



Countryside Stewardship:

New CS Offers for Wildlife Lowland Grazing Offer

Applicant guidance
Option and supplement descriptions and prescriptions

Applies to all New CS Offers for Wildlife: Lowland Grazing Offer agreements commencing on 1 January 2019

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1 Introduction

Basic Requirements of the **Lowland Grazing Offer: (applicants choose a minimum of 2 options from a total of 7)**

- The applicant's land must be registered on the Rural Payments service to the Single Business Identifier (SBI) submitting the application. Land use for the year of application must be recorded as permanent or temporary grassland. Arable fields can be included but only hedgerow options can be located on those fields.
- The 7 options are divided into 3 categories in the table below. Applicants must pick at least one option from category 1 and 2, and may choose additional options from category 3 if they wish
- The minimum number of options in the 5 year agreement is therefore 2. Applicants can select as many options as they wish and can enter more than 3% of their land into the package.

Category 1. Nectar and pollen sources for insect pollinators and insect-rich foraging for birds (select at least one, minimum 2% or 2 ha per 100 ha of farmed land included in the agreement, no maximum)

Option	Option title	Payment rate
GS2	Permanent grassland with very low inputs (outside SDA)	£95
GS4	Legume and herb-rich swards	£309

Category 2. Nesting and shelter for insect pollinators and birds (select at least one, minimum 500m of BE3 / 1% or 1 ha of GS1 per 100 ha farmed land included in the agreement, no maximum)

Option	Option title	Payment rate
BE3	Management of hedgerows	£8/100m
GS1	Take field corners out of production (outside SDA)	£365

Category 3. Optional additional resources & habitats (no minimum or maximum, apart from individual option requirements)

Option	Option title	Payment rate
GS3	Ryegrass seed-set as winter/spring food for birds	£331
GS17	Lenient grazing supplement	£44
WT1	Buffering in-field ponds and ditches in improved grassland	£201

2 Option Guidance and Prescription sets

Introduction to the Lowland Grazing Offer

Option Guidance:

Countryside Stewardship offers a range of options for managing your land. This document describes those available through the Lowland Grazing Offer. These can be applied for in different combinations to create an agreement.

Each description is broken down into sections covering:

- Payment rate
- Where it can and cannot be used (eligibility)
- How it will benefit the environment
- Requirements, including keeping records
- Advice and suggestions for how to carry it out

Prescriptions:

All eligibility Rules and Prescriptions are mandatory

Take small areas out of management (GS1)

£365 per ha

Where to use this option

Whole and part parcel

Only on:

- permanent grass
- corners and small areas within permanent grassland fields

Where this option cannot be used

- on historic or archaeological features identified in your HEFER or FER

How this option will benefit the environment

It creates year-round habitat and food for a range of wildlife.

If successful there will be tall grass tussocks with abundant flowering plants during the summer and dead seed heads throughout the winter.

REQUIREMENTS

- only cut or graze 1 year in every 5
- create a patch no more than 0.5ha in area

Do not:

- use the option more than once in every 5ha of permanent grassland on the holding
- locate the option next to another area under the same option
- cut or graze all areas in the same year if there is more than 1 area
- cut or graze during the bird breeding season 1 March to 31 August
- apply any fertilisers or manures
- apply any lime
- use pesticides, except for herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds or invasive non-natives, nettles or bracken

Keeping records

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them on request:

- field operations at the parcel level, including associated invoices
- stock records to show grazing activity on parcels

On your annual claim you will be asked to declare that you haven't carried out any activities prohibited by the option requirements.

ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS OPTION

*The following section gives advice on carrying out this option successfully, but does **not** form part of the requirements for this option.*

Using the mosaic approach

Better results will be achieved when the areas of longer vegetation are scattered widely across a landscape and located close to other habitat features, in a mosaic approach.

GS1	Take field corners and small areas out of management
Aim	To provide habitat and food for invertebrates, birds and other animals.
Eligibility Rules	
E4	This option must not be located on historic or archaeological features.
E95	Corners and other small areas within permanent grassland fields.
Prescriptions	
P2	Do not apply any fertilisers or manures.
P3	Do not apply any lime.
P10	Only use pesticides, including herbicides, to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds, invasive non-natives, nettles or bracken.
P290	Only cut or graze once every 5 years. Do not cut or graze during the bird breeding season 1 March to 31 August. If you have more than one field corner (patch), do not cut or graze all patches in the same year.
P682	Individual field corner (patch) size must be no more than 0.5 ha. You must not use this option more than once in every 5 ha of permanent grassland on your holding and patches must not be adjacent to each other.
EITHER:	
P706	Keep a monthly record of stock numbers grazing on parcels in this option. Make the record available on request.
OR:	
P707	Submit an annual return to confirm that no stock have grazed agreement land under this option.

