are planning to publish the new guidance in the autumn.

How to spot and report BSE in cattle – a reminder

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is a notifiable disease. If you think an animal in your care is displaying symptoms of BSE, you must report it. You can help Defra by remaining vigilant and spotting signs of the disease.

The disease exists in two forms:

1. **Classical BSE** – linked directly to ingestion of feedstuffs contaminated with the BSE pathogen.
2. **Atypical BSE** – which is believed to occur spontaneously at very low rates in all bovine populations.

Cases of BSE are now fortunately rare, but Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) modelling suggests it is still possible that further classical cases may occur over the next few years as the disease continues to decline. The most recent classical cases in the UK were confirmed in Scotland in 2018 and in England in 2021. The most recent atypical case was confirmed in England this year.

How to spot BSE

Affected cattle do not usually show symptoms until they are at least four or five years old, due to the incubation period of the disease. Cattle with BSE may slowly develop some of the following signs over a period of weeks or months:

- apprehension or nervousness (flighty)
- repeated, exaggerated reactions to touch or sound (startled), and also to stimuli the animal was previously familiar with
- weakness or high stepping of the legs, particularly the hind legs
- reluctance to cross concrete or drains, turn corners, enter yards or go through doorways
- aggression towards humans or towards other cattle
- manic kicking during milking or reluctance to allow milking
- head held low
- difficulty in rising, progressing to recumbency, often with the hind legs in an abnormal position
- tremors under the skin
- loss of body condition, weight or milk yield
- excessive nose licking

Not all affected cattle display the above signs but two or more of these signs in a single animal are suspicious. For downer cows it is important to know whether any of the signs were previously present before the animal was unable to get up.

How to report BSE

If you suspect that an animal may have BSE, please contact the following:

- In England – call the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301.
- In Wales – contact Defra on 0300 303 8268.
- In Scotland – get in touch with your local Field Services Office.

An APHA vet will visit your farm and carry out a veterinary assessment of the animal as soon as possible. If an APHA vet suspects that your animal may have BSE, the following action will be taken:

- They will issue you with a notice restricting the movement of the animal.
- Depending on the animal's condition, they will either cull it on your premises or transport it to an APHA laboratory for slaughter.
- It will be tested to find out if it has BSE and you will receive compensation at market value.

- The APHA vet will put a “whole herd restriction” in place prohibiting the movement of cattle on and off your farm until the cohorts (animals born and/or reared with the suspect animal for up to 12 months before or after its birth and that shared feed with it) and offspring (aged under two years) of the suspect animal are identified. After this, APHA will lift the whole herd restriction and issue notices restricting the movement of these animals.
- If the suspect animal subsequently tests positive for BSE, all offspring aged under two years and all cohorts will be culled and compensation will be paid at market value.

Visit the pages below for more information on:

- [How to spot BSE](#) and what will happen if the disease is suspected or confirmed
- [APHA's International Reference Laboratory for TSE website](#) for more details on clinical signs.

Videos on [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) showing cattle with clinical signs of BSE.

Trees on farms – the latest updates

Woodland creation campaign: Put Down Roots – Plant for the future of your land, business and the environment

The [Put Down Roots](#) campaign encourages farmers and landowners in England to reap the rewards of woodland creation for their land, business and the environment.

Creating woodland can offer new opportunities to diversify, generate extra income, and enhance your land, all while working hand-in-hand with food production.

Depending on the size, type and composition of your woodland, this could include generating additional income through selling carbon credits, timber, wood products and woodfuel, or through designing woodland for recreation and leisure activity.

There are a number of different ways to integrate trees into your farm so that planting doesn't come at the expense of taking agricultural land out of use. This could mean adding trees in fields with crops and livestock, or mixed farming.

From incorporating trees on small patches of land – with some grants supporting planting on as little as 0.1 hectares – to shelterbelt planting and creating large-scale areas of wood pasture, there are plenty of options that can be shaped around the needs and goals of your land and business.

Planting trees can benefit your land and the environment now and for years to come, through boosting biodiversity, improving water quality, reducing erosion, mitigating flooding and helping to tackle climate change.

A variety of grants are available that can support you in the planning, purchasing, planting and long-term management of your woodland:

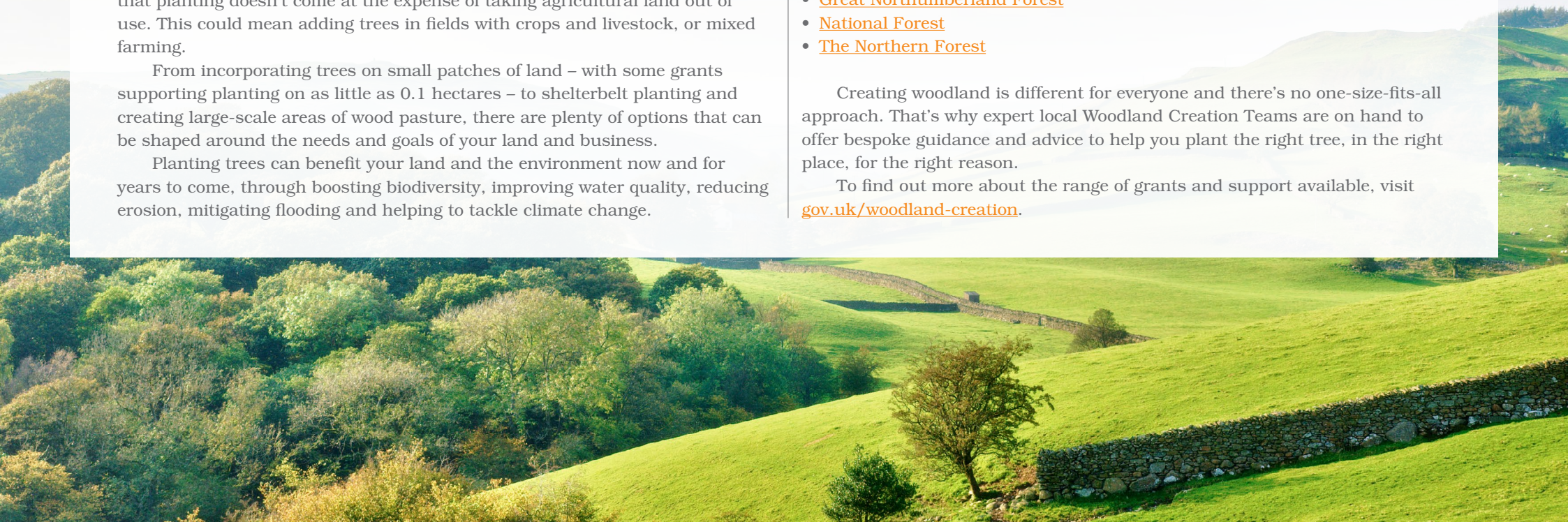
- [The England Woodland Creation Offer](#), via the Forestry Commission.

