



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

**April 2024 –
Issue 98**

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Key dates to be aware of...

10 May	The deadline to request a delinked payments reference data transfer (other than in cases of inheritance).
15 May	The deadline for submitting your 2024 revenue claim for Countryside Stewardship (CS) or Environmental Stewardship (ES) is 11.59pm on Wednesday 15 May 2024 . If you miss this deadline, you still have until 11.59pm on Wednesday 2 September 2024 to submit a claim, but a reduction will be applied to the value of your claim – <i>the later you submit it, the greater the reduction</i> .
31 May	If you're taking part in the Lump Sum Exit Scheme , you will need to send your Lump Sum Exit Scheme: entitlements and evidence form to the Rural Payments Agency for them to receive it by 31 May 2024. If you want to transfer your reference data for delinked payments you will need to withdraw your Lump Sum Exit Scheme application by 10 May 2024 (the deadline to request a delinked payment reference data transfer). If you applied online, you can withdraw online using the Rural Payments service.

In case you missed them...

1 April	You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land, other than in upland areas , from this date. (GOV.UK)
1 April	If you hold a water abstraction licence, from 1 April the Environment Agency will generate and send you your annual bill (or first-part charge if you hold a two-part tariff agreement) for the forthcoming financial year. (GOV.UK)
16 April	You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium in upland areas from this date. (GOV.UK)

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, visit the [Rules for Farmers and Land Managers](#) and the relevant pages of [GOV.UK](#).

Upcoming grant deadlines

1 May	The deadline for applications to be submitted for Animal Health and Welfare items as part of the Farming, Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) 2024 is midday on 1 May 2024.
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In case you missed them...

From 3 January the following grants opened for applications:

- [Capital Grants 2024](#)
- [Higher Tier Capital Grants 2024](#)
- [Protection and Infrastructure Grants 2024](#)
- [Woodland Management Plan \(WMP\) Grants 2024](#)
- [Woodland Tree Health \(WTH\) Grants 2024](#)
- [Implementation Plan Grant \(PA1\) or Feasibility Study Grant \(PA2\)](#)

Farming
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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 and land managers in England understand and meet the legal requirements in English law around certain farming activities to protect people, livestock and the environment. 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 Farming Regulation, 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, Rural Payments Agency (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.



Need extra support?

*We understand that it can be difficult to keep up to date with all the changes affecting the farming industry at the moment, and that the amount of information available can be daunting. The **FAS** is here to help and you can also find the most up-to-date information on grants and payments at GOV.UK.*

If you are feeling overwhelmed and are not sure where to turn, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution ([RABI](#)) and the Farming Community Network ([FCN](#)) offer support services by email and phone. A range of other organisations also offer complementary forms of support for the farming community; [click here](#) to view support organisations by topic.

The FCN receives between 100 and 150 calls from farmers each month and they have now produced an article highlighting the learnings from these calls. For information on their top 10 observations from these calls, please [click here](#).

Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts

If you missed any of our previous webinar sessions, including:

- [Integrated Pest Management with Richard Heady of Heady's Farm](#)
- [Understanding soil biology for soil health and productive agriculture, with Dr Felicity Crotty](#)
- [Agroforestry options in 2024](#)

You can watch these recordings and more on the [FAS website](#).



You can also listen to previous webinars as podcasts through the [FAS website](#) and Spotify, Audible, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

New technical articles available on the FAS website:

Animal Welfare Compliance Requirements for Farmers



In March, the FAS published a new technical article on [Animal Welfare Compliance Requirements for Farmers](#). The article outlines the different legislative requirements related to on- and off-farm animal welfare in England. Animal welfare refers to the duty of care that owners and keepers have towards their animals, and actions that they must take to meet their animals' needs and ensure their well-being and humane treatment.

Legal requirements for Animal Welfare

While cross compliance ended in 2023, farmers still have to comply with [regulatory standards](#) and legal requirements in English law around certain farming activities to protect people, livestock and the environment.