Permanent grassland with very low inputs (outside SDAs) (GS2)

£95 per ha

Where to use this option

Whole parcel (except when located with GS1)

Only on:

- permanent grassland outside severely disadvantaged areas (SDAs) and below the moorland line

Where this option cannot be used

Part parcel (except when located with GS1)

This option can only be used if one or more of the following criteria are met:

- the grassland qualifies as semi-improved (see Permanent grassland options Eligibility Assessment form - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/countryside-stewardship-permanent-grassland-with-very-low-input-options>)
- to help the sustainable management and buffering of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or priority habitats
- to maintain grassland to conserve species of national or regional importance, or protect historic or archaeological features
- when in-field scrub cover is less than 1% and the option will be used in target areas for ground-nesting wading birds
- as part of the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package (see Mid Tier Manual section 8.3)
- on parcels adjacent to a permanent watercourse

Features that can be included in this option

The following features can be included if they are part of the land, even if they are ineligible for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS):

- ditches, dykes, drains, rivers, streams that are less than 4m wide for the majority of their length in the parcel
- temporary water
- permanent water up to 0.1ha
- natural unsurfaced roads, tracks, paths and bridleways, as long as the Requirements can still be met
- bracken
- areas of scree, rock outcrops and boulders - each area can cover up to 0.1ha
- grazed woodland and scrub that allows livestock access and has grass underneath

How this option will benefit the environment

If successful there will be:

- more flowering grass and wildflower species
- varied structures offering nectar and shelter for invertebrates
- increased food supply for birds

REQUIREMENTS

- graze or cut for hay or silage
- remove any cuttings
- maintain a sward with a range of heights during the growing season so that at least 20% is less than 7cm and 20% is more than 7cm. No height variation needs to be maintained when the field is closed up for a cut of hay or silage.
- maintain soil above pH 5.4, by liming if necessary, unless the target is to maintain acid grassland. Do not apply paper waste or other industrial by-products.
- when a parcel is cut for hay, haylage or silage, or grazed, either up to 12 tonnes/ha of farmyard manure can be applied, or fertiliser at a maximum rate of:
 - 9 kg/ha nitrogen
 - 23 kg/ha phosphate
 - 83 kg/ha potash
- applications of fertiliser must not be increased if the current rate is less than this
- graze or cut areas of dense rush growth so that they cover 20% or less of the parcel area and are less than 20 cm high by 30 September
- where scrub cover is less than 5%, keep areas of well-established scrub in separate small patches, lines and occasional individual bushes across the site
- where scrub cover is equal to or above 5%, maintain between 5% and 10% scrub cover over the parcel
- keep historic and archaeological features free of scrub

Do not:

- plough, cultivate or re-seed
- use pesticides, except for herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe to control nettles, bracken, injurious weeds or invasive non-native species
- cut more than one-half of scrub in any one year, except on historic and archaeological features
- harrow or roll on historic or archaeological features
- use supplementary feed except for mineral blocks
- allow bare ground to cover more than 5% of the option area, and only in the form of small, well-distributed areas
- allow bare ground to develop on historic or archaeological features
- allow more than 5 square metres of localised patches of bare ground around rabbit warrens by year 2
- top more than 50% of the total area in any one year
- carry out drainage works, including modifying existing drainage, without Natural England's written permission before work starts

Restrictions that apply on certain dates

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
		15 March to 30 June - do not apply fertiliser or manure									
		15 March to 30 June - do not cut for hay or silage									
		15 March to 30 June - do not operate machinery or allow activities that disturb breeding birds; do not cut bracken									
		15 March to 31 July - do not cut rush									
do not top except in patches to control injurious weeds and invasive non-native species									1 Oct to 31 July		

Keeping records

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them on request:

- receipted invoices, consents or permissions connected with the work
- field operations at the parcel level, including associated invoices
- a standard soil analysis to be completed in the final agreement year and results submitted with the final claim
- any sites grazed will require a grazing activity record

On your annual claim you will be asked to declare that you haven't carried out any activities prohibited by the option requirements.

