

February 2014 – e-news issue 13

Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

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We hope you find the information in this issue helpful. If you have any comments or ideas for topics you'd like us to cover, please let us know.

FAS technical advice line:

Telephone: 0845 345 1302

Email: advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

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

**Farming
Advice Service**

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

Defra have issued a Soil Protection Review (SPR) **continuation sheet** for 2014. This should be included with existing SPR documentation.

The continuation sheet was issued along with the 2014 updates for the Cross Compliance rules. Postal customers received a hard copy of the sheet and digital customers have been emailed a link to an online version to print off if they have been completing the SPR in booklet format. **The continuation sheet must be kept with the 2010 booklet for inspection.** If you do not have a copy of the continuation sheet, you can download it from the [RPA website](#). The [SPR online](#) service has been updated to include the 2014 annual review information.

The requirement to complete an annual review is retrospective. The review of soil management and the measures adopted for 2013 should

have been reviewed by 31st December 2013 and completed in the existing SPR 2010 booklet in part 3 (or using the [SPR online](#)).

The following updates are required to be recorded in the SPR during 2014:

- **New land taken on** – record this information in the Soils Risk record (table B) or by producing an amendment to the Soils Risk map. If new measures are required against existing enterprises on the new land, record this in the Farm Soil Plan sections (section 3).
- **New enterprises on existing or new land** - in the relevant land use category of the Farm Soil Plan sections (section 3)
- **New measures adopted where the farmer determines that existing measures against a land use category are not working.**

- **The annual review of each land use category by 31st December 2014**
- **The 2014 annual review is not required to be completed until 31st December 2014. This requirement will not need to be checked during 2014 inspections but may form part of the inspection requirements in 2015. However access to waterlogged land should be recorded on an ongoing basis and will be checked during inspections undertaken in 2014.**

The Soil Protection Review (SPR) requirements are being reviewed and new arrangements will be implemented from 2015. If you require any further information regarding the SPR, please contact the FAS helpline on 0845 345 1302.

Strengthened TB testing

If you are a cattle keeper, you are considered to be in breach of cross compliance if TB tests that were set for your herd by the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) are not carried out by the testing deadline. From 1 January 2014, Defra are enhancing the existing cross compliance process for overdue TB surveillance and check tests: breaches of this nature will be reported to RPA by AHVLA and reductions to payments will be applied from the first day of the test going overdue. The level of reduction will depend on the length of time the test was overdue before completion. It is important to note that detection will not be reliant on an inspection taking place.

It is your responsibility to notify AHVLA in writing of any extenuating circumstances for failing to complete a test within the prescribed timeframe. This information will be considered as part of the referral process to RPA. If you anticipate problems meeting your test deadline, contact your local AHVLA office.

For contact details of your local AHVLA office, use the postcode search tool on the [AHVLA website](#) or call 02920 768 555.

Further information about these changes can be viewed on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Access to waterlogged land

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) have issued guidance to help farmers currently coping with flood damage and waterlogged fields to avoid potential impact on SPS payments and inspections. It also explains how to apply for Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) exemptions and derogations. Please go to the [RPA website](#) for further information.

If you need to carry out mechanical field operations or use motorised vehicles on land that is waterlogged, you must record all activity in the 'Access to Waterlogged Land Record' in your SPR. The Waterlogged Land Record is on page 44-46 (Table D) of the SPR 2010 booklet or you can log into your SPR online and update the information. Record the field number, month and year of the activity, reason for access and action taken to remediate once conditions allow. Appropriate action to remediate damage caused by accessing waterlogged soil must be taken as soon as possible within 12 months of the first month of access to the waterlogged field. This action is in addition to any other actions identified in the SPR farm soil plan.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) reminders

New NVZ rules apply from January 2014

To view the full guidance on complying with the NVZ rules, please go to the [GOV.UK website](#). Below is a summary of the new rules that were implemented from 1 January this year, along with the relevant chapter in the guidance so that you can easily find further information.

- If you have medium or heavy land that was designated as an NVZ in 2008 or before, the closed period for organic manures with high readily available nitrogen (N) has been extended by 2 weeks and now ends on 31 January – see Chapter 8.
- If you grow horticultural crops, you will need to comply with the new N max values – see Chapter 7.
- When calculating N max, you will need to include the nitrogen contained in all organic manures (not just livestock manures) applied to your land – see Chapter 7.
- Under N max you must not apply organic manure to crops for which there is an N max value if you have not established the amount of crop-available nitrogen it contains – see Chapter 7.
- N max rules now apply to a range of horticultural crops – see Chapter 7.
- The amount of nitrogen in pig and cattle slurry that you must assume is readily available to crops (the manure N efficiency values) has increased – see Annex 6.
- You will only be allowed to spread 30 cubic metres per hectare of slurry (rather than 50 cubic metres as before) at any one time every three weeks between the end of the closed period and the end of February – see Chapter 8.
- Additionally, from the 16th May 2014, any temporary field heap, at the time of construction, must occupy as a small a surface area as is required to support the mass and prevent it from collapse and temporary field heaps must not be constructed within 30 m of surface water if the land slopes steeply (1 in 5 or 20%) – see Chapter 10.