The [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) is the principal law relating to animal welfare and protects all vertebrate animals. Under the act, owners and keepers have a duty of care towards their animals and must make sure that their animals:

- have a suitable environment and place to live
- have a suitable diet
- exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- are housed with, or apart from, other animals (where applicable)
- are protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease.

[The Welfare of Farmed Animals \(England\) Regulations 2010](#) outlines the minimum welfare standards by which farmed animals are required to be kept in England and [The Mutilations \(Permitted Procedures\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#) sets requirements for permitted procedures which can be performed on livestock, making it an offence to carry out a prohibited procedure on a protected animal. In addition to the above legislation, it is a legal requirement that farmers and keepers are familiar with welfare codes of practice for relevant species. These codes of practice provide advice to farmers and keepers on how best to comply with legislation. The different welfare codes of practice for farmed animals are available on the GOV.UK page: [Farm animals: looking after their welfare](#).

Off-farm animal welfare

Animal welfare rules also apply during transport, slaughter, and at markets and shows. All underlying legislation, regulation and orders are outlined in Table 3 of the technical article and the relevant links can be found below on [GOV.UK](#):

- [Animal welfare during transport](#)
- [Welfare of animals at markets and farm shows](#)
- [Animal welfare at the time of slaughter](#).

Animal health and disease

Under the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007, any animals which appear to be ill or injured must be cared for appropriately and without delay. When they do not respond to such care, veterinary advice must be obtained as soon as possible.

Some livestock [diseases must be reported](#) to the APHA, as well as in some circumstances [dead wild birds](#).

Grants and schemes

Defra provides a variety of grants and schemes to help farmers maintain and improve animal welfare. You can subscribe to the [Defra Farming blog](#) and visit [Funding for farmers, growers and land managers](#) for further information on current and future grants and schemes.

More technical articles covering a range of topics are also available on the FAS website:

- [The end of Cross Compliance: What does that mean for Compliance Requirements on Farm?](#)
- [Environment Agency Updated Prospects for Irrigation – forecast for 2024](#)
- [Soil Health in UK Farming](#).

The full catalogue of technical articles can be found [here](#).

Managing livestock and public access

With the annual turnout of cattle slowly progressing, and as the weather turns drier, more people will be visiting the countryside. It is important to keep visitors as safe as possible on your farm by ensuring that risks to them from livestock are minimised.

The [Countryside Code: advice for land managers](#) on GOV.UK gives advice to farmers on a range of subjects, including creating a safe farm environment and managing cattle and public access.

The Health and Safety Executive provides on-line guidance for farmers on [cattle and public access in England and Wales](#). This summarises your responsibilities and provides a checklist and advice on how to manage livestock and public access on your farm. It recommends trying to avoid keeping cattle, particularly with calves at foot, in fields with public access, but gives recommendations on what to do if this is not practical.

The [Countryside Code](#) provides advice for people visiting the countryside on how to act responsibly and respect farmland and farm practices, such as keeping dogs under control, closing gates, not starting fires etc. You can provide appropriate signage on your farm to help people understand how to stay safe and keep livestock safe, whilst using public rights of way.

Farming and land-owner organisations also provide advice on your responsibilities and have advice on managing livestock in areas with public access. See: Public and livestock safety: [Top tips for fencing footpaths – NFU](#) and [Tips on staying legal with bulls and cows near footpaths – Farmers Weekly](#).

Legislation:

In general, you have a legal duty of care under the [Occupier's Liability Act 1957](#) towards people visiting or crossing your land, e.g. walking on public footpaths or on open access land. This duty also extends to people potentially trespassing.

Under [Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#) both employers and those who are self-employed (i.e. most farmers) have an obligation to ensure that people outside their employment, or work activities, are not exposed to unnecessary health and safety risks, which could include livestock management.

Under the [Animals Act 1971](#) the keeper of an animal has a duty of care to prevent the animal from causing harm to others, whether this is a known dangerous species or a domesticated breed that may sometimes cause harm, such as cattle. Under the Act, the keeper of an animal is strictly liable for any harm or damage which may have been caused by it, regardless of whether or not the keeper/owner was at fault.

