

August 2018 - e-news issue 40

Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

Thank you for subscribing to the Farming Advice Service (FAS) newsletter.

If you do not already receive the FAS newsletter straight to your inbox, but would like to, 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 would like us to cover, please let us know.

FAS technical advice line:

Telephone: 03000 200 301

Email: advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/government/groups/farming-advice-service

**Farming
Advice Service**

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Key dates

Below are details of forthcoming key dates.

1 September	You can cut or trim hedges and trees from this date. (GAEC 7a and 7c)
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 1)
1 September	Start of closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to tillage land. (SMR 1)
15 September	Start of closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland. (SMR 1)
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 1)
1 October	You can burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land in upland areas from this date. (GAEC 6)
1 October	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 soils which are not shallow or sandy. (SMR 1)
1 October	EFA cover crops must be established by this date (and retained until at least 15 January 2019). (Basic Payment Scheme 2018)
14 October	EFA catch crops must be retained until at least this date. (Basic Payment Scheme 2018)
15 October	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 soils which are not shallow or sandy. (SMR 1)
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 2)

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, please visit the '[Cross compliance 2018](#)' and '[Basic Payment Scheme 2018](#)' pages of GOV.UK.

You can also download a poster with all cross compliance and greening key dates for 2018 from the [FAS website](#).

How can FAS help you?

Free and confidential advice

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) regulations require European Union (EU) Member States to run an advisory system covering cross compliance, greening, water protection and aspects of pesticide use. In England, this is provided by FAS. Under these regulations, the advice given to individual farmers must be **confidential** – that is, FAS **must not** disclose any personal or individual information or data it obtains during its advisory activity.

FAS updates the farming sector on relevant EU and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) policies.

It explains the requirements under and objectives of CAP, EU directives, national legislation and policies; and the actions that can be taken to help meet compliance. FAS provides **free, confidential** advice on cross compliance and the greening requirements, some aspects of the Water Framework Directive (such as silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil (SSAFO) and waste exemptions) and the Sustainable Use (of pesticides) Directive.

The cross compliance rules apply to you if you are a claimant of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship.

Getting in contact with the advice line

Farmers requiring telephone advice from FAS can contact the **Rural Services Helpline** on 03000 200 301 Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5pm.

The Rural Services Helpline provides a single number for all FAS, Rural Payments Agency, Animal and Plant Health Agency, Natural England and Forestry enquiries. By providing a single point of contact, the Government aims to make it simpler for farmers to access technical guidance on a range of topics, including cross compliance, greening, CAP payments and animal health inspections.

You can also email enquiries to advice@farmingadvice.org.uk.



Livestock registration and identification

FAS has produced two technical articles to provide top tips for compliance with cattle and sheep registration and identification.

Please click on the following links to view the articles:

- [Top tips for compliance with sheep identification and registration](#)
- [Top tips for compliance with cattle identification and registration](#)



New guidance released regarding the dry weather conditions

Advice for those in agri-environment schemes

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has issued guidance to farmers in the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), and agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Environmental Stewardship (ES), regarding the persistent dry weather conditions that have been experienced in England. This guidance is being reviewed and updated regularly on GOV.UK.

Water abstractions

The Environment Agency is also offering support for farmers by allowing a more flexible approach to water abstraction. More information is available on GOV.UK.

The Environment Agency has also issued a new Regulatory Position Statement regarding treated sewage effluent – visit GOV.UK for more information.

The dry weather situation could continue as we go through into the autumn, which may affect your water resource availability for next year's irrigation season. The Environment Agency is advising farmers and growers to use the experiences of this summer to check the conditions of licences and the resilience of water supplies. This includes considering the effect that a dry winter could have on the ability to refill storage reservoirs.

Abstractors should talk to the Environment Agency about the options to improve resilience – for example, extending the licensed abstraction season through a formal variation and/or a new licence. Processing a licence application (variation or a new licence) can take up to 4 months to determine, so prompt action is recommended. More information is available on GOV.UK.