You should also be aware that at the start of each claim year, a percentage of agreement holders will be asked to take and submit the following photographic records:

- photographs of the management undertaken

Applicants will have to send the following with their application:

- permanent grassland eligibility assessment form

By the submission of the first claim, applicants will need to submit a laboratory soil analysis including at least pH and phosphate (P)

ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS OPTION

*The following section gives advice on carrying out this option successfully, but does **not** form part of the requirements for this option.*

Choose the right location

Grassland which contains rare plant species is clearly valuable. It can still be valuable, and suited to this option, if it contains commoner species:

- legumes such as red clover, lesser trefoil and black medick
- herbs such as ribwort plantain and yarrow
- attractive wildflowers such as selfheal and germander speedwell

Low input grassland is most valuable when located alongside other important landscape features such as scrub and wetlands in a mosaic approach.

Grassland is also the best protection for historic and archaeological features, as long as plants with powerful roots like scrub or bracken do not take hold, and bare ground does not develop.

Managing the sward

The land will be much more valuable for insects, birds and other animals if it has a varied, patchy structure all year round, as detailed under requirements. It is much easier to achieve this structure by grazing with cattle than by grazing with sheep only.

Grazing may be rotational or intermittent, but the stock should eat the sward down well during the grazing periods to avoid it becoming rank during the rest periods.

Wet areas can be important sources of insect food and should be maintained where possible.

Check for breeding birds before operating machinery, even outside the closed periods.

Further information

See the illustrated guide Farming the historic landscape: caring for archaeological sites in grassland - <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/local-heritage/helm-redirect>

GS2 Permanent grassland with very low inputs (outside SDAs)	
Aim	To provide a varied sward structure and more flowering grasses and wildflowers, in order to increase the habitat and food available for invertebrates, birds and other animals.
Eligibility Rules	
E39	Only available on permanent grassland outside SDAs and below the Moorland Line.
E40	The grassland must qualify as at least, semi-improved as defined in Key 2a in the BEHTA manual, unless it is used; as part of a feature-specific option bundle; or for facilitating the sustainable management and buffering of SSSI's or Priority Habitats; or for the maintenance of grassland to conserve species of national or regional importance or to protect historic or archaeological features; or where in-field scrub cover is less than 1% and the option will be used in target areas for ground-nesting wading birds; or on parcels adjacent to a permanent watercourse.
E1041	For Mid Tier only, you must submit a laboratory soil analysis showing ph and P levels only with the first claim.
Prescriptions	
P10	Only use pesticides, including herbicides, to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds, invasive non-natives, nettles or bracken.
P30	Do not plough, cultivate or re-seed.
P31	Do not harrow or roll on historic or archaeological features.

GS2	Permanent grassland with very low inputs (outside SDAs)
Prescriptions	
P59	Only in years when the parcel is cut for hay/ haylage/ silage/ grazed you may apply either: up to 12 tonnes/ha of farmyard manure: or fertiliser at a maximum rate of 9 kg/ha nitrogen, 23 kg/ha phosphate, 83 kg/ha potash. Do not increase your application rate if your current rate is less than this. Do not apply between 15 March and 30th June.
P133	Manage by grazing and/or cutting for hay or silage. Do not cut between 15 March and 30 June. Remove any cuttings.
P134	Maintain a sward with a range of heights during the growing season so that at least 20 per cent of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20 per cent is more than 7 cm. You do not need to maintain this height variation when the field is closed up for a cut of hay or silage.
P135	Only top between 1 August and 30 September except in patches to control injurious weeds or invasive non-native species. Do not top more than 50% of the total area in any one year.
P136	Maintain soil pH above 5.4 by liming if necessary unless the target is to maintain acid grassland. Do not apply paper waste or any other industrial by-products.
P137	Control dense rush so that stands do not cover more than 20% of the parcel area. Manage by grazing and/or cutting every year to achieve a sward height of less than 20 cm by 30 September. Do not cut between 15 March and 31 July.
P138	Retain the full extent of well-established scrub where cover is below 5%. Where the cover is 5% or greater maintain scrub over at least 5% and a maximum of 10% of the parcel area. It must be retained as discrete small patches, lines and occasional individual bushes scattered across the site. Do not cut more than half of the scrub in any one year except on historic and archaeological features.
P184	Do not supplementary feed except for the provision of mineral blocks (non-energy based).
P299	Prevent additional scrub encroachment on historic or archaeological features.
P441	Only carry out mechanical operations or allow other activities that may cause disturbance to breeding birds from 1 January to 14 March and from 1 July to 31 December.
P456	Cover of small, well distributed areas of bare ground must not exceed 5%, and must not be located on historic or archaeological features. By year 2, localised patches of bare ground around rabbit warrens must not exceed 5m x 5m.
P673	Agree all drainage works, including modification to existing drainage, in writing with Natural England before undertaking any works.

