



Farming Matters

Issue 3 Spring 2018

Welcome to the spring edition of 'Farming Matters', a newsletter to update our Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund farmer groups and stakeholders on recent and forthcoming events and meetings, relevant projects and news and tips of topical interest.

In this newsletter you'll find a handy summary of what is available in the 2018 round of Countryside Stewardship funding. Hopefully, being part of the group will make it easier for you to get your head round the process, especially as the timing coincides with lambing, calving, field operations and seeding!

There are also articles about recent events, which, as ever, focus on farm business efficiency alongside sustainable management of our precious resources - soil and water.

With Brexit looming, the future of farming is a hot topic. Take a look at our articles on page 5 about the new **Farming rules for water**, plus information about a consultation paper that will affect us all - worth a look and have your say!

If you haven't read it already, **A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment** gives you the background to the Government's long-term thinking about the environment.

The plan lays out a range of goals and policies designed to 'help the natural world regain and retain health' and restates the Government's commitment to deliver a Green Brexit.

If you're short of time (!) the executive summary gives a flavour of the key goals and policies and Chapter 1, *Using and managing land sustainably*, goes on to consider how to improve the way we manage and incentivise land management, including payments, improving soil health and expanding woodland cover, plus greater use of natural flood management solutions to reduce the risk of harm from flooding.

[Read A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment >>](#)

Alice Robinson

Events

Lowther & Leith group met in Jan to plan their spring / summer programme.

Events coming soon include:

- **New techniques for over-seeding to rejuvenate pasture**
- **Opportunity mapping on farms - identifying areas to deliver environmental benefits and productive farming**
- **Field drains, ditches and the importance of soil structure in drainage**
- **Managing our farms for carbon storage**

Just a reminder, ideas for events come from you - give us your ideas and we can make them happen!

Book your place
01768 866788
office@edenrt.org



Grants update

With the window now open for 2018 applications for Natural England administered grants, here's our handy guide to what's available

1. Countryside Stewardship elements

Mid Tier

What is it: Includes multi-year options and capital items which will help farmers improve the wildlife on their farm; increasing year-round habitats and helping pollinators to thrive.

This is a competitive scheme.

Deadlines:

31 May -

- Request application packs from Natural England
- Requests for Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO) support & approval (if needed)

31 July - last date to submit application.

NEW FOR 2018 Offers for Wildlife

What is it: Four 'Offers' providing selected number of multi-year options for:

- Arable,
- Lowland grazing,
- Upland, and
- Mixed systems.

The Offers are tailored to help farmers choose the right options for their land. **The application process is simplified and the Offers are NOT competitive.**

Deadlines:

31 May - request application pack
31 July - deadline to submit application. Note, you can apply on-line for the Arable Offer.

2. Stand-alone two-year capital grants

Hedgerows and Boundaries Grant

What is it: A grant to help restore existing farm boundaries, delivering environmental and landscape benefits.

Grant: maximum has increased this year to £10,000.

Deadline: Apply online by 30 April.

Water Capital Grant

What is it: A limited range of water capital items that can be used to create a Mid Tier agreement comprising of only capital items. Some items require approval from a CSFO.

Grant: maximum £10,000

Deadlines: Contact local CSFO by 31 May to guarantee advice/visit/ approval if needed.

31 July - last date for submitting applications.

Further information:

www.gov.uk – search Rural Grants

Getting help with your application ...

We can support members on a 'group' basis in putting together applications and providing endorsement for Facilitation Fund applications = 10% uplift in score.

During the 2017 application window we gave advice to farmers and supported applications which included items such as covering yards and middens to keep clean and dirty water separate, relocating sheep pens, cow tracks for foot and soil health, farm wildlife and pollinator packages and hedge restoration.

Act now:

Every location where an option or capital item is to be used will need a field number. This includes farmyards. You are required to submit an RLE1 to the RPA - this takes time so start now!

**Natural England meeting
28 March, 10am - 1pm
The Shepherd's Inn, Rosehill,
Carlisle**

For farmers thinking of applying for Mid-Tier schemes this year. How to apply, the offers explained and more.