[Section 59 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981](#) bans the keeping of bulls in fields that are crossed by a right of way, unless the bulls are under the age of 10 months or not of a recognised dairy breed, and they are accompanied by cows or heifers. Recognised dairy breeds are: Ayrshire, British Friesian, British Holstein, Dairy Shorthorn, Guernsey, Jersey and Kerry.



Trees on farms

Spring management tips and the eighth Woodland Carbon Guarantee auction

Five tips for managing woodland this spring

The Forestry Commission's Nature Recovery Adviser MacBradán Bones has set out his top five tips for managing woodland this spring:

1. Find out what grows in your wood
2. Undertake deer surveys
3. Look out for tree pests
4. Plan tree work around wildlife
5. Observe all wildlife activity.

For more information on this, please visit the [Forestry Commission blog page](#) on GOV.UK.



£20m available in the eighth Woodland Carbon Guarantee auction

The eighth Woodland Carbon Guarantee auction is confirmed for 23–29 September 2024.

Administered by the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Carbon Guarantee is a £50m scheme that aims to help accelerate woodland planting rates and remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It has already resulted in nearly 3,000 hectares of new woodland across England.

£20 million is now available as part of the eighth auction for farmers and land managers to create new woodlands to help tackle the effects of climate change and provide new income in the form of long-term payments for the amount of carbon a new woodland will store.

Following an online auction process, successful bidders will be offered the option to sell woodland carbon in the form of Woodland Carbon Units – a financial value given to each tonne of carbon stored – to the Government up to 2055 at a guaranteed price protected against inflation.

For the first time, the eighth auction will have a new category for 'projects without grant support', which is for project developers who choose not to receive any grant funding from the Government to plant and maintain their new woodland. These projects will have access to a higher, but undisclosed, reserve price at auction compared to projects that receive grant support.

Before applying for the Guarantee, land managers will need to have registered with the [UK Woodland Carbon Code](#), which provides the tools and information required to verify and record the carbon they are capturing and can sell in future.

- There are five stages to the Woodland Carbon Guarantee process. Please see [Getting Started with the Woodland Carbon Guarantee](#) for further information.
- Further details about how the eighth auction will operate, including a list of eligible tree species that can be included within your application, can be found in the [Guide to the Eighth Auction](#).
- The Eighth Auction will take place from 23 to 29 September 2024, with an application deadline of 6 September 2024.

You can register with the [Woodland Carbon Code](#) and apply for the [Woodland Carbon Guarantee here](#).

Water and agriculture

Support for Farmers/Land Managers, Water Rights trading and Local Resource Option screening study reminder

Storm Henk: grants available for affected farmers

Eligible farmers in England who suffered damage to their land during Storm Henk that was uninsurable will be contacted by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) about a grant to help them cover the costs of returning the land to the condition it was in before it flooded.

The [Farming Recovery Fund](#) supports the cost of reinstating agricultural land which flooded between 2 and 12 January 2024.

The fund forms part of a broader scheme called the Flood Recovery Framework which is activated in exceptional circumstances to support councils and communities following severe flooding.

Following feedback from farmers, Defra has updated the eligibility criteria to remove the 150m limit and farmers will now be able to receive payments for all land parcels which are flooded and directly border an eligible river. Eligibility for the fund will remain under review to ensure it supports areas where farmland is most impacted.

You can read more about the support available [here](#), including details of eligibility.

Water Restoration Fund

Groups of farmers can now apply for a grant to improve freshwater habitats through the new [Water Restoration Fund](#).

The fund, which was initially announced in Defra's [Plan for Water](#) in 2023, is financed by environmental fines and penalties that were issued to water companies between April 2022 and October 2023.

In total, £11 million will be allocated to projects by region to ensure that money goes to the areas where environmental damage has occurred.

Funding will bolster capacity and capabilities for delivery of on-the-ground projects. These projects will restore and protect habitats using nature-based solutions and improve community access to blue and green spaces, including re-meandering rivers, restoring water-dependent habitats, and removing barriers to enable the natural movement of fish in rivers.