Ryegrass seed-set as winter food for birds (GS3)

£331 per ha

Where to use this option

Whole or part parcel

Rotational

Only on:

- temporary grassland
- permanent grassland that has been cultivated and re-sown within the last 5 years

Swards must contain at least 50% ryegrass (perennial, Italian or hybrid).

How this option will benefit the environment

There will be an abundance of ryegrass seed in the autumn, providing food for many birds (including yellowhammers and other buntings, gamebirds such as grey partridge, and skylarks) until late winter.

REQUIREMENTS

- close the field for at least 5 weeks before cutting, and take a silage cut before 31 May
- close the field after cutting and removal, allow the sward to flower and set seed in the autumn, and leave the sward undisturbed until 1 March
- part parcels must be at least 10m wide

On swards containing at least 70% Italian or hybrid ryegrass, a second cut of silage (or hay) can be taken before 30 June.

This option can be moved between different eligible parcels of land, but the same total area (hectarage) must be maintained each year.

Do not:

- allow any grazing for at least 5 weeks before the first cut or, for Italian or hybrid ryegrass, in the period before the second cut

Keeping records

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them on request:

- field operations at the parcel level, including associated invoices
- stock records to show grazing activity

Applicants will need to supply with their applications:

- evidence of the sward composition will be needed with the application
- when applying to use this option on permanent grassland, evidence will be needed that the grassland has been cultivated within the last 5 years

ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS OPTION

The following section gives advice on carrying out this option, but does **not** form part of the requirements for this option.

How to choose a site

This option is designed to benefit buntings and other declining farmland birds, though it is also good for invertebrates and small mammals. For best results it should be used in areas that have:

- a population of buntings
- dense hedges and scrub for nesting
- invertebrate-rich habitat for summer feed (e.g. leniently grazed, low-input grassland and enhanced arable margins)

This option can provide essential winter seed food. On mixed farms it can be combined with arable options such as AB9 - Winter bird food. (See guidance on the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package (Mid Tier Manual section 8.3))

As a part-field option the best results can be obtained by placing it next to a hedgerow or wooded edge. However, it should be kept well away from hedges and trees to feed skylarks.

This option should only be used on areas that are at least 0.5ha in size. More birds will benefit if the option is split between 2 or more locations up to 500m apart.

The option is intended for intensive grass farms that have little scope to put land in other grassland or arable options, where regular reseeding is a typical practice.

How to manage this option

The aim is to have a large amount of herbage over the winter, which will enable hard harrowing or an early spring cut.

If grass is in rotation on the farm, or is regularly ploughed and re-sown, this option could be used:

- on fields due to be ploughed or re-sown
- on thinned swards that would benefit from the self-seeding this option provides

GS3	Ryegrass seed-set as winter food for birds
Aim	To provide a food resource throughout winter for buntings and other granivorous birds.
Eligibility Rules	
E84	Available only on swards containing at least 50 % ryegrass (perennial, Italian or hybrid).
E85	Temporary grassland and grassland that has been cultivated and re-sown within the last 5 years are eligible for this option.
Prescriptions	
P267	Take a silage cut before 31 May.
P268	On swards containing at least 70% Italian or hybrid ryegrass you may also take a second cut of silage (or hay) before 30 June.
P269	After cutting and removal, close the field, allowing the sward to flower and set seed in the autumn. Leave the sward undisturbed until 1 March.
P685	Part parcel blocks must be at least 10 m wide.
P706	Keep a monthly record of stock numbers grazing on parcels in this option. Make the record available on request.
P711	Do not graze for at least 5 weeks before the first cut, or in the period before the second cut on Italian or hybrid ryegrass.

