

**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
November Newsletter [by clicking this link.](#)*

**You can now speak to our
Helpline team through the new
online chat function on the
farmingadvice.org.uk
website**

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Key dates to be aware of...

1 December	If you keep sheep and/or goats, you must carry out your annual count of the animals on your holding as of 1 December, enter this into your holding register and complete the inventory by 31 December. You will receive a letter or email in November telling you what to do. (SMR**8)
1 December	Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship 2023 payment window opens.
31 December (midnight)	Cross compliance, which farmers and land managers must follow if they claim certain rural payments, ends in England on 31 December 2023, but farming and land management regulations still apply. The rules farmers and land managers must follow can be found on GOV.UK .

In case you missed them...

31 October	If you hold a summer water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction wholly within the months of April to October), the Environment Agency (EA) will make actual abstraction return forms available to you from 31 October. You then have 28 days to send your readings to the EA. (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)

* GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions

** SMR = Statutory Management Requirements

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.

FAS speakers available for farmer events

If you are running a free event for farmers and land managers and you would like the Farming Advice Service to provide an update on the Agricultural Transition, new rules or schemes, please let us know.

The Farming Advice Service have a team of programme staff and advisors who can attend online and in-person events to provide updated guidance to help farmer and land managers understand their obligations and opportunities under current and future farming policy.

Send details to advice@farmingadviceservice.org.uk with the subject 'Booking FAS speakers' to see if we can support your event.



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.

You can also now speak to our Helpline team through the new online chat function on the farmingadvice.org.uk website.



Cross Compliance ends in England on 31 December 2023, but farming and land management regulations still apply

Cross compliance in England ends on 31 December 2023. Regulations will continue to protect the environment and animal health and welfare. Compliance will be monitored by the existing statutory bodies and regulated in a fair, proportionate and consistent way. This means, wherever possible, working with farmers to get it right and giving them opportunities to self-correct before taking formal action.

If you have an agri-environment agreement, the RPA will contact you with more information about how the changes impact your agreement.

Defra has produced the [Rules for farmers and land managers page](#) on GOV.UK. This page is designed to provide all the information farmers and land managers need to know in one place.

While this page does not contain all the rules, it can help you find the ones that apply to you by providing links to those individual rules.

The page groups regulations by farming activities rather than by individual regulations.

If you have any suggestions to improve the page, you can get in touch with Defra via farmingcontent@defra.gov.uk.



Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts



The recordings of our series of webinars on the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) with the Future Farming Resilience Fund are 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](#)

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:

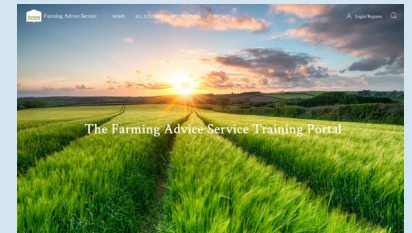
- [Support available from ADAS through the Future Farming Resilience Fund](#)
- [The Future Farming Resilience Fund, with Sarah Starkey](#)
- [Nutrient Management, with Mel Holloway](#)
- [Mental health in farming, with the Farming Community Network \(FCN\) and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution \(RABI\)](#)
- [Meet the FAS 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 the 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
- 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.

Manure storage – Regulation reminder for the Farming Rules for Water and Nitrate Vulnerable Zones



Farming Rules for Water – Rule 2 storing organic manure

The Farming Rules for Water were introduced to reduce and prevent diffuse water pollution from agricultural sources and apply to all farmers.

Rule 2 of the Farming Rules for Water refers to storing manure. The rule states that it is important to take into account the risk of runoff when deciding where to store your manure. Guidance on how to assess your pollution risk can be found [here](#).

When [storing organic manure](#), you should not store it:

- within 10 metres of inland freshwaters or coastal waters
- within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole

These rules are enforced by the EA and if you are not following the rules the EA can help you by:

- identifying the changes you need to make
- agreeing a timescale with you to make changes

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones manure heaps and slurry

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) are areas designated as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution.

To find out if your land is in an NVZ, you can use the EA's [interactive map](#). Your farm may be completely or partly in an NVZ. NVZ boundaries are drawn around whole fields, hence there are no fields that are only partly in an NVZ.

If you are in an NVZ you must follow the NVZ specific rules on [storing organic manure](#).

Rules for storing slurry and poultry manure

You must be able to store all the slurry you produce and all poultry manure produced in a yard or building, during the storage period, unless you reduce the volume by:

- sending it off your farm
 - spreading some of it on fields that are classified as low risk for runoff
- Storage periods run from:
 - 1 October–1 April for pigs and poultry
 - 1 October–1 March for cattle, sheep, goats, deer and horses



Manure storage – Regulation reminder for the Farming Rules for Water and Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

- You must also be able to provide storage for any slurry, rainfall, washings or other liquid that enters the store during the storage period. You can use the [Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board \(AHDB\) slurry wizard](#) to help you calculate storage capacity. This tool can help you calculate the amount of:
 - slurry your cows will produce
 - rain falling directly into the store and from contaminated yards
 - washings or other liquids that enter the store during the storage period

This will help you compare your existing storage capacity with the capacity you need.

