

February 2013 – e-news issue 07

# Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

*Welcome to the first Farming Advice Service (FAS) newsletter of 2013. This issue includes guidance regarding the slurry storage requirements, changes to Cross Compliance for 2013, information about forthcoming FAS events and how to sign up for our services.*

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

*If you would like to sign-up to receive the FAS newsletter straight to your inbox, please email [bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk) with 'Register for newsletter' in the subject line. Your details will not be shared with any third parties.*

**FAS technical advice line:**

Telephone: 0845 345 1302

Email: [advice@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk)

Website: [www.defra.gov.uk/farming-advice](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farming-advice)

**Farming  
Advice Service**

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# Important changes to Cross Compliance for 2013

Amendments have recently been made to the Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) and Statutory Management Requirement (SMR) rules for Cross Compliance, but it is important to note that the way that this information is communicated to Single Payment Scheme (SPS) claimants has also changed. Between Christmas and the New Year, you should have received a note from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) explaining these changes. If you have not received the 2013 updates, they are available on the [RPA website](#) or you can contact the RPA Customer Service Centre (CSC) on 0845 603 7777 to request a copy.

## Changes to 2013 Cross-Compliance guidance

In response to the Farming Regulation Task Force report, the Government is committed to making greater use of online facilities to communicate with the farming community (Digital by Default). It is recognised that this will be a big change from previous years, so an [annex](#) to the Guide to Cross Compliance in England was sent to SPS claimants in December 2012. This details all of the rule changes to the GAECs and SMRs for 2013. It is important that you read this note in conjunction with your existing 'Guide to Cross Compliance in England 2012', which you received last year.

**It is vital that the 2012 guidance book is retained, along with the annex, particularly if you do not have internet access.**

The full online version of The Guide to Cross Compliance in England 2013 edition is available as a PDF on the [RPA website](#) and a text version is available for those with slower internet connections. In addition to this, the RPA are developing an 'e-book' version for mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, which will be available to download from the same website soon.

## Summary of rule changes for 2013

There have been amendments to five GAECs and eight SMRs for 2013, although not all of these changes are substantial. Full details of the changes to individual GAECs and SMRs are detailed in the [annex](#).

Please note, due to regulatory changes, there will also be amendments made to SMR 4/GAEC 19 and SMR 7 during 2013. While it is not ideal to update the rules part-way through the year, the RPA have to reflect changes to the legislative position on which Cross Compliance is based. You will be notified in writing with confirmation of these changes and when they will take effect.

You can obtain advice on Cross Compliance rules and how they might apply to you through the FAS. Further details on the service can be found on the FAS [website](#) or by calling the FAS Helpline on 0845 345 1302.

Visit [www.rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance](http://www.rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance) for more information about 'Digital by Default'.

## Managing and remediating damage to soil

Management of waterlogged soils is essential in preventing damage to soil structure, which can lead to a lower crop yield. FAS has produced an article that provides guidance on how to record activity on waterlogged land and how to remediate damage caused by this. The full article can be viewed on the FAS [website](#).

You can also find soil management information in the [Cross Compliance Guidance for Soil Management 2010 booklet](#) and the Environment Agency's 'Think Soils' [documents](#).

If you are experiencing soil issues on your farm and would like some advice regarding how to remediate the damage, please contact FAS on 0845 345 1302 to speak to an independent soil adviser.

## Strengthened TB cattle control measures introduced from January 2013

Tighter control measures to reduce the risk of bovine TB spreading between cattle have been introduced as part of the drive to eradicate the disease in England. The strengthened rules, which came into force on 1 January 2013, include changes to the surveillance testing regime and cattle movement controls for herds trading under TB restrictions following a breakdown or overdue test.

The changes affect restocking, approved quarantine units (AQUs) and approved finishing units (AFUs). The movement window for cattle from herds under movement restrictions is reduced from 60 to 30 days following a clear TB test if moving to another holding (apart from an AFU). The window for movements to slaughter remains at 60 days following a clear TB test (direct or via an AFU or slaughter gathering).

These changes build on the tightening of cattle controls introduced in July 2012.

Full details of the changes can be found on the Defra [website](#). Your Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) Statement of Testing Interval has details of the testing changes which will affect you. Contact your [local AHVLA office](#) if you have any TB testing queries or the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) Helpline for any CTS link queries (0845 050 1234).

## Slurry storage requirements – are you being compliant?

FAS has published an article which discusses slurry storage requirements for farmers in England. It aims to provide practical guidance on manure storage requirements to ensure farmers have the information they need to get the best from their manures and to comply with regulations. The article discusses the benefits of maintaining slurry storage capacity; the legal requirements of slurry storage; and the practicalities of what you need to store, how to store it and, importantly, cost-efficient mechanisms to minimise storage requirements.

Having sufficient and well-maintained on-farm slurry storage enables farmers to schedule

spreading at the optimal time to meet crop requirements and avoids being forced into spreading because of storage capacity limitations. Spreading at the optimal time increases nitrogen uptake by crops which, in turn, lowers the need for artificial fertiliser, and reduces the loss of nitrate and other pollutants to ground or surface water. Further benefits of having sufficient storage capacity include giving farmers more resilience to cope with wet or freezing weather when the risk of slurry runoff and soil structural damage through trafficking, and subsequent soil wash/runoff, can be very high.