Legume and herb-rich swards (GS4)

£309 per ha

Where to use this option

Rotational

Whole or part parcel

Only on:

- arable land
- temporary grassland
- permanent grassland that has been cultivated and re-sown within the last 5 years

Where this option cannot be used

- on parcels at risk of soil erosion or runoff as identified in the Farm Environment Record
- on organic land or land in conversion to organic status
- on parcels with historic or archaeological features in your HEFER or FER

One of the following conditions must also be met:

- a recommended fertiliser management system must be followed to plan nutrient inputs across the farm
- a recommended fertiliser management system must be adopted within 18 months of the start of the agreement
- the applicant must qualify as a low intensity farmer

How this option will benefit the environment

A vigorous sward with abundant legumes and herbs, suitable for productive cattle and sheep, will also provide habitat and food for invertebrates, including crop pollinators, and improve soil structure and water infiltration.

This option does not use nitrogen fertilisers, which contribute to climate change.

REQUIREMENTS

- establish a mixed sward of grasses, legumes and herbs and wildflowers in the first 12 months of the agreement
- maintain the required area of mixed sward for the remainder of the agreement
- make sure the sward has a minimum 10% cover of red clover
- make sure the sward has an additional 10% cover of other legumes, herbs and wildflowers (not counting white clover, creeping buttercup or injurious weeds)
- make sure that the sward contains at least 5 species of grass, 3 species of legume (including bird's-foot trefoil) and 5 species of herb or wildflower
- re-establish the sward if necessary, on the same or a different field, to maintain these minimum requirements
- manage the sward by cutting or grazing
- leave the sward to rest for at least 5 weeks between 1 May and 31 July, so that the majority of red clover flowers are open and available for pollinators
- this option can be moved between different eligible parcels, but the same total area (hectare) must be maintained each year

Do not:

- use pesticides, except herbicides to spot treat or weed-wipe injurious weeds or invasive non-native species, nettles or bracken
- use inorganic fertilisers containing nitrogen

Keeping records

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and produce them on request:

- field operations at the parcels level, including associated invoices
- stock records to show grazing activity on parcels

On your annual claim you will be asked to declare that you haven't carried out any activities prohibited by the option requirements.

A fertiliser management plan is required at application or within 18 months of the start of the agreement.

If applicants intend to use this option on permanent grassland, they will need to provide evidence with the application that it has been cultivated within the last 5 years.

ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS OPTION

*The following section gives advice on carrying out this option successfully but does **not** form part of the requirements for this option.*

How to choose a site

The option allows only very limited use of pesticides so only fields that do not have a burden of weeds or slugs should be chosen. Clovers, in particular, grow less well in soil that has a pH less than 6.0 and that is below index 2 for phosphorus and potassium. Soil can be improved with lime, manures or PK (but not N) fertiliser.

This option is not intended to be used on valuable semi-natural permanent pasture. Permanent grassland re-sown with grass or other herbaceous forage during the last 5 years, temporary grassland and other "agricultural" areas of grass could benefit from this option.

How to establish

Sow shallowly on to a firm, clean, fine seedbed. Alternatively, sow into an established grass sward: create at least 50% bare ground (and preferably 70%) and pay careful attention to slugs and other pests. Sowing legumes and herbs after August may not allow good enough establishment before the winter.

Legumes

Most of the widely available, inexpensive cultivars of red clover have low persistence, so the sward is likely to need to be re-established in its third year.

Remember that white and red clover can cause bloat, particularly in cattle.

Herbs

Chicory is a highly productive species, eaten by cattle and sheep and effective in protecting against internal parasites. It is better suited to grazing than cutting, as its stout stem is difficult to dry and can damage bale wrapping material.