To find out how much manure your animals, including other cattle and pigs, will produce, you can also use the NVZ guidance [standard values tables](#) from GOV.UK.

Support to farmers is available through the second round of the [Slurry Infrastructure Grant](#), which is currently open. Farmers can apply for grants of £25k–£250k.

Rules for storing manures include the following

- You must store poultry manure, other types of solid organic manure or animal bedding that contains organic manure in one of the following ways:
 - in a container
 - on a waterproof base, where you can collect and store runoff
 - in a roofed building
 - in a temporary field heap
- If you store manure in a temporary field heap, you must ensure:
 - your field heap is at least 10 metres from any surface water or land drain, or 30 metres if the land slopes at 12 degrees or more
 - the location of the field heap is not liable to being waterlogged or flooded
 - you locate field heaps at least 50 metres from a spring, well or borehole
 - you move the field heap at least every 12 months
 - you leave a two-year gap before returning to the same site
 - you keep a record of the sites used for field heaps and the dates of use
- the field heap is made from manure solid enough to be stacked in a freestanding heap
- the field heap does not give rise to free drainage from within the stacked material
- the field heap is covered with a waterproof material if it contains poultry manure without bedding or litter
- the field heap occupies as small a surface area as is needed to support the weight of the heap without it collapsing

If you are constructing new storage for slurry, reconstructing part of a storage facility or enlarging your current storage facilities, you must follow the [rules on storing silage, slurry and agricultural oil](#). Information is also available on [constructing or enlarging your storage facilities](#) and [keeping storage records](#).

Applications for grassland derogations in 2024

Grassland derogation guidance on what to do if the livestock manure produced on your farm is likely to exceed the amount you're allowed to spread on your land in an NVZ (farm limit) can be found on the [GOV.UK](#).

You must apply by 31 December 2023 for grassland derogation in 2024.

Applications made in the previous round between 6 June and 4 July 2023 only cover 2023.

To apply you can:

- call 03708 506 506 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)
- email regaware@environment-agency.gov.uk

Remember to submit your annual sheep and goat inventory

If you keep sheep or goats, you must carry out an annual count of the animals on your holding as of 1 December. Enter this into your holding register, complete the inventory form and submit it online or by post by 31 December. This article provides more information on how to do this.

Keeping an annual inventory is a requirement of sheep and goat legislation and also a cross compliance requirement under [Statutory Management Requirement \(SMR\) 8: Sheep and goat identification](#).

Once you have carried out your annual count of your sheep and/or goats, you must enter the information either on a paper inventory form if you have been sent one, or on the online portal [here](#). *Even if you have been sent a paper form, Defra would encourage you to respond online – the form/covering letter will display the web link.*

This must be done by 31 December. Reminders will be sent to late responders. Not completing the annual inventory is a breach of regulations and it may increase your chances of being selected for a future sheep or goat identification inspection.

The [online inventory form](#) became available on 27 November.

If you are completing a paper form, use the accompanying pre-paid envelope addressed to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which records the information on behalf of Defra.

For guidance on how to complete the forms, please visit [GOV.UK](#).

You should have received a letter or email invite from Defra during November. If you have not received either by 3 December with information on how to complete your inventory, please call the Defra Surveys Team helpline on 03000 600 140 or email surveys@defra.gov.uk.



Trees on Farms – National Tree Week: Discover the benefits of tree planting on your farm

As part of 'National Tree Week,' which began on 27 November, Defra, the Forestry Commission (FC) and the Woodland Creation Partners have launched a campaign to promote how tree planting can support biodiversity, productivity and resilience on farms, now and for years to come.

As part of the promotional campaign Put Down Roots, the FC have provided the case study of Andy Gray, a commercial beef farmer based at Elston Farm in Devon. Andy has planted 8,500 trees on Elston Farm since March 2021, using a considered integration approach to allow the trees to work in harmony with food production.

By planting a mixture of trees in rows, Andy can easily access the land with machinery and graze livestock around them, with the trees providing shelter and natural forage.

'The trees will become the backbone of the farm and at the same time capture carbon, enhance biodiversity and enrich soil health,' he says. Andy has also planted walnut, chestnut and apple trees, which have the potential to generate additional income streams for the farm.

If you are interested in integrating trees into your farming business, you can access expert advice and support through [Defra's range of tree planting grants](#).

The England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO), administered by the FC, supports the creation of

resilient, well-managed woodland on areas as small as 1ha.

The grant covers standard capital costs up to £10,200/ha with additional payments of up to £8,000/ha for tree planting projects that support wider benefits to society, nature recovery and the wider environment.

Recent funding changes to EWCO, including an increase in Maintenance Payments from 10 years to 15 years, and an extended Capital Window from two to three years, will provide more flexibility and financial security for those looking to plant trees.

Alternatively, there are regional grants offered by various Woodland Creation Partners across England, with many schemes starting from as little as 0.1ha. Partners can offer local knowledge and expertise to assist you in planning and planting your woodland creation.

For more detailed information on the range of grants and support available, visit gov.uk/woodland-creation.