Spring Nitrogen Advice now available

The Spring Nitrogen Advice document, which can be used for NVZ planning, is now available to download from the [FAS website](#). You can use the excess winter rainfall (EWR) maps to identify your rainfall class within RB209, which in turn determines your Soil Nitrogen Supply (SNS) category & nitrogen recommendations.

Grassland derogation

If you held an NVZ Grassland Derogation for 2013, you are required to submit field and farm information known as a 'fertilisation account' to the Environment Agency by **30 April 2014**.

You must submit records for the period 1 January – 31 December 2013 that show:

- The total agricultural area of the derogated holding and the area (hectares) covered by each of the following crops: winter wheat, spring wheat, winter barley, spring barley, winter oilseed rape, sugar beet, potatoes, forage maize, grass and any other crops.
- The number and category of livestock kept on your farm, and the amount of nitrogen and phosphate in the manure they produce. These categories are given in the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) ['Guidance on complying with the rules for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones in England for 2013 to 2016'](#), Annex 2, Part D, together with standard values for manure nitrogen and phosphate.
- The amount and type of livestock manure imported to or exported from your farm, together with the total amount of nitrogen and phosphate in that manure.
- The weight (tonnes) and nitrogen content of all manufactured nitrogen fertiliser stocks kept on, imported to or exported from your farm.

You can submit your records electronically by email to regaware@environment-agency.gov.uk or by post – Regulation Awareness Team, National Customer Contact Centre, The Environment Agency, Quadrant 2, Parkway Business Park, Sheffield, S9 4WF.

Making use of composts in NVZ

From 17 May 2013, subject to conditions, you may apply more than 250 kg N/ha in any 12-month period if the only organic manure you apply to a field is compost. In this case, you may apply compost containing:

- up to 500 kg N/ha every two years; you can apply the compost on any land as a mulch or work it into the soil; or
- up to 1,000 kg N/ha every four years; the compost must only be applied as a mulch and only in an orchard (growing fruit of the genera *Malus*, *Prunus* or *Pyrus*).

The flexibility described is only applicable when the compost used is **PAS 100** certified, as set out in the regulations. The compost is also not permitted to contain or be sourced from any livestock manure.

The 250 kg N/ha does not include livestock manures deposited by grazing animals. The new rule here enables users of compost to choose how and when to apply the allowances set out, provided that in any 2 or 4-year period, as appropriate, no more than the indicated amount is spread (for example, you could decide to apply 1,000 kg N/ha to your orchard in year one and none in the following three years or you might elect to apply 500 kg N in year one and 500 kg in year three).

Further information can be located in chapter 8 of the [NVZ guidance](#).

Informal consolidation of the Nitrate Regulations is now available

An informal consolidation of 2008 nitrates regulations and its subsequent amendments has been published to help farmers and advisors easily refer to regulations for NVZs. This is available on [GOV.UK](#)

In February an updated ['note to farmers'](#) was also made available. This note provides an update on recent changes to NVZ rules and what's happening on slurry management and storage.

Water resources (control of pollution) (silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil) (England) Regulations 2010 and as amended 2013 (SSAFO) is now part of cross compliance

These regulations aim to prevent water pollution from all stores of silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil. If you are in an NVZ, the requirements for silage and slurry are also part of the [cross compliance rules](#) that you are required to follow from 1 January if you claim single farm payment. SSAFO sets out requirements for the design, construction and maintenance of new, substantially reconstructed or substantially enlarged facilities

for storing these substances. Storage facilities should be sited at least 10 metres from inland freshwater or coastal water and must have a 20-year life expectancy.

You must notify the Environment Agency in writing of any new, substantially enlarged or substantially reconstructed system at least 14 days before any construction begins. This should help save you time and money

by making sure your proposals comply with the regulations. The Environment Agency is likely to request details of the proposed design and construction methods. Once construction is complete they will ask you to send a completed notification form before you start using the facility.

Further information can be found on the [Environment Agency website](#).

Reporting sheep and goat movements electronically from April 2014

From April 2014, sheep and goat keepers in England will be able to use a new [Animal Reporting and Movements System \(aRAMs\)](#) to report their animal movements electronically. The service will be delivered by SouthWestern Business Process Services (UK) Ltd.

Keepers will be able to:

- report moves electronically with a click of a button;
- set up moves and print their own movement documents; and
- save themselves having to write out repetitive information for each move.

The system will be user friendly with a dedicated helpline. A paper service will be delivered for keepers who cannot report electronically and a new movement document will be made available – replacing the AML1 form. Keepers who report moves electronically will also be able to use a free, personalised holding register to record:

- dates of identification and year of birth;
- deaths;
- tag details;

- annual inventory; and
- movements on and off a holding.

From 1 January 2015, non-electronic slaughter tags cannot be used to tag slaughter lambs. This will allow some time for lamb producers to use up their existing stocks of conventional slaughter tags.