GS4	Legume and herb-rich swards
Aim	To provide habitat and food for invertebrates including crop pollinators, improve soil structure, mitigate climate change by reducing nitrogen fertiliser use and provide productive high-quality forage for livestock.
Eligibility Rules	
E2	This option must not be located on parcels at risk of soil erosion or run-off (as identified in your FER).
E4	This option must not be located on historic or archaeological features.
E201	Only available on: Arable land or temporary grassland; or Grassland that has been cultivated and re-sown within the last five years.
E221	This option cannot be used on organic parcels or land in conversion.
E225	This option is only available when: You are following a recommended fertiliser management system to plan your nutrient input across your farm; or You adopt a recommended fertiliser management system within 18 months of the start of your agreement. Advice (supported through RDP) will be provided to support the adoption of this system; or You qualify as a low intensity farmer.
Prescriptions	
P10	Only use pesticides, including herbicides, to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds, invasive non-natives, nettles or bracken.
P553	In the first 12 months of the agreement, establish a mixed sward of grasses, legumes and herbs/wildflowers.
P554	Maintain the required area of mixed sward for the remainder of the agreement.
P555	The sward must contain a minimum cover of 10% red clover and an additional 10% combined cover of other legumes plus herbs plus wildflowers. This 10% must not include white clover, creeping buttercup or injurious weeds. The sward must include at least 5 species of grass, 3 species of legume (including bird's-foot trefoil) and 5 species of herb/wildflower.
P556	Re-establish if necessary, on the same or a different field, to maintain these minima.
P557	Manage by cutting or grazing but rest for at least 5 weeks between 1 May and 31 July so that the majority of red clover flowers are open and available for pollinators.
P560	Do not apply any inorganic fertilisers containing nitrogen.
P706	Keep a monthly record of stock numbers grazing on parcels in this option. Make the record available on request.

Lenient grazing supplement (GS17)

£44 per ha

Where to use this supplement

Whole or part parcel

Only on:

- permanent grassland
- in combination with GS2 as part of the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife package (Mid Tier Manual section 8.3)
- in combination with GS5 permanent grassland with very low inputs in SDAs
- on parcels where at least one boundary is a hedgerow and/or there is scrub cover within 200m of the parcel

This supplement can be rotated between eligible parcels, but the same total area must be maintained each year and once applied to a parcel it must remain on it for at least 3 successive years.

How this supplement will benefit the environment

It provides critical spring and summer invertebrate food needed by species such as yellowhammers.

There should be:

- plenty of spiders and insects, including larger ones such as grasshoppers and beetles
- birds, such as yellowhammers, reed buntings and skylarks flying into the field to feed

REQUIREMENTS

- graze during the growing season to maintain a sward:
 - that has an average height of 7cm to 13cm
 - where at least 20% is shorter than 10cm
 - where at least 20% is over 10cm tall
- on the parcel or part parcel where this option is used one boundary must be a hedgerow and / or there must be scrub within 200m of the option

Do not:

- cut for hay or silage

Keeping records

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them on request:

- stock records to show grazing activity on parcels

On your annual claim you will be asked to declare that you haven't carried out any activities prohibited by the option requirements.

You should also be aware that at the start of each claim year, a percentage of agreement holders will be asked to take and submit the following photographic evidence:

- photographs of the management undertaken

ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS SUPPLEMENT

*The following section gives advice on how to carry out this supplement successfully, but does **not** form part of the requirements for the supplement.*

Sward height importance

The option is usually used as part of a package to benefit declining farmland birds. It provides the critical spring and summer invertebrate food needed by species such as yellowhammers.

Most invertebrates are much more abundant in taller grass but birds find it difficult to access them if the whole sward is tall. Birds need shorter patches where they can land and check for danger. They can then dart into the taller patches to catch their prey, or wait for them to move to the edge of the tall grass or out into the shorter patches.

Option amount and location

Normally at least 1ha of this option per 100ha of the farm area is needed to provide sufficient invertebrates.

Place the supplement on part parcels next to hedges or scrub for yellowhammers and other buntings. For skylarks it should be placed away from trees, hedges or other tall structures.

Since the target birds do not generally feed more than 300m from their nests, parcels of this option should not be more than 500m apart.

This option will be more effective on grassland including herbs and wildflowers, but it can also be used on grassland with few, if any, herbs or wildflowers.

Checking sward height

If a sward stick is not available, uncompressed sward height can be measured using a ruler, or lines on boots. Ignore stems and seedheads – measure to the top green leaf.

How to achieve the right sward

It is much easier to achieve the correct diverse sward structure by grazing with cattle than by grazing with sheep only, which risks non-compliance with the Requirements.