This summer has highlighted the importance of water for many businesses. If you abstract water for previously exempt activities, such as trickle irrigation and environmental stewardship, you need to apply for a licence via GOV.UK. The 'clock is ticking' on bringing these type of abstractions (New Authorisations) into regulation. We are now over a quarter of the way through the application period, which finishes on 31 December 2019. The Environment Agency strongly recommends that you submit your application in good time before the transitional application period closes as there will be no extensions.

Slurry spreading

The Environment Agency has published guidance to help prevent agricultural pollution during the exceptional weather. It will assist farmers impacted by these exceptional dry weather conditions

with compliance on slurry spreading. This can be found on GOV.UK.

The focus of this is to avoid or minimise soil damage and/or water pollution that can occur if slurry is spread in unfavourable soil and/or weather conditions. It is also important that stores do not overflow and become a point-source of water pollution. The guidance includes several favoured options farmers should consider before spreading slurry and waste milk. However, in some instances, spreading to land may be the only available option. When this happens, farmers may not be able to comply with legal requirements.

In such situations, farmers are asked to contact the Environment Agency to discuss a sensible solution. If spreading to land needs to happen, and can be done without causing pollution, a flexible enforcement approach can be taken.

Environment Agency staff at the National Customer Contact Centre are also available to discuss individual situations and advise on what actions can be taken. Please call 03708 506 506 to speak to the National Customer Contact Centre. Out of hours, or in an emergency, call the incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Integrated pest management

Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products (PPPs) on the market applies in every EU country and requires PPPs to be applied 'properly'. Proper use includes those applying pesticides in a professional capacity to follow the principles of integrated pest management (IPM) set out in The Sustainable Use (of Pesticides) Directive 2009/128/EC. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan aims to put IPM at the heart of an in-the-round approach, using pesticides more judiciously and supplementing them with improved crop husbandry and the use of natural predators.

What is integrated pest management?

The Directive defines IPM as the careful consideration of all available plant protection methods and integration of appropriate measures to discourage the development of populations of harmful organisms. It aims to keep the use of all forms of control to levels that are economically and ecologically justified, and reduce or minimise risks to human health and the environment. IPM emphasises the growth of a healthy crop with the least possible disruption to agro-ecosystems and encourages natural pest control.

General principles of IPM

The general principles include:

- preventing or suppressing the development of populations of harmful organisms (for example, through crop rotation; use of cultivation techniques, resistant varieties, balanced fertilisation, irrigation/drainage practice, hygiene measures, and protecting and enhancing beneficial organisms);
- using forecasting and monitoring systems to assess pest pressures and using thresholds (where available) to decide whether and when to apply controls;
- giving preference to non-chemical methods if they provide a satisfactory method of control;
- using pesticides that pose least risk to human health and the environment;
- keeping use of all methods of control to levels that are necessary (in the case of pesticides, this may involve reducing dose rates), while being mindful of the need to avoid the development of resistance and adopt anti-resistance strategies;
- assessing the effectiveness of controls.

What you should do to comply with the IPM requirements

Having an IPM plan (IPMP) can help farmers to adopt an integrated approach to pest management and to demonstrate due diligence in meeting the obligation to take all reasonable precautions to protect human health and the environment when using pesticides. An IPMP can help to demonstrate that risks have been carefully assessed and that the control regime has considered different ways of controlling pests, weeds and diseases. An IPMP may also be useful evidence for farm assurance schemes and cross compliance inspections.

Obtaining an IPMP

The NFU and Voluntary Initiative have developed an [IPMP](#) that can be used by farmers to demonstrate they are following the principles of IPMPs stated in the Directive. This is a free tool and, once you have completed it online, a copy of the IPMP will be emailed to you. The IPMP can then be printed and retained with other farm records.

It is important to review the IPMP regularly, with a thorough annual review. A BASIS registered adviser may be able to assist with completing and reviewing an IPMP.



Greening reminders

Greening supports farmers to adopt and maintain practices that help to meet national environmental and climate goals. Greening payments account for approximately 30% of the total payment farmers receive when claiming under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). Failure to comply with the greening rules could result in the loss of some or all greening payments under the BPS. Please be aware that reductions in greening payments for failure to comply with the rules can also be accompanied by administrative penalties proportionate to the severity and scope of the non-compliance.