Water Rights Trading

One of the innovative approaches the Environment Agency (EA) encourages to help manage water resources is water rights trading. This is where somebody without a water abstraction licence or who is looking for more water may be able to enter into an agreement with an existing licence holder to trade water rights.

The EA recently updated its water rights trading map, which gives an indication of the potential for the quantities associated with a licence to be traded. The map now covers all of England and is based on more up-to-date data. It is available at [Water Resources: Help for licence trading \(arcgis.com\)](#). There are wider benefits of the map, such as helping farmers identify neighbours who may wish to form or join a Water Abstractor Group.

Local Resource Option screening studies – a reminder

As outlined in [last month's newsletter](#), you can now apply for a Local Resource Option (LRO) screening study.

You can apply for a screening study if you:

- are a group of two or more farming businesses within the same catchment (and preferably part of a Water Abstractor Group or similar)
- are currently abstracting, or would like to abstract water for arable, horticultural (including ornamentals or forestry nurseries) aquaculture, or livestock husbandry located in England.

For more information, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-water-resources-options-apply-for-a-screening-study>

Updates from the Farming blog and industry announcements

Defra regularly updates the [Farming blog](#). Please [subscribe to the blog](#) to ensure that you receive all the latest news.

Delinked payments

The delinked payments transfer window is now open. You can transfer some or all of your reference amount to another business until 10 May 2024 (11.59pm) – you will need full business permissions to either view or transfer reference data. (The 10 May 2024 deadline will not apply in inheritance cases.)

The RPA have updated the [Delinked payments: replacing the Basic Payment Scheme](#) guidance to include more information about transferring data, closed businesses, and inheritance. You can also find out more in the RPA blog: [Delinked payments guidance: information about transferring reference data](#).

Placing area-limits on six Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) actions

New measures came into force on 26 March to [limit the amount of land farmers can enter into six SFI actions](#) in order to safeguard domestic food production. Under the changes, new SFI applicants will only be able to put a total of up to 25% of the total agricultural area of their farm into one or more of these 'limited area' SFI actions:

- IPM2: Flower-rich grass margins, blocks, or in-field strips
- AHL1: Pollen and nectar flower mix (which should be growing in blocks or strips in a land parcel)
- AHL2: Winter bird food on arable and horticultural land (which should be growing in blocks or strips in a land parcel)
- AHL3: Grassy field corners or blocks
- IGL1: Take improved grassland field corners or blocks out of management
- IGL2: Winter bird food on improved grassland (which should be growing in blocks or strips in a land parcel)

These actions involve taking land out of food production for a short period of time and were designed to be used on relatively small areas of land. However, a very small number of agreement holders have entered 80%+ of their land into these actions, which reduces the environmental benefits and takes land out of agricultural production unnecessarily.

From 26 March 2024, any SFI application submitted that exceeds the 25% area limit on six SFI actions will not be offered an agreement.

The changes will not apply to those farmers with existing SFI agreements and will realign these actions with their original intentions and ensure the scheme continues to support farmers to produce food sustainably alongside protecting the environment.



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Bluetongue Virus (BTV) latest situation: End of the seasonal low vector period

The UK's Chief Veterinary Officer has urged farmers to remain vigilant for bluetongue virus after the disease was found in cattle and sheep in Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and the Pirbright Institute identified the first case of the disease in November 2023 through Great Britain's annual bluetongue surveillance programme.

Current situation

England is now out of the seasonal low vector period. This is because biting midge activity has increased with the warmer Spring weather. APHA are planning for a possible increase of bluetongue virus over the coming months as the weather warms and the risk of infected biting midges blowing over from northern Europe increases.

The risk of bluetongue transmission and therefore the risk level has not changed.

Farms close to the coast in counties along the east coast of England from Norfolk to Kent and along the south coast from Kent to Devon are at highest risk of incursion.

Farmers should continue to monitor their animals frequently for clinical signs and make sure their animals and land are registered with APHA so they can locate animals in the event of an outbreak.

There is currently no evidence that there is circulating bluetongue virus.