Grazing can be rotational or intermittent, but the stock should eat the sward down well during the grazing periods to avoid it becoming rank during the rest periods

GS17	Lenient grazing supplement
Aim	To provide an invertebrate-rich foraging habitat for declining farmland birds, especially buntings, on grass-dominated farms as part of a package/bundle of bird-friendly measures for pastoral landscapes.
Eligibility Rules	
E86	This supplement can only be used either: in combination with GS2 Permanent grassland with very low inputs (outside SDAs) option as part of an option bundle for farmland wildlife in pastoral and mixed farming landscapes; or in combination with GS5 Permanent grassland with very low inputs in SDAs; or In combination with option GS13 Management of grassland for target features.
E88	In Mid Tier agreements, this supplement must only be placed on parcels where at least one boundary is a hedgerow and/or there is scrub cover within 200 metres of the parcel.
E89	Once applied to a parcel it must continue for at least 3 successive years.
Prescriptions	
P272	Do not cut for hay or silage.
P273	Graze during the growing season to maintain a sward with an average height of 7 - 13 cm with at least 20 per cent of the sward shorter than 10 cm and at least 20 per cent more than 10 cm tall.
P706	Keep a monthly record of stock numbers grazing on parcels in this option. Make the record available on request.

Management of hedgerows (BE3)

£8 per 100m for 1 side of a hedge

Where to use this option

On boundary lines of shrubs, which are:

- composed of woody plants with less than 2m between the ground and the base of the leafy layer
- over 20m long
- less than 5m wide between major woody stems at the base
- composed of at least 80% native shrubs

Where this option cannot be used

- on features that are trees for most of their length
- lengths of hedge managed under this option are not eligible for the capital item BN7 - Hedgerow gapping-up but are eligible for other capital item payments

How this option will benefit the environment

Increases the availability of blossom for invertebrates. By allowing fruit and berries to ripen it provides food for overwintering birds. It will also improve the structure and longevity of hedgerows.

If successful there will be:

- taller and wider hedges, with gaps forming less than 10% of the hedge length
- a mix of hedges of different heights and width across the farm
- production of 2 to 4 times the weight of berries when compared with hedges cut every year
- an increase in the blossom available to insect pollinators
- dense cover, which is important for successful breeding for a variety of wildlife
- an improvement in overall hedge condition to maintain them as distinctive and historic landscape features

REQUIREMENTS

- maintain a hedge at least 2m tall and 1.5m wide by year 2, except for sections gapped up, laid or coppiced during the agreement term
- cut hedgerows:
 - either no more than 1 year in 3 between 1 September and 28 February - leave at least two-thirds of hedges untrimmed each year
 - or no more than 1 year in 2 between 1 January and 28 February - leave at least one-half of hedges untrimmed each year
- gap up any length of hedge with more than 10% gaps within the first 2 years

Do not:

- remove any tree limbs, including lower limbs, or mature ivy growth from hedgerow trees
- remove any standing deadwood
- supplementary feed livestock within 2m of the centre of the hedge

Keeping records

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them on request:

- hedgerow management records

You should also be aware that at the start of each claim year, a percentage of agreement holders will be asked to take and submit the following photographic records:

- photographs of each hedge entered into the option

With their application, applicants will have to send maps showing:

- existing access tracks

This can be marked on the Farm Environment Record (FER).

ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS OPTION

*The following section gives advice on carrying out this option successfully but does **not** form part of the requirements for this option.*

Pick the right hedge

If you do not have management control of both sides of a hedge then only enter 1 side into the option. If there is no parcel number listed under your SBI for the land on one side of the hedgerow, for example where it is a road or track verge, or the land belongs to a neighbour, that side of the hedgerow can't be entered into BE3 on your application.

Select hedges that:

- are connected to other hedges or habitats (such as woodlands and ponds)
- have other components such as hedgerow trees, bases or banks rich in flowers, or an adjacent ditch or margin

Use the option to improve the condition and longevity of hedges which are of particular historic interest, such as parish boundaries, or are especially important in the landscape.

Managing the hedges

If the correct rotor and forward speeds are used, well-maintained flails are effective for cutting 2 to 3-year-old growth of most woody species.

Fast growing species, such as ash or willow, may need heavier duty flails or more powerful cutting heads. Alternatively, use a circular saw or leave hedges uncut. There is no requirement to trim hedges at all during the agreement. Instead, leave them to grow and manage in a coppicing or laying rotation.

Cutting incrementally, rather than trimming back to the same point, allows hedges to increase in height and width by several centimetres at each cut, encouraging a dense, healthy hedgerow.

