



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 September Newsletter [by clicking this link](#).

**September 2023
– Issue 91**

Key dates to be aware of

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Stay up to date with us

Key dates to be aware of...

1 October	You can burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land in upland areas from this date. (GAEC*6)
1 October	For any land located in a 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 soils which are not shallow or sandy. (SMR**1)
15 October	For any land located in a 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 soils which are not shallow or sandy. (SMR**1)

In case you missed them...

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 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 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	Defra began inviting those who submitted an expression of interest to apply for an SFI agreement from 18 September.

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](#).

* 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), 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 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.



The Sustainable Farming Incentive has opened for applications

On Monday, 18 September, Defra announced that applications are starting to be accepted for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme.

SFI is one of three environmental land management schemes on offer for farmers. SFI pays farmers for taking actions that support food production, farm productivity and resilience, whilst protecting and enhancing the environment. The scheme has been expanded and made more flexible in response to farmers' feedback.

Providing you and your land are eligible, anyone can apply for a Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) Agreement in 2023, including those with 2022 agreements.

Defra is asking everyone who is interested in joining the scheme to register their interest first. They will then invite them to make a full application. This approach is to make sure everyone who wants to join the scheme has a smooth and supported experience.

Defra started inviting people to register their interest in August and are now inviting those who did to apply for

an agreement. There is no upper limit on the number of agreements that will be issued.

If you haven't yet expressed your interest in SFI, you still can by filling in the form below.

Farmers representing a diverse range of farm types across the country have already registered their interest.

To provide a boost for those who apply early, farmers who have a live 2023 agreement before the end of the year, will receive an early payment – worth 25% of the value of their agreement – in the first month of their agreement.

Before you join SFI, there are some steps you'll need to take to get ready. Alongside updates from the team and background on the scheme, you'll find [all the resources you need to prepare in this blog post](#).

[Click here for the SFI Expression of Interest Form.](#)



Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts

NEW

The recordings of our series of webinars on the SFI with the Future Farming Resilience Fund are now available to view on the [FAS webinar pages](#).



NEW



[Support available from ADAS through the Future Farming Resilience Fund](#)

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](#)

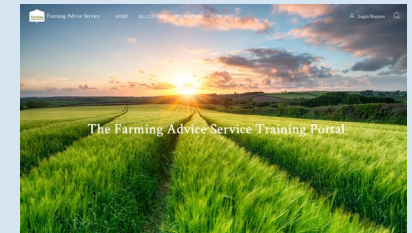
Technical articles available on the FAS website

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](#)

A new technical article on **Integrated Pest Management** is planned for October; watch this space for further details.

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.

The rules on removing or working on a countryside hedgerow



Hedgerows forms a vital part of the English farming landscape and act a boundary marker and wildlife habit. Their healthy growth above and below ground supports carbon sequestration, soil health and the protection of water courses, as well as reducing risks of flooding and pollution. The rules on removing or working on a countryside hedgerow are in place to preserve these benefits for farm businesses and the wider landscape.

A countryside hedgerow is a boundary line of bushes that can include trees. This article covers some of the rules that apply if you want to remove or work on (cut or trim) a hedgerow that falls under the [Hedgerows Regulations 1997](#). In addition to this, some of these rules are cross compliance requirements under [GAEC 7a: Boundaries](#).

Before starting work on a countryside hedgerow, you must check if it is protected, as this would mean you cannot remove it. The full criteria for defining a protected hedgerow are available on [GOV.UK](#) – these apply to the length, location and ‘importance’ of the hedgerow.

Apply to remove a countryside hedgerow

You can only remove a hedgerow if it is less than 30 years old, if you are the owner, tenant or manager of the hedgerow, or if you are a utility company that is eligible to remove it.

You should discuss your proposal to remove a hedgerow with the local planning authority (LPA) first, to make sure it is legal to do so. You will need to provide plans relating to the hedgerow you want to remove – the local authority will explain what is needed. The LPA will be one of the following:

- the [local authority](#)
- the [National Park Authority](#) for land within a national park boundary
- the [Broads Authority](#) in the Norfolk Broads
- the [Council of the Isles of Scilly](#) for land on the Isles of Scilly

After it has acknowledged your request, the LPA has 42 days to respond to your written notice to remove a hedgerow. If you do not agree with the LPA’s decision, you can appeal it; however, this must be done within 28 days of the date on the LPA decision letter. For more information, please visit [GOV.UK](#).