Water abstraction reminder for winter

Winter is a good time to review your water needs. The Environment Agency's (EA) [guidance on water abstraction during prolonged dry weather and drought](#) is designed to help farmers. This includes a section on planning for the future and improving the resilience of your water supplies, changing your abstraction licence if necessary. In light of recent flooding in some parts of England, if you think you would benefit from a change in your abstraction pumping rate or extending your abstraction season, then please [apply for a licence variation](#).

The EA is aware of the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) Water Management grant scheme Round 2 deadline for any planning permission or abstraction licences to be in place by 31 October 2024. Where a new abstraction licence or a change to an existing licence is required, the EA is encouraging applicants to submit their applications as soon as possible and to ensure that Sections A1.4 and A1.5 of Form [WR328 Section A1.4](#) Part A are completed to make it clear that the application is linked to the RPA Water Management grant scheme funding.

The EA is expecting to receive a high number of water resources applications over the next 12 months, mostly due to the large number of time-limited licences expiring in 2024 and 2025. They will be monitoring the progress of applications

that are linked to the grant scheme and will prioritise applications to help ensure they are determined in a timely manner. If you have concerns around the timeframes for abstraction licensing determination in the context of your grant, please contact the National Permitting Service at the EA.

The EA has developed a secure [Water Resource Licensing Service \(WRLS\) on GOV.UK](#) for abstractors. They are encouraging abstraction licence holders to register to be able to submit abstraction returns easily and quickly online, see a summary of their licences while in the field and delegate access to a third party to submit returns. Most EA area teams are now using the WRLS to send abstractors Water Abstraction e-Alerts when hands-off conditions are coming into force or being lifted.



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 today: new expanded round of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant available to farmers

On 21 November Defra announced that farmers can now apply for the [new round of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant](#). More than £70 million of grant funding is available, which is more than double the funding offered in Round 1. This is a great opportunity to make better use of organic nutrients, tackle water pollution and improve air quality.

Farmers can apply for grants of £25k–£250k towards different types of slurry store, slurry store cover and supporting equipment. Several improvements have been made to the scheme following feedback from industry after the first round. These include an increase in the amount of storage pig farmers can apply for; offering grants towards a slurry separator; and the option to retrofit covers onto existing stores. Read [the guidance](#) for more information on what the grant can pay for and who can apply.

Use the simple online checker process to start your application. This will confirm your

eligibility and how much grant funding you could receive based on your storage needs. The checker is open until 17 January 2024. Applications are not first-come-first-served, so you can take your time to get your details right.

On 23 November, Thomas Proudfoot, who leads the development of new slurry infrastructure grants, hosted a webinar about the Slurry Infrastructure Grant where questions were put to the RPA and the EA. The recording of the webinar will be made available to those who could not attend.

Defra Webinar – SFI for arable and horticultural farmers

On Monday 4 December, Defra is holding a webinar for arable farmers and horticultural farmers in England to learn more about the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI).

The hour-long session will begin at 11am. To register to attend please click [here](#).

The webinar will explain how SFI supports both productivity and the environment. From the actions for soils to the actions for integrated pest management, the presenter will go through the offer and you'll be able to put your questions to the Defra team.

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) will be joining Defra to answer operational questions, too.

If you can't make the webinar, a recording will be made available via the [Defra Farming blog](#).



Updates from the Future Farming blog and industry announcements

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New requirement for farmers who export meat to the European Union

From the 13 December 2023, livestock farmers whose products may be exported to the European Union will require proof of an annual vet visit, called a [Vet Attestation](#).

The vet will review all livestock species for signs of notifiable diseases and biosecurity risks and provide a Vet Attestation Number (VAN), which needs to be recorded on Food Chain Information (FCI) documents.

Farmers involved in the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (England) can get their VAN as a result of the funded vet visit offered through the Annual Health and Welfare Review.

Defra have worked with industry and can confirm that farms in certain farm assurance schemes do not need to do anything new. Being part of these schemes gives assurance of at least an annual vet visit.

The current qualifying farm assurance schemes are:

- Red Tractor
- Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)
- Farm Assured Welsh Livestock Beef and Lamb Scheme (FAWL)/Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers Ltd (WLBP)
- Lion Quality
- Poultry Health Scheme

If you are not part of the above farm assurance schemes, please read the [guidance on the AHDB website](#) to find out what you need to do.

Future Farming Resilience Fund

The Future Farming Resilience Fund provides free business support to farmers and land managers in the first few years of adapting to agricultural transition. If you currently receive direct payments, you can receive this support free of charge. It is designed to help you make the right business choices for the future.

Future Farming Resilience Fund organisations are known and trusted in the farming community. Advisers can help you understand how farming in England is changing, identify how you could change your business and adapt to changes with tailored support. The support may be offered in various ways, ranging from group workshops supported by experts through to one-to-one advice.

You can learn more about the support offered through the Future Farming Resilience Fund by listening to this [podcast](#).

Find out which organisation can provide free business support in your area by visiting the [Future Farming Resilience Fund guidance page](#) on GOV.UK.

Stay up to date with us



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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/.