

The logo for Farming Advice Service, featuring the text "Farming Advice Service" in a serif font inside a white speech bubble shape with a pointed bottom, set against a green background.

Farming
Advice Service

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

**October 2023 –
Issue 92**

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Key dates to be aware of...

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)
1 November	You can burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land, other than in upland areas, from this date (GAEC*6)
30 November	If you have a two-part tariff agreement for your water abstraction licence, expect to receive your second part charge after 30 November (GAEC*2)

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 \(RPA\) key dates 2023](#) pages of GOV.UK.

In case you missed them...

15 September	For any land located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), this is the start of the closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland (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	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 soils that are not shallow or sandy (SMR**1)
15 October	For any land located in an NVZ, this is the 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)

* 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, 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.



Trees on Farms – Podcast mini-series

The Forestry Commission, as part of their Woodland Management Matters campaign, has teamed up with Ben Eagle, from the Meet the Farmers podcast and founder of RuralPod Media, for a mini-series called Trees on Farms.

In this series, Ben Eagle is joined by Jon Burgess, Woodland Resilience Officer at the Forestry Commission, and special guests, to ask three questions focused on woodland management on farms.

In the first episode, Ben and Jon explore 'why' there is a need to improve management of farm woodlands. In the second, they discuss 'what' farmers need to know about managing trees. The third and final episode covers 'how' farmers can manage their farm woodlands, using the practical example of a woodland management plan.

Guests include Dougal Driver from Grown in Britain, Simon James from the Small Woods Association and Karina Ponton from Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Southwest, who is also joined by farmer Dan Holmes.

You can listen to the series now:

• Episode 1

[Why do we need to improve our management of farm woodlands?](#)

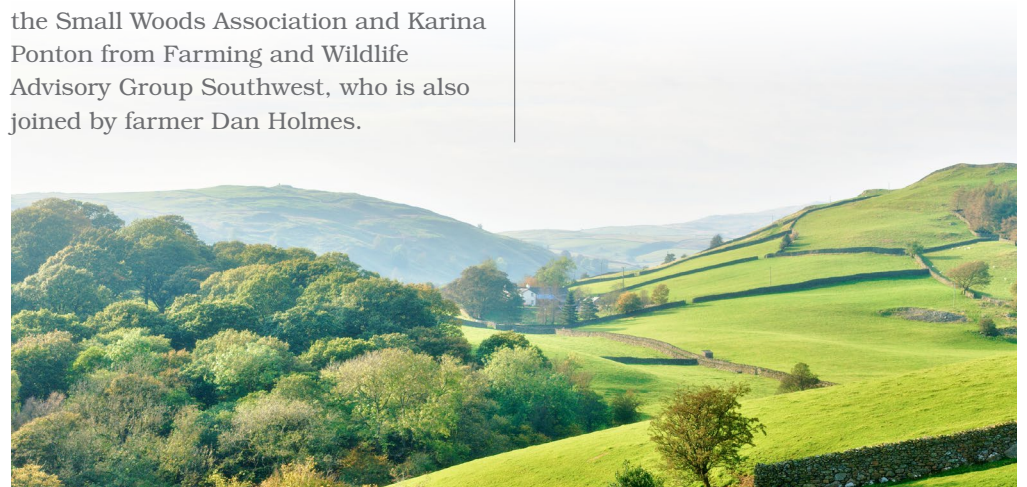
• Episode 2

[Trees on Farms question time](#)

• Episode 3

[Creating a woodland management plan](#)

For further information on woodland management visit www.gov.uk/manage-woodland.



Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts



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](#).

Watch the recording relevant to your farming business via the links below:

- [SFI update for upland farms](#)
- [SFI update for grassland farmers](#)
- [SFI update for arable farmers](#)
- [SFI update for mixed farms](#)

A new FAS podcast is now available: [Autumn 2023 Sustainable Farming Incentive announcement with Amelia Rome of the Andersons Centre](#).

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:

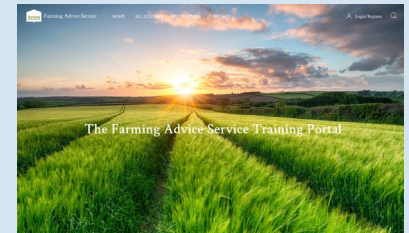
- [Support available from ADAS through the Future Farming Resilience Fund](#)
- [The Future Farming Resilience Fund with Sarah Starkey](#)
- [Nutrient Management with Mel Holloway](#)

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](#)

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
- 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.

Countryside Stewardship: A seasonal reminder from the RPA



As part of their commitment to improve customer service, the RPA are introducing changes to the way they communicate with farmers and landowners. You may notice an increase in communications throughout the year to support you in maximising the impact of your agreements and delivering benefits to the farming industry, rural communities and the environment. The RPA will tailor their communications to include reminders about necessary actions to take, as well as helpful links to guidance material, including seasonal tips such as the following.