Check if you can work on a hedgerow

Before starting work on a hedgerow, you must check whether there are any restrictions in place. These include the following:

- **Nesting birds:** The closed period for cutting or trimming hedges and the main nesting and breeding season (1 March to 31 August) has now passed. However, you still have an obligation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 not to disturb nesting birds or their eggs. Please note that leaving hedge trimming until later in the year helps provide more food and protection for birds and wildlife.
- **Tree protection and licensing:** Before carrying out work on hedgerow trees, you must check if you need a [felling licence](#). The LPA will tell you if there is a [tree preservation order](#) in place, or if it is in a [conservation area](#).
- **Restrictions for schemes:** If you are claiming under the BPS, you must follow the rules for hedgerows in [GAEC 7a: Boundaries](#). If you have an [Environmental Stewardship](#) or [Countryside Stewardship](#) agreement, you must check your [agreement handbook for the restrictions](#).

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

Storing silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil

If you are a farmer, land manager or a tenant farmer (who is jointly or wholly responsible for land), this article provides guidance on the Environment Agency's regulations for storing silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil.

The environment agency (EA) enforces regulations to reduce the risk of pollution incidents from the storage of silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil. The regulations aim to protect the surrounding environment and prevent pollution from entering water courses.

If you are farming in an NVZ, please note there are extra [requirements for storing organic manures](#).

When to contact the Environment Agency

You must inform the EA 14 days prior to making any changes to your storage or if you are building new storage for silage, slurry or agricultural fuel by using the [WQE4](#) form. Send the completed form to [your local office](#).

Storing silage

The regulations require you to:

- Ensure your silo has an impermeable base extending beyond walls complying with the two British Standards for concrete bases ([8007:1987](#) and [8110-1:1997](#)) or the single standard for hot-rolled asphalt bases ([13108-4:2006](#)).
- Comply with the [British Standard](#) if your silo has walls to withstand wall loadings.
- Have an effluent collection system for your silo and ensure the drainage collection channels are impermeable.
- Ensure your effluent tank, if above ground, is able to resist attack from silage effluent for at least 20 years with maintenance.
- Ensure your effluent tank, if below ground, is impermeable for at least 20 years without maintenance.

- Have enough storage in your effluent tank for a minimum of two days at peak flow and enough to avoid a pollution risk.
- Seal baled silage in an impermeable membrane to avoid leakage into a water source.
- Contain the drainage if you store silage in a non-baled bag.

The regulations prohibit you from:

- Making or storing any silage or unwrapping baled silage within 10 metres of inland or coastal waters or storing field silage within 50 metres of a protected water source.
- Placing silage effluent into an under-floor slurry store.
- Disturbing topsoil and states that you must avoid construction works, e.g. walls or earth banks, when storing field silage.

Storing silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil

Storing slurry

The regulations require you to:

- Ensure your slurry tank, reception pits, pipes and channels are all impermeable and meet the anti-corrosion [British Standards](#) and last for 20 years with maintenance.
- Comply with the [British Standard](#) to ensure the base and walls of your slurry tank and reception pit withstand the wall loadings.
- Ensure your slurry store capacity includes a minimum of 300 millimetres of freeboard and 750 millimetres for earth-banked stores.
- Have capacity in your slurry store to secure at least four months storage.
- Ensure any drainage pipes fitted have two valves separated by at least one metre which can prevent flow.
- Ensure earth-banked slurry stores consist of impermeable soil to a thickness of at least one metre.
- Ensure the base of a weeping wall store extends beyond its walls and includes drains to capture escaped slurry to drain into an effluent tank.

The regulations prohibit you from:

- Positioning your slurry storage tanks, effluent tanks, channels or reception pits within 10 metres of inland or coastal waters (unless permission is given by the EA).

Storing agricultural fuel oil

The regulations require you to:

- Store your fuel oil in a tank or drum that meets [ISO 9000 standards](#).
- Follow the Defra [Groundwater Protection Code](#) for underground tanks.
- Surround your tank or drum with a secondary containment structure or bund. If using a bund please be aware of, and follow, the related requirements, which can be found in the [secondary containment section of the government's guidance](#).

The regulations prohibit you from:

- Positioning your installation within 10 metres of inland or coastal waters (including yard drains, dry ditches and land drains).