Regional grants via local Woodland Creation Partners:

- [England's Community Forests](#)
- [Forest for Cornwall](#)
- [Great Northumberland Forest](#)
- [National Forest](#)
- [The Northern Forest](#)

Creating woodland is different for everyone and there's no one-size-fits-all approach. That's why expert local Woodland Creation Teams are on hand to offer bespoke guidance and advice to help you plant the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason.

To find out more about the range of grants and support available, visit gov.uk/woodland-creation.





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. Find more information and guidance on good biosecurity by visiting [GOV.UK](#).

Government announces application dates for Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023

- Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) 2023 will accept applications from 18 September.
- Farmers will be able to prepare for SFI 2023 by registering their interest from Wednesday 30 August
- New and improved offer includes 23 actions to protect the environment while supporting food production and farm productivity

Farmers can sign up for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) from 18 September and start registering their interest from 30 August through the online Rural Payments service.

The dates provide certainty and pre-registration will ensure farmers are supported to have all necessary information in place, including online maps and land use / cover details, so they are ready for when the scheme starts to accept applications from 18 September.

The SFI pays farmers for taking actions that support food production, farm productivity and resilience, whilst protecting and enhancing environment.

There are 23 actions on offer under the new and improved 2023 scheme, including on soil health, moorland, hedgerows, integrated pest management, farmland wildlife, buffer strips, and low input grassland.

Secretary of State for Food and Farming Thérèse Coffey has said:

“The Sustainable Farming Incentive is important for sustainability – for production and profitability. With opening up the options, from mid September for everyone, there is likely to be an opportunity for every eligible farmer to join SFI.”

Full details of the SFI 2023 were published in June this year in a [detailed handbook](#) so that farmers can plan ahead for autumn planting and what they will apply for.

Unlike existing and previous schemes where farmers have had to wait until the end of the first year of their agreement to receive any payment, payments under SFI 2023 will be paid quarterly to support farmers’ cashflow and activities required in the scheme.

There has been sustained increased demand for new CS agreements increase in recent years, with the number of agreements almost doubling over 3 years to 2023. This has continued into this year – the RPA have already had 6,000 applications, with still 4 weeks to go before the extended deadline.

Following direct feedback from farmers and to enable as many people as possible to apply, the application window for 2024 Countryside

Stewardship Mid Tier agreements has been extended until Friday 15 September.

Farmers are able to be in SFI and Countryside Stewardship at the same time as long as the actions are compatible, and they are not being paid for the same action twice. The confirmed timeline for SFI allows time for small final technical adjustments to ensure the service works as straightforwardly as possible for all customers and aligns with the closing date for CS.

The Government’s flexible and accessible farming schemes are supporting farmers to keep the nation fed while protecting and enhancing our environment – and are all part of the £2.4 billion annual farming budget ringfenced for the life of this parliament.



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. Find more information and guidance on good biosecurity by visiting [GOV.UK](#).

Hedgerow consultation

A reminder that the Consultation on Protecting Hedgerows closes on 20 September. Please contribute your views via the [consultation page](#).

Small R&D Partnership Projects competition is now open

The small R&D Partnership Projects competition is now open. Through this competition, Defra wants to enable UK-based businesses to collaboratively develop solutions which improve productivity, sustainability and resilience in farming, and which realise our net zero ambitions. For more information please read the Defra [Farming blog post](#).

Defra calls for evidence on barriers to planning permission

Defra is seeking evidence of barriers farmers and land managers have experienced when applying for permission for slurry stores, reservoirs, changes to agricultural buildings and any projects involving engineering works or land use change, e.g. creation of ponds, wetlands, peatland restoration, fallowing/rewilding etc.

The purpose of the call for evidence is to identify the root causes of planning barriers and consider the most appropriate measures for overcoming them. Defra would also welcome views on any unintended consequences that could result from these types of projects being successful. Further consultation on those proposals would be needed before any changes were implemented. For more information please visit [GOV.UK](#).

The survey is currently live online at [GOV.UK](#) and closes on 25 September 2023.

Stay up to date with us



Get the latest updates by following us on Twitter

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



Subscribe to our free monthly newsletter

If you don't already receive our monthly FAS newsletter, please visit farmingadvice.org.uk and enter your email address into the newsletter sign-up box.

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