On 30 June 2017, the European Commission published changes to the regulations that set out the greening requirements. These changes have been introduced for the 2018 BPS year, which started on 1 January 2018.

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has published detailed 2018 guidance, which can be viewed on GOV.UK. A summary of the main changes can be found on page 1 of the guidance. It is important that farmers understand these if they are claiming BPS payments.

Ecological Focus Areas

If your farm has more than 15ha of arable land, then you are likely to be required to dedicate at least 5% of the total arable land declared on your BPS application to Ecological Focus Areas (EFA). EFAs are areas of land

that are used to deliver ecological and environmental benefits.

Detailed guidance on the EFA rules begins on page 39 of '[Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2018](#)'.

Catch and cover crops

One of the EFA options is to establish catch and cover crops. These are designed to protect the soil and use available nutrients between harvest and sowing.

Catch crops are quick-growing crops that are planted between two regular crops grown in consecutive seasons or between two rows of regular crops in the same season.

Cover crops are planted between main crops to prevent leaching or soil erosion, or to provide green manure.

For land to count as an EFA, farmers must use a sown mix of at least two

different cover types (one cereal and one non-cereal). The crops that can be grown in the sown mix are:

Cereal	Non-cereal
Rye	Vetch
Barley	Phacelia
Oats	Mustard
	Lucerne
	Oilseed radish

Using crops from this list will give the soil surface the best chance of protection from erosion. It will also help to make sure that available nutrients are taken up by the plants. Once the catch/cover crop is destroyed, you should take care to ensure that all those benefits are not lost.



So, ideally, you should avoid grazing and establish the next crop quickly. You can include other crops in your catch and cover crops, but these areas cannot count as an EFA.

This list is based on the crops that have been used successfully for the Environmental Stewardship scheme in recent years. The regulations do not allow farmers to include crops that are usually grazed – kale and stubble turnips are not included.

However, grass or leguminous crops (or a mix of both) can be used as a catch crop or a cover crop if they are undersown in the previous crop and are visible and dense enough to cover the ground by the start of the catch crop or cover crop period.

To count as an EFA in 2018, catch crops must be established by **20 August 2018 and retained until at least 14 October 2018**.

To count as an EFA in 2018, cover crops must be established by **1 October 2018 and retained until at least 15 January 2019**.

Where a catch or cover crop is established through undersowing, the period starts from the time of harvest of the main crop and remains until the next main crop is sown, even if this is less than the retain date above.

There are no restrictions on the management of catch or cover crops outside of these periods. However, EFAs should not be sown with the intention of being used for harvesting or grazing. Catch and cover crops do not need to be destroyed after these periods and they can be grazed outside of them.

The catch or cover crop cannot be destroyed before the end of the relevant period. Any activities that would destroy the catch or cover crop may only take place after the end of the relevant period. Similarly, carrying out drainage work, sowing wild bird seed mixes and/or nectar sources, and topping the cover of previous crop residues may only take place after 14 October 2018 for catch crops or 15 January 2019 for cover crops.

The ban on the use of plant protection products (PPPs) applies for the whole of the periods shown above or, if the cover has been established by undersowing, it will apply from the time the main crop is harvested until the end of the catch and cover crop period or until the next main crop is sown if this is sooner. The PPP ban applies only where land is declared as an EFA.

For more information on the EFA requirements, please refer to '[Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2018](#)', contact FAS on **03000 200 301** or email advice@farmingadvice.service.org.uk

Greening 2019

The BPS 2019 will run on the same basis as that for 2018, with applications opening in spring 2019. Updated guidance for farmers will be published later this year.





Are you complying with the farming rules for water?

Do you know that the [new rules for all farmers in England](#) to help improve water quality are now in force? The rules standardise good farming practices that many farmers are already demonstrating. The rules are separate from cross-compliance. Full details of the new rules are available on [GOV.UK](#).

Additional help and support

FAS produced an article on the requirements that can be downloaded [here](#).

FAS also ran a webinar on this topic in conjunction with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Environment Agency – the recording of which can be viewed on our website [here](#).