There are a number of reasons for this:

- It underpins the new e-reporting service/database and provides the tools with which to capture and report individual animal data to the database. This will improve the speed and accuracy of data available to track and trace animals in a disease outbreak.
- It addresses an existing non-compliance issue with regard to recording mixed batches (that is, batches with slaughter animals from different birth holdings). Markets and abattoirs cannot comply with this requirement unless the animals they handle are electronically identified. This also impacts on store lamb finishers who regularly move high volumes of mixed batches of animals.

Removing non-electronic slaughter tags from the system will simplify the identification arrangements. It will also provide longer term benefits for those in the industry who wish to embrace electronic identification (EID) to improve growth and competitiveness, and provide a platform from which to encourage abattoirs to provide carcass feedback. As well as improving the quality of movement data, EID will also potentially:

- provide Government with the evidence to return to the European Commission on single farm payment rules and the need for a tolerance of minor sheep ID record keeping errors; and
- enable Defra to consider the sheep standstill rules more flexibly. Possibly from an individual animal perspective rather than a whole farm one.

More information is available at www.aRAMs.co.uk. New guidance on sheep and goat identification, and recording and reporting movements will be sent to all registered sheep and goat keepers in spring 2014.

HACCP guidance

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has produced updated guidance on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points system (HACCP) as it applies to livestock farmers buying in and using feed additives and premixtures to feed animals on their own holding. To view the guidance, please go to the [FSA website](#).

Water abstraction consultation launched

Defra has launched a consultation on proposals to change the water abstraction management system and is inviting you to provide comments and feedback. The consultation closes on 28 March 2014, please click [here](#) to have your say.

Hedge laying/need for felling approval

The mild weather might mean an early start to bird nesting this year but there are still a few weeks when land managers might be considering work on their hedgerows. If you are thinking about hedge work it might be useful to bear in mind the standard for Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition that applies to hedgerow cutting (GAEC 15). The [Guide to Cross Compliance in England 2014](#) sets out the requirements of this and the other GAEC standards

Also, while the trimming and laying of hedges does not require a felling licence from the Forestry Commission, you may need a felling licence if you are felling trees in the hedgerow. Whether a felling licence is needed will depend on the size of the tree(s) to be felled and such a licence will usually carry restocking conditions, even when the re-stocking will ultimately be laid to restore the hedgerow. Further information about felling licences can be found [here](#).

Funding

Round three of the Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme (FFIS) has been launched and will close on Friday 4 April 2014. The FFIS is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and is a scheme of support, developed to help farming, forestry and horticultural businesses in England to become more efficient at using resources. This scheme aims to help make your business more profitable and resilient whilst reducing the impact of farming on the environment.

The five themes that are covered by FFIS are:

- Nutrient management;
- Energy efficiency;
- Water management;
- Animal health and welfare; and
- Forestry

Further information can be found using the following link - <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/farm-and-forestry-improvement-scheme>

Forthcoming FAS events

Improve business competitiveness and meet cross compliance requirements

FAS specialists will provide the latest information on farm profitability forecasts and farm business analysis. This will include top tips for business efficiency. The latest information on Common Agricultural Policy reform and cross compliance, including key action points will also be covered. When booking, please state which session you would like to attend.

Meetings will be held on:

Date	Time	Venue
26 February	10.00 am – 12.30pm	Court Farm Inn, Abbotskerswell, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 5PG
27 February	10.00 am – 12.30pm	Best Western Hotel, Blundells Road, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 4DB
27 February	1.30pm – 4.00pm	Best Western Hotel, Blundells Road, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 4DB

Places are limited, so please book now to avoid disappointment.

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.

FAS will be running an events programme during the spring/summer, which will cover most regions. The events will be advertised on the FAS website, so please keep an eye on the [events page](#).

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We use text messages to get relevant information to farmers quickly. We send reminders of approaching key dates for cross compliance. To register for FREE text message updates, please call 0845 345 1302 or email bookings@farmingadvice.service.org.uk with 'Register for text updates' in the subject line. Don't forget to include your name and mobile phone number in the message. Your details will not be shared with any third parties.



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Key dates

28 February	End of rules on post-harvest management of land. (GAEC 1)
28 February	End of the quantity restrictions for application of organic manures with a high readily available nitrogen content. (SMR 4)
1 March	You must not cut or plough vegetation on agricultural land which is not in agricultural production from this date (except in a limited number of circumstances). (GAEC 12)
1 March	You must not cut hedgerows from this date, but you can carry out hedge-laying and coppicing. (GAEC 15)
31 March	If you hold a water abstraction licence, expect to receive your annual bill (or first part charge if you hold a two-part tariff agreement) for the forthcoming financial year from 31 March. (GAEC 18)
1 April	You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land, other than in upland areas, from this date. (GAEC 10)
1 April	If you hold a winter or all-year-round water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction outside the period April to October), the Environment Agency will make actual abstraction return forms available to you from 1 April. You then have 28 days to send your readings to the Environment Agency. (GAEC 18)
1 April	You can start to report your sheep and goat moves electronically. (SMR 8)