Countryside Stewardship options: Tips for AB9 and AB12

If your agreement includes options AB9 or both AB9 and AB12, here are some tips that may help. These don't replace the detailed option requirements listed in your agreement, but may help explain what you need to do.

AB9: Winter bird food

The minimum plot size is 0.4 ha. The maximum individual plot size is 5 ha.

- Keep the plots in place until 15 February each year
- Keep your seed invoices (the RPA may ask to see these)
- Take and keep photographs of the blocks or strips (the RPA may ask to see these)

AB12: Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds

Check the guidance in your agreement and on GOV.UK to see how many feeding locations you need. Then, from 1 December to 30 April:

- Supplementary feed once a week
- Use 25 kg of feed in each location per week

To include AB12 in your agreement, you must have AB9. You can deliver one tonne of AB12 per two hectares of AB9 and must:

- Have two feeding stations per hectare
- Split the feed equally between feeding stations
- Broadcast/spread 90% of the feed – you can only use hoppers for a maximum of 10%

Keep a feeding diary and record:

- The dates you feed
- The location of feeders
- How much feed you use
- Details of the seed mix you use (including the weight of components and cost)
- The source of the seed (details of where you bought it from)
- How you fed it (for example, by scattering or using a hopper)

If you think you might not be able to meet the rules of one of your agreement options, please read the [Minor and temporary adjustment \(MTA\) form: Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship](#) to find out what you need to do.

Farming Rules for Water: Rule 8 – Position of livestock feeders



Since 2 April 2018, all farmers in England have had to comply with rules introduced to help improve water quality by reducing diffuse pollution. The rules standardise good farming practices that prevent manure, fertiliser and soil from entering watercourses. There are **eight rules in total**: five about managing fertilisers and manures, and three on managing soils. This article is about Rule 8.

Rule 8 requires you not to place livestock feeders:

- Within 10m of inland freshwaters or coastal waters
- Within 50m of a spring, well or borehole
- Where there's a significant risk of pollution

Assessing pollution risks

You must take into account the risks of pollution when deciding where to position livestock feeders, including risks from:

- The slope of the land, in particular if the angle is greater than 12 degrees
- Any ground cover
- The distance and connectivity to inland freshwaters, coastal waters, wetlands, springs, wells or boreholes
- The soil type and condition of the land
- The presence and condition of land drains

It is important that you identify the risks that apply to your land and your land management practices

Water abstraction update

Summer abstraction returns

If you hold a summer water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction wholly within the months of April to October), the Environment Agency will ask you at the end of October 2023 to submit your abstraction return for summer 2023. You should submit your return by 28 November 2023.

If you haven't done so already, you can register to submit your return online. Please visit the link at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). You will need your email address and licence number(s) to register.

You may also be asked to submit a return for summer 2022. This will happen where the online system has now been updated with the details of new or varied licences, and the changes were effective for the summer 2022 period.

The winter abstraction period

With the start of the winter abstraction licensing season (typically 1 November) for farm reservoirs, the Environment Agency is asking farmers to make use of all opportunities to refill them when the flows are above any hands-off conditions.

Winter is also a good time for farmers to review their water needs. The Environment Agency has provided [guidance](#) on water abstraction during prolonged dry weather and drought which provides information on planning for the future and improving the resilience of your water supplies as well as changing your abstraction licence if necessary.

Abstraction licences linked to Water Management Grants

If you are applying for a Water Management Grant (Round 2) for a new reservoir and you think you may need an abstraction licence, you should contact the Environment Agency as soon as possible.

You will need an abstraction licence before you can submit your full grant application. The closing date for grant applications is **31 October 2024**, but it can take up to a year to apply for an abstraction licence and if you plan to fill your reservoir with water from a small river or stream you may need to collect flow data this winter to support your licence application.

Please use the Environment Agency's pre-application advice service to get your abstraction licence application started and to find out what data (if any) you might need to collect this winter. Further details can be found online at [Get advice before you apply for a water abstraction or impounding licence \(GOV.UK\)](#).

Water abstraction e-alerts

If you hold a water abstraction licence with a hands-off flow or level condition, you may have heard about water abstraction e-alerts. These are the new digital alerts the Environment Agency uses to provide abstractors with quicker, targeted alerts about approaching licence restrictions.

The email alerts inform licence holders and operators when restrictions have taken effect, and when they have been lifted. The system is similar to the Environment Agency's targeted flood warning service, but considers water management during periods of dry weather. These alerts help improve access to water when it is there, and better protect the environment when it is not. It is one of the ways the Environment Agency is supporting abstractors to adapt to climate change, and industry data has shown an estimated benefit of £6.3 million per year to affected businesses through the provision of more timely alerts.

If you haven't heard from the Environment Agency yet, please be patient. They need to ensure the transition from the existing approach to email alerts is seamless, so the local team will contact you when it has completed the necessary preparatory work. You can read more about the new system at the [Defra digital, data and technology blog](#).