In addition, Defra and the Environment Agency have produced a Q&A document to answer the most frequently asked questions. This can be viewed on our website [here](#).

If you want to check your compliance with the requirements, the Environment Agency's National Customer Contact Centre is open Monday to Friday, from 8am until 6pm.

Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Telephone: 03708 506 506



Don't forget, the restrictions on tree and hedge-cutting rules are in place until September

You must not cut or trim hedges or trees on your holding until 1 September. The closed period that places a ban on cutting and trimming hedges and trees between 1 March and 31 August (inclusive) is a cross compliance requirement under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) 7a: Boundaries and GAEC 7c: Trees. If you are a Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Environmental Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship claimant, you must adhere

to these requirements on eligible land being used for agriculture, which may include woodland (for example, when used for grazing), or you could receive a reduction in your payment.

Fruit and nut trees in orchards, or trees acting as windbreaks in orchards, vineyards, hop yards or hop gardens are not included in the ban.

Full details of the requirements can be found in '[The guide to cross compliance in England 2018](#)'.



Buffer strip management

Cross compliance protection zones

Cross compliance protection zones (green cover) are established to protect hedgerows and watercourses against pollution and runoff from agricultural sources. The protection zones should measure 2 metres from the centre of the hedgerow or from the centre of a watercourse or field ditch, and 1 metre from the edge of the watercourse or field ditch to the landward side of the top of the bank. You must not cultivate or apply fertilisers or pesticides to cross compliance protection zones, but you are permitted to 'top' the green cover or use pesticides for spot application if they are deemed reasonable steps to control the spread of any weeds. If the work is to be undertaken during the bird nesting and rearing season, you must not intentionally or recklessly destroy or damage birds, eggs or nests. Further information can be found in ['The guide to cross compliance in England 2018'](#).

Public access on buffer strips

As a general rule, cross compliance does not prohibit public access to public rights of way (PROW) that are on cross compliance protection zones. However, agri-environment schemes such as Environmental Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship generally prohibit public access to margins or buffer strips since these have been put

there to protect important habitats and species or prevent run-off from agricultural operations. Public access can often result in damage, which reduces the intended environmental benefits being funded.

Ecological Focus Area buffer strips and field margins

To count as an Ecological Focus Area (EFA), a buffer strip must be all of the following:

- next to a watercourse (or parallel with and on a slope leading to a watercourse);
- on or within 5 metres of arable land on the arable side of the watercourse;
- have a minimum width of 1 metre (edge to edge).

To count as an EFA, a field margin must be an:

- uncultivated margin around the perimeter of fields against the permanent parcel boundary or surrounding internal landscape features within the land parcel;
- at least 1 metre wide (edge to edge);
- on or adjacent to arable land (or within 5 metres of it).

They must not be used for any crop production, although they can be grazed and/or cut as long as it is

possible to tell the difference between the EFA buffer strip, EFA field margin and adjoining agricultural land.

Farmers can use the same buffer strips to meet the greening and cross compliance rules.

Some strips of temporary grassland are wider than 1 metre and meet the definition of an EFA buffer strip and EFA fallow land. In these cases, farmers can count the first metre as an EFA buffer strip. The extra width could then be counted as EFA fallow land (as long as it is at least 2 metres wide). If this is done, it must be possible to tell the difference between the EFA buffer strip and the EFA fallow land during the fallow period (1 January to 30 June). This means at least one of the following must apply:

- they have different vegetation;
- the vegetation is of different heights;
- there is different land management (for example, the fallow land has been cultivated).

The difference must be visible at an inspection.

Further information on the management of buffer strips and field margins under EFA can be found on page 42 of ['Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2018'](#).



Protecting your soils post-harvest

The cross compliance Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) requirements for soils focus on the condition of the land and this is what the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) will consider during an inspection.

One method of reducing compaction and soil erosion, as detailed in [GAEC 5: Minimising soil erosion](#), is to select the correct post-harvest options. This is to ensure that land harvested by a combine harvester or mower is left in a state where erosion is unlikely.