Surveillance of susceptible animals and epidemiological assessments will continue. APHA will keep the situation under review.

Find out more information on the [latest situation and guidance](#).

Bluetongue does not affect people or food safety. The virus is primarily transmitted by midge bites and affects cattle, goats, sheep and camelids such as llamas. The midges are most active between April and November and not all susceptible animals show immediate, or any, signs of contracting the virus. The impacts on susceptible animals can vary greatly – some show no clinical signs or effects at all while for others it can cause productivity issues such as reduced milk yield, while in the most severe cases it can be fatal for infected animals.

The virus can also be spread through germplasm (semen, ova and embryos) as well as transmitted from mother to unborn offspring.

Rules on the movement of livestock from regions affected by bluetongue are already in place and farmers are reminded that animals imported from these regions must be accompanied by the relevant paperwork to clearly show they meet certain conditions designed to reduce disease risk, such as correct vaccination.

Following confirmation of BTV in a non-imported animal in England, some trading partners may restrict exports of bluetongue susceptible animals or their products. The latest information on availability of individual [export health certificates can be found on GOV.UK](#).

NI and GB ruminants cannot be exported from a GB Assembly Centre to the European Union or moved to Northern Ireland until further notice.

BTV is a notifiable disease. Suspicion of BTV in animals in England must be reported to the Animal and Plant Health Agency on 03000 200 301

More information about BTV is [available here](#).



Updates from the Farming blog and industry announcements

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River Wye Action Plan published

On 12 April, Defra published the [River Wye Action Plan](#), which was a commitment made by the former Secretary of State at a [roundtable held last May](#). The plan sets out a range of government measures to improve the water quality of the River Wye, including:

- appointing a River Champion to establish a River Wye taskforce, which will develop and implement a 5–10-year catchment plan
- providing up to £35 million for poultry manure combustors in the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) catchment
- improving control of manure exports from permitted poultry farms by reforming Environmental Permitting Regulations
- providing £1.5 million of development funding to local Landscape Recovery projects over the next two years, with the aim of involving 50 farmers and land managers to secure soil in place and buffer the river from surrounding farmland
- provide funding for at least a further two projects that will help create habitat, facilitate fish migration and mitigate flood risk, as well as help farmers to adopt regenerative food production methods that reduce nutrient pollution and soil erosion, and naturally improve water infiltration and retention.

Dartmoor Review government response published

On 10 April, the [Government published a response to the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor](#).

The government's response sets out a number of priorities to ensure that farmers on Dartmoor are supported to produce food sustainably and run viable businesses, while protecting important habitats and species across Dartmoor.

These include boosting farmers' confidence in environmental land management schemes, including: those transitioning from Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements; encouraging collaborative relationships between Natural England and commoners; and backing a robust strategy and long-term governance for Dartmoor.

A key recommendation in the Review is the creation of a Land Use Management Group (LUMG) to develop a multifunctional land use framework and long-term plan for Dartmoor.

Defra have confirmed the LUMG will be set up later this year and run for two years. Defra will appoint an Independent Chair who will be supported by a secretariat provided by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (and funded by Defra) in the day-to-day running of the group.

Defra have also set out their ambition to make it easier for land managers to understand site designations and associated requirements, such

as for those farming on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and to make monitoring and evaluation of these sites more transparent.

Natural England is working hard to find ways to ensure that protected landscapes can provide for wildlife, climate and people, so that both nature and farming can thrive.

Marian Spain, Chief Executive for Natural England, said:

“Natural England has a statutory duty to protect sites containing the nation's most precious examples of wildlife and biodiversity like those seen across Dartmoor's unique landscape, and farming will remain integral to how we achieve this. Since the review's publication, Natural England has taken steps to rebuild trust with farmers and discuss how we can support them to run viable farm businesses that also work for nature, and we welcome the creation of a Land Use Management Group to bring all stakeholders together to pursue a shared vision for Dartmoor.”

For further information on the government's response, please read the [Defra](#) and [Natural England](#) blog posts.

Stay up to date with us



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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/.