First farmers receive Sustainable Farming Incentive early payment

As covered in last month's issue, applications for the Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI) are now open.



Recently Defra have announced that the majority of farmers will no longer need to submit registrations of interest and will be able to apply directly online, simplifying the application process.

Those farming on commons should continue to express their interest with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), who can support them to get ready to apply.

Defra also announced that every farmer whose agreement started on 1 October 2023 has received an early payment which will help to improve cashflow and make sure SFI works for their farm business.

All farmers who have a live 2023 agreement before the end of the year will receive an early payment. This is worth 25% of the value of their annual agreement and will be received in the first month of their agreement.

To find out more about the scheme and why farmers should apply, take a look at Defra's new [campaign page](#).

Five reasons to consider applying for the SFI

1 Business resilience

By applying sustainable food production practices on your farm, you could improve soil health and biodiversity or help mitigate the impact of extreme weather. All of these help look after your farm in the short and long term.

2 Flexibility

You can enter as much land as you want and choose how many actions you do. Once you're in the SFI, you can add more land and actions to your agreement each year.

3 Good for your cashflow

If you have a live 2023 agreement before the end of the year, you'll receive an early payment worth 25% of the value of your annual agreement in the first month of your agreement.

Otherwise, your first payment will be four months after your SFI agreement starts. After that, you'll be paid every three months so you have a regular, reliable income.

4 Works with Countryside Stewardship

You can have a Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship agreement and an SFI agreement at the same time. This means you can combine SFI actions with other scheme options.

5 Straightforward application process

It's straightforward to apply and manage your agreement. You'll apply online through the Rural Payments service and your agreement will start the month after you accept it.

More information can be found on [GOV.UK](#), including a [YouTube video](#) on applying for an SFI agreement.



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.

Guidance for farmers on the new round of slurry infrastructure grants – Webinar on 9 November

Ahead of opening Round 2 of the slurry infrastructure grant in November, Defra have published full [guidance for the grant on GOV.UK](#) to help farmers get ready.

Grants of between £25,000 and £250,000 will be available, improving slurry storage to go beyond legal minimums. This will help improve the use of organic nutrients on farms, aiding productivity and reducing pollution. The grant is only available for slurry stores located in England.

Based on feedback gathered online, at shows and on farms, Defra are making several changes to the scheme, such as how much storage pig farms can apply for, offering grants towards a slurry separator and the option to retrofit covers onto existing stores.

In Round 2, Defra will be able to invite many more projects to submit a full application than in the first round. However, Defra may still need to limit overall numbers to prevent swamping suppliers. If necessary, Defra will prioritise projects in areas where coordinated action is most needed to reduce water and air pollution from farming.

Defra will be hosting a webinar on 9 November 2023, where farmers can raise questions about the scheme. [Click here to register to attend.](#)

The Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund is now open for applications

In October, the RPA published the latest round of the [Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund](#), which gives groups of farmers and landowners in England the opportunity to work together and share knowledge to protect and enhance the local environment, in line with their local [Countryside Stewardship priorities](#).

The £2.5 million fund for this round encourages collaboration between farming groups and supports government efforts to improve the environment and create cleaner, greener landscapes.

A new theme of Net Zero has been introduced for this round alongside existing themes, which will contribute to meeting the UK's environmental targets. Groups now need a minimum of 500 hectares to be eligible for the scheme, making it easier for smaller groups of farms to come together.

Administrative processes have also been changed, making it easier to apply and be in the scheme.

The funding allows facilitators, for example local farming and nature groups and charities, to give advice and share knowledge with groups of farmers and other land managers on activities such as restoring habitats for wildlife and improving biodiversity, creating woodland, improving air and water quality, or restoring historic environments.



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.

New consultation on changes to cattle identification, registration and movements

Defra have launched an eight-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, the introduction of bovine electronic identification, the 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 will close at 23:59 on 15 November.

The consultation, entitled 'Changes to bovine identification, registration and movement in England', can be found [here](#).

Farmers and growers to be given continued access to crucial plant protection products

British farmers and growers will continue to have access to important pesticides to support resilient and profitable food production and cut input costs, the government announced in a [press release on 24 October](#).

Following feedback from farmers and industry, these plans will ensure farmers and growers can continue to buy and use seeds treated with EU-approved pesticides, and more cost-effective pesticides identical to those authorised in Great Britain can continue being imported.

The plans will provide certainty to farmers around which treated seeds and plant protection products they can use in coming growing seasons, and will also help improve the availability and reduce the cost of pesticides.

The government shared these plans with Parliament on 23 October and, once agreed, they will come into force by the end of the year. This means there will be no break in the existing treated seed schemes (currently due to expire on 31 December), so that farmers can buy and use treated seeds ready for next growing season.

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.service.org.uk and enter your email address into the newsletter sign-up box.

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