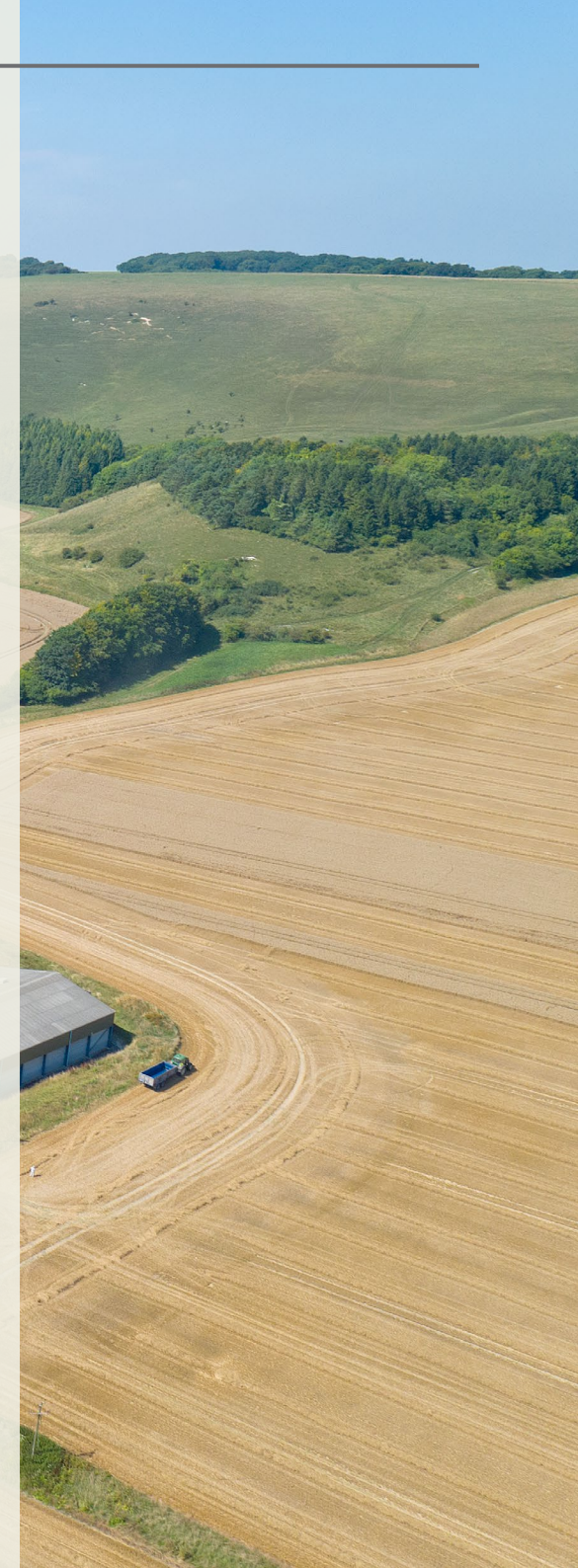
If you do not comply with the regulations, you could be subject to prosecution and a resulting fine should you be inspected by the EA. However, grants are available to help you make the appropriate changes.

Grants

The [slurry infrastructure grant](#) is available to help replace, build new or expand existing slurry stores to provide six months' storage. Those interested in the second round of this grant will be required to use the AHDB [Slurry Wizard Tool](#) (update expected early October 2023) to calculate storage requirements as part of the application process.

[Capital grants](#), which are available under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, are three-year agreements offering capital items to achieve specific environmental benefits, such as improved water quality. Capital item RP28 refers to roofing (including roofing to slurry and silage stores) and offers £72.50 per square metre.

Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) programme is a partnership between DEFRA, Natural England and the EA which aims to provide free one-to-one advice to farmers and land managers to improve their slurry management and reduce water and air pollution. Amongst others, CSF offers one-to-one visits, tailored on-farm advice and information on available grants. For more information and to find your local CSF advisor, please visit the [Catchment Sensitive Farming guidance page](#).



Trees on farms – Benefits from woodland management

The Forestry Commission (FC) has launched a new campaign, called Woodland Management Matters.

This campaign is aimed at farmers who manage woodland and trees on farm, who are thinking about planting a woodland or would just like to understand more about how to manage trees and woodland.

Trees and woodlands are important natural assets. Vital for biodiversity and nature recovery, they provide valuable ecosystem services such as delivering sustainable wood products, capturing carbon, and helping to regulate the flow of water through your farm. They offer opportunities to diversify, generate extra income, and improve productivity. However, for trees and woodlands to flourish and deliver all these benefits to the farm, they need to be managed to ensure they are resilient and in good health.

There is plenty that can be done to start or increase woodland management activities, including understanding the overall health and condition of the woodland and identify whether the trees and woodland show any signs of pests and diseases. There may be a need to consider how to manage browsing mammal populations or invasive non-native plants. It is also important to set clear woodland objectives so any activities you take are appropriate and support your overall aims.