Not only is it good practice to have sufficient storage in place, but it

is also a legal requirement under The Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2008 as amended (NVZ Regulations) and The Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended (SSAFO Regulations).

For further guidance regarding the requirements, please see the full [article](#). FAS can offer technical advice if you have any questions regarding your compliance with the storage requirements. Please contact the technical helpline on 0845 345 1302 or email [advice@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk)

## Update on nitrate issues

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has issued a short note to update farmers about when the new Nitrogen Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) Regulations are expected to come into force, record-keeping on organic farms and this year's grassland derogation. The note can be viewed on the [Defra website](#).

Please note that while the Environment Agency is already accepting [grassland derogation applications](#), it has had to postpone the start date for online applications to the 1 March 2013. The Environment Agency apologises that this is later than previously advertised. To overcome any difficulties from a potential shortened application period and the Easter weekend, the end date for the farming online application process has been extended to the end of April 2013.

Therefore, you will be able to apply online through the [Farming Online website](#) from 1 March until 30 April 2013.

## Forthcoming events

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

### Farm business update for livestock and mixed farms:

**Tuesday 19 February at The Clive Bar & Restaurant, Bromfield, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 2JR.** This workshop will take place between 10.00am and 1.30pm.

**Tuesday 19 February at The Royal Oak, Much Marcle, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2ND.** This workshop will take place between 6.30pm and 9.00pm.

At these events, Oliver Lee from FAS will discuss farm business performance and opportunities to improve competitiveness within your business and Ian Wilkinson from Cotswold Seeds will explain how deep rooting and diverse leys can significantly improve your profits. The events will conclude with a Q&A session with the speakers.

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# Forthcoming events continued

## Soil management for higher yields workshops:

**Wednesday 20 February at Cowdray Hall, Cowdray Park, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 0AG.**

**Friday 22 February at Fishers Farm, Shefford Woodlands, Hungerford, Berkshire, RG17 7AA.**

Sessions will run between 10.00am and 12.30pm and again from 1.30pm to 4.00pm. When booking, please state which session you would like to attend.

Given the wet conditions through harvest and drilling, there could not be a more opportune time to consider your soil structure and how to remedy compaction. The workshops aim to improve knowledge on soil structure so that more informed management decisions can be made when required.

The workshops will cover:

- **Soil structure** – what's good? Likely yield and cost benefit from altering it.
- **Soil management and yield production.**
- **Soil management and the environment** – relevant changes to Entry Level Stewardship (ELS).
- **Soil management planning** – the Soil Protection Review for 2012.

As the workshops are primarily field based, please bring suitable outdoor clothing and footwear.

## One-stop event for rural advisers to find out more about opportunities and challenges for the farming sector in your area:

**Friday 15 February at Askham Bryan College, Askham Bryan, York, YO23 3FR.**

**Friday 22 February at Tyneside House (Environment Agency Regional Headquarters), Skinnerburn Road, Newcastle Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7AR.**

Sessions will run between 10.00am and 4.00pm and will include a buffet lunch.

Topics covered include:

- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform.
- Cross Compliance.
- Water Framework Directive.
- Grants for farmers.
- FAS's regional knowledge exchange network.

There will be speakers from a number of organisations.

## Getting on top of NVZs:

**Monday 25 February at The Hired Lad, Skirsgill, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 0DN, from 10.30am to 12.45pm.**

The meeting will be led by an independent farm adviser and will focus on the NVZ regulations. Topics to be covered include:

- The differences between farm and field limits.
- The closed periods for manure and fertiliser applications.

- Storage requirements.
- Nitrogen planning requirements.
- Recordkeeping.
- The rules regarding spreading techniques.
- Risk maps.

## Sustainable water systems for livestock:

**Wednesday 27 February at Chimney Meadows Nature Reserve, Chimney, Bampton, Oxfordshire, OX18 2EH, (9 miles west of Abingdon), from 9.30am to 1.00pm.**

The event, delivered in conjunction with the Environment Agency and BBO Wildlife Trust, will cover:

- Alternative non-mains methods of watering livestock.
- Pasture pumps and ram pumps – their costs and suitability.
- Rainwater capture and water management plans.
- Livestock drinking bays and methods to prevent poaching.
- The use of pasture pumps for cattle at Chimney Meadows.
- Natural England grants available through Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF).
- Environment Agency flood defense consents and abstraction license limits.

Tea/coffee and cakes provided.

**Wellies are essential for the farm walk!**

Unless otherwise stated, please call **0845 345 1302** or email [bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk) to book your place at the FAS events listed above. Please remember to include the event name, date, session that you wish to attend, your name, company name and contact details.

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



#### Register for free text message updates

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



#### Get the latest updates by following FAS on Twitter

FAS has joined Twitter. Follow us on @DefraFAS for up-to-the-minute updates on publications, events and industry information.



#### Receive a regular email version of this newsletter

Please email [bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk)

## 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 this date. (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 this date. You then have 28 days to send your readings to the Environment Agency. (GAEC 18)
16 April	You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium in upland areas from this date. (GAEC 10)