Choosing the correct post-harvest management technique involves taking into consideration the weather, soil type and topography; the crop that has been harvested; and the next crop to be sown. Hot, dry conditions can cause soils to cap during harvest and cultivations. This can exacerbate runoff, especially if rainfall is heavy. To minimise the risk of significant runoff, care must be taken when deciding what and where to sow.

Before cultivating and drilling, make sure that any topsoil and subsoil compaction is removed. Do this by first checking the depth of compaction by digging several soil pits across a field. Then, set up the appropriate machinery (such as a subsoiler) to just below the pan to remove the layer of compaction.

Please ensure that soil is sufficiently dry to enable effective subsoiling. By identifying the correct depth of compaction, savings can be made on fuel use, machinery parts, labour costs and time by not cultivating deeper than necessary.

Planting a winter crop where a spring crop has been grown will help to:

- enhance soil organic matter levels;
- comply with [GAEC 4: Providing minimum soil cover](#) and the [farming rules for water](#);
- improve workability;
- retain moisture and nutrient levels for further crop development needs;
- provide valuable soil protection from winter rains;
- prevent soil loss if sown by early October.

For more information on the cross compliance soil management requirements, please refer to [‘The guide to cross compliance in England 2018’](#).



Bovine TB Advisory Service

If you are registered in the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Environmental Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship, you have a requirement to adhere to the bovine tuberculosis (bTB) testing requirements. If you are late with your bTB testing, you will receive an automatic reduction in your BPS payment.

Visit [GOV.UK](#) for more information on bTB requirements.

In October 2017, the Bovine TB Advisory Service was launched. Funded by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), the service provides on-farm visits and telephone support to cattle farmers in high-risk and edge areas of England. If you would like to register to receive free support, please e-mail info@tbas.org.uk or call 01306 779410. More information is available at www.tbas.org.uk.



Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) reminders

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) are used to help protect the environment from inappropriate use of nitrates. If you are within a designated NVZ you will need to comply with the requirements. You can find detailed guidance on GOV.UK.

Final 2017-2020 NVZ designations now confirmed

The final [2017-2020 Nitrate Vulnerable Zone \(NVZ\) designations](#) were published at the beginning of August.

Please check on the [maps](#) to see whether the land you are working is within an NVZ. Even if you did not appeal or were not part of a group appeal, results of neighbouring appeals may have altered the NVZ boundaries affecting your land.

For information on how to comply with NVZ, read our updated guidance pages on GOV.UK.

FAS has produced a technical article called 'NVZ: Back to basics'. This provides a simple guide to the NVZ requirements, including the rules for applying organic and manufactured fertiliser, the forthcoming closed periods and storage of organic manure. The article can be downloaded for free from the [FAS website](#).

If you are claiming Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments, Environmental Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship and your land is in an NVZ, you must comply with the requirements or your payments could be reduced.

Nutrient Management Guide (RB209) has been updated

In May 2017, the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) launched a revised edition of 'The Nutrient Management Guide (RB209)', which provides recommendations for a broad range of crops. All changes from previous versions are based on a comprehensive review of trials data conducted by a consortium of research scientists. All recommendations were reviewed by a partnership of organisations including farmers and growers.

The most obvious change is that the guide is now published as seven separate sections rather than one combined document:

1. Principles of nutrient management and fertiliser use;
2. Organic materials;

3. Grass and forage crops;
4. Arable crops (including sugar beet, peas and beans);
5. Potatoes;
6. Vegetables and bulbs;
7. Fruit, vines and hops.

Each section has undergone a significant revision with information and recommendations updated to reflect changes in farming practices and crop varieties.

You can obtain this essential guide to crop nutrient management free of charge from AHDB by:

- downloading navigable PDFs at www.ahdb.org.uk/rb209;
- downloading an app for Apple® devices from the App Store® (search for AHDB);
- ordering copies from AHDB by emailing cereals.publications@ahdb.org.uk;
- picking up free copies at selected AHDB events.

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In line with the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), FAS has updated its privacy policy to explain how your data is kept safe. To view the policy, please visit www.farmingadvice.service.org.uk/events/privacy/