A useful first step would be to develop a woodland management plan. This can provide a structured way to organise the sustainable management of the woodland, working woodland management actions into your farming practice. If approved by the Forestry Commission, you could be issued with a felling licence lasting up to 10 years. Funding to create a woodland management plan is available from the [Forestry Commission](#).

To find out more:

- Read the Forestry Commission [blog](#)
- Watch the Forestry Commission's latest [video](#)
- Visit [gov.uk/manage-woodland](https://www.gov.uk/manage-woodland) to discover funding opportunities and woodland management resources.





Updates from the Future Farming blog and industry announcements

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

Important changes to the Livestock Information Service support team

From 1 September 2023, the Sheep Bureau Service will sit under new management from the Livestock Information Service. This partnership is a first move toward a multispecies bureau service as part of Defra's Livestock Information Transformation Programme.

What does this mean for users of the service?

The only change users of the service will notice is that the contact details have changed. Please see below for the new details (note: the email address will remain the same):

- **Telephone:** 03300 416 577 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 5:00pm)
- **Address:** Livestock Information Service, C/o Defra, Curwen Road, Workington, CA14 2DD
- **Email:** support@livestockinformation.org.uk

What is Defra's Livestock Information Transformation Programme?

The Livestock Information Transformation Programme (LITP) is accountable for the delivery of the Livestock Information Service (LIS), alongside Livestock Information Ltd.

Its goal is to improve the accuracy and management of livestock movement data to benefit trade and disease control, along with bringing wider industry benefits.

Why not go digital?

To start using the Livestock Information Service (LIS) to report sheep, goat and deer movements online, [log in](#) or [create an account](#) today.

For more information about the Livestock Information Service, please visit our website <https://www.livestockinformation.org.uk/> or follow us on [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

New consultation on changes to cattle identification, registration, and movements

Defra have launched an 8-week public consultation to seek views on the Government's proposals for improving the identification, registration, and movement system for cattle, bison, and buffalo in England. Cattle traceability is crucial to protecting the national herd from disease and safeguarding our food chain.

The consultation will cover proposals to simplify legal requirements, more proportionate enforcement, introduction of bovine electronic identification, removal of holding registers, late registration of calves, and changes to reporting movements. Digitisation of cattle traceability offers potential benefits, such as cost savings from reduced administrative tasks, improved traceability data to assist with stemming disease, and strengthening the UK position in international markets.

Defra is inviting farmers and livestock keepers to share their views. The consultation titled 'Changes to Bovine Identification, Registration, and Movement in England', can be found [here](#).



Updates from the Future Farming blog and industry announcements

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

Apply now: new funding to improve calf housing

You can now take the first step to apply for a Calf Housing for Health and Welfare Grant. This is the first animal health and welfare infrastructure grant offering farmers the opportunity to receive co-funding for large infrastructure projects that help to continually improve the health and welfare of your animals.

Grants of between £15,000 and £500,000 are available.

The Calf Housing for Health and Welfare Grant is available for cattle keepers to co-fund new and upgraded calf housing that improves social contact (rearing calves in small groups) and the ambient environment. This covers adequate ventilation, protection from draughts, and suitable temperature and humidity, including Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels.

Healthy and thriving calves cost farmers less (for example in vet visits and/or treatment), perform better and are more valuable.

Better housing could result in fewer losses, as well as better growth rates and feed conversion on all calf units, beef and dairy.

Before applying, please [read the official guidance on GOV.UK](#). It explains the eligibility criteria for the grant and the information you'll need to supply.

The next step is to [use the online checker to determine whether you can apply for the grant](#). This online checker is available until **30 November 2023**.

Government sets out support for farmers on Back British Farming Day

On 13 September, the government set out further support for British farmers as it joined the NFU in celebrating Back British Farming Day to showcase the hard work of farmers and growers and encourage more people to buy high-quality British produce.

The government is backing industry-led action to signpost customers to 'buy British' when they shop online and is supporting campaigns to endorse home-grown meat and dairy.

Recognising the challenges that farmers face with inflation and rising input costs, the government will confirm that farmers who have a live Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023 (SFI) agreement before the end of the year will receive an early payment in the first month of their agreement, helping with cashflow and ensuring SFI works for farm businesses.

Farmers will also benefit from £30 million to invest in automated, robotic and solar technologies and £4 million to upgrade small abattoirs. The government will support food and drink exports by launching a recruitment drive to appoint an additional five agri-food attaches and confirmed that farmers producing sustainable British food under Environmental Land Management schemes will be able to use them to help meet public procurement standards, benefiting farmers and allowing the public sector to benefit from more excellent British food.

[Read more here.](#)

Stay up to date with us



Get the latest updates by following us on X (formerly 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/.