Use native shrubs species that already occur in hedgerows in the local area to gap up. A gap is a complete break in the canopy. Where a tree canopy overlaps the hedgerow canopy it is not counted as a gap.

Further information

Read more on:

- managing hedgerows in a long-term cycle - <http://hedgelink.org.uk/index.php>
- common questions on hedge cutting - <http://hedgelink.org.uk/index.php>

BE3	Management of hedgerows
Aim	To increase blossom availability for invertebrates, provide a vital source of food for over-wintering birds by allowing fruit and berries to ripen, and improve the structure and longevity of hedgerows.
Eligibility Rules	
E16	<p>You can only use this option on:</p> <p>A boundary line of shrubs (a woody plant where the distance between the ground and the base of the leafy layer is less than 2 m) which is over 20 m long and less than 5 m wide (between major woody stems at the base) and composed of at least 80% native shrubs.</p> <p>You cannot use this option on features which consist of trees over most of their length.</p>
Prescriptions	
P71	Allow hedgerows to reach and then maintain a minimum height of 2m and minimum width of 1.5 m by year 2. Sections gapped up, layed or coppiced during the term of the agreement are excluded.
P73	<p>Either:</p> <p>Cut hedgerows no more than one year in three between 1 January and 28 February or 1 September and 31 December. Leave at least two thirds of hedges untrimmed each year.</p> <p>Or:</p> <p>Cut hedgerows no more than one year in two between 1 January and 28 February. Leave at least one half of hedges untrimmed each year.</p>
P79	Do not remove any tree limbs including the lower limbs or mature ivy growth from hedgerow trees.
P80	Do not remove any standing deadwood.
P88	Do not supplementary feed within 2 m of the centre of the hedge.
P622	Gap up any length of hedge with more than 10% gaps within the first two years.

Buffering in-field ponds and ditches in improved grassland (WT1)

£201 per ha

Where to use this option

Only on improved grassland next to ponds.

Where this option cannot be used

- on historic or archaeological features around ponds associated with industrial features such as effluent ponds, balancing ponds or small water supply reservoirs

How this option will benefit the environment

It protects ponds from nutrient leaching and runoff. This will maintain and enhance water quality and wildlife. If successful there will be:

- a grassy strip with a mix of grasses, flowering plants, scrub and trees
- a decrease in the amount of sediment and nutrient entering the pond

REQUIREMENTS

- leave a 10m to 20m wide buffer strip next to the pond
- let tussocky grass and low scrub develop
- only cut to control the spread of woody growth

Do not:

- let scrub develop on more than half of the pond or ditch margin - the southern side of the pond must remain open
- let livestock poach more than a third of the pond margin
- use pesticides, except herbicides to weed wiper or spot treat for the control of injurious weeds, invasive non-native species, nettles or bracken
- apply any fertilisers or manures
- cut between 1 March and 31 August

Keeping records

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them on request:

- field operations at the parcel level, including associated invoices

On your annual claim you will be asked to declare that you haven't carried out any activities prohibited by the option requirements.

You should also be aware that at the start of each claim year, a percentage of agreement holders will be asked to take and submit the following photographic records:

- photographs of the strips

Applicants will need to send the following with their application:

- evidence that the grassland is improved

WT1	Buffering in-field ponds and pitches in improved grassland
Aim	To protect ponds and high value ditches from nutrient leaching and run-off, to maintain and enhance water quality and wildlife.
Eligibility Rules	
E108	This option is only available on improved grassland adjacent to ponds or improved grassland adjacent to ditches in the Management of ditches of high environmental value option.
E4	This option must not be located on historic or archaeological features.
Prescriptions	
P2	Do not apply any fertilisers or manures.
P10	Only use pesticides, including herbicides, to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds, invasive non-natives, nettles or bracken.
P307	Leave a 10 – 20 m wide buffer strip adjacent to the pond or ditch.
P308	Allow the development of tussocky grass and low scrub. Only cut to control the spread of woody growth. Do not cut between 1 March and 31 August.
P309	Do not allow scrub to develop on more than half of the pond or ditch margin. The southern side of the pond or ditch must remain open.
P310	Do not allow livestock to poach more than one third of the pond or ditch margin.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



The European
Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development:
Europe investing in
rural areas



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