Call 01270 613195 or email hub@reaseheath.ac.uk

Natural England's grants in practice

Matt Jenkinson

One of the aims of our meetings and events is to inspire farmers to make the most of Countryside Stewardship grants. Our approach is to use real-world examples and invite experts along to spark discussion and debate.

At a recent meeting of the River Petteril Facilitation Fund farm group, Richard Spooner of Pendragon Vets, Kirkby Stephen discussed the causes, prevention and cure of lameness of cattle in both beef and dairy enterprises.

The main topic of the evening was how farm infrastructure can impact on the herd, for example finding the best surface for cow tracks, and making the most of concreted yard space.

The importance of good maintenance was at the forefront

of the discussion throughout the evening.

These infrastructure themes were linked back to the capital items on offer from Natural England through both Mid Tier and stand alone Water Capital items.

It was encouraging that farmers who run different systems were so willing to contribute to the evening, this collaborative approach is something which will be very important in the coming years as we all prepare for Brexit.

The evening proved a good opportunity to remind farmers what is on offer at the moment and that these capital items not only improve water quality and environmental performance, but can also benefit the farm business.

The Farm Crap App

Need an easy way of measuring the value of slurry? Need to know the available nutrient content for a certain time of year? Well all of this could be in the palm of your hands.

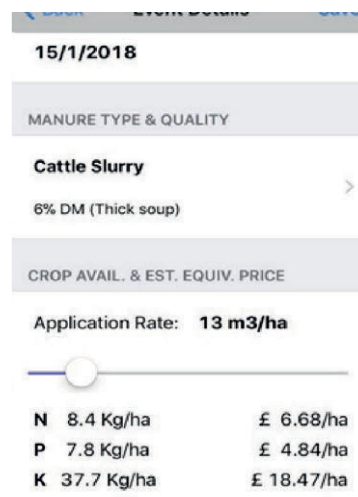
Farm Crap App is a sustainable agriculture project designed to help farmers make the most of their manure. It's a smartphone app containing three components;

- A calculator,
- An image library (to which you can add your own photos), and
- Record sheets.

The calculator will determine the **amount of crop-available key nutrients** (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium) within the manure at different spreading rates, helping you decide how much to spread in order to meet the crop requirements, and also the **value in £ of what that load of slurry is worth**.

Simply enter your fields and sizes into the main 'homepage', then, when you spread certain fields, update the information required. This starts with the dry matter content, which can be gauged by sight and the amount/ha you wish to apply. When you have updated this information the app calculates the available nutrients and the value of the slurry/m3 (see below).

Download from Google Play Store (Android phones) or Apple Store.



15/1/2018

MANURE TYPE & QUALITY

Cattle Slurry

6% DM (Thick soup)

CROP AVAIL. & EST. EQUIV. PRICE

Application Rate: 13 m3/ha

N	8.4 Kg/ha	£ 6.68/ha
P	7.8 Kg/ha	£ 4.84/ha
K	37.7 Kg/ha	£ 18.47/ha



Silage - the low cost feed?

Making quality home-grown forage

Back in October around 20 members attended an informative event, 'Silage – the low cost feed?' kindly hosted by Messrs Bindloss at High Buildings, Shap Abbey.

Charlie Morgan, GrassMaster Ltd, gave a straight-talking presentation about producing silage and avoiding the hidden costs. Charlie prompted the group to consider the efficiency of their silage making process.

It starts with the soil ...

The group heard how the starting point for growing cost-effective silage is the soil. Having adequate fertility and structure are crucial. Compacted soils result in low soil fauna and in turn, poor nutrient cycling, poor root growth and nutrient uptake. Temporary waterlogging is likely and can result in a shortened harvesting period.

Soil nutrient status

Silage is a very hungry crop for P and K. The requirement to provide 30% DM silage is 2.1 kg of P and 7.2 kg of K /t. Make use of manures and slurries to provide this using recommendations in RB209.

Don't overlook Sulphur - an essential element for protein production and its deficiency is becoming increasingly common.

Factors affecting silage quality

Remember to match silage quality to the needs of your stock - finishing stock, growing cattle, dry stock, milking cows.

When making silage, whether it be clamp or bale, the two important things to have at the forefront of your mind are:

- 1) crop quality at harvest and
- 2) how to reduce oxygen in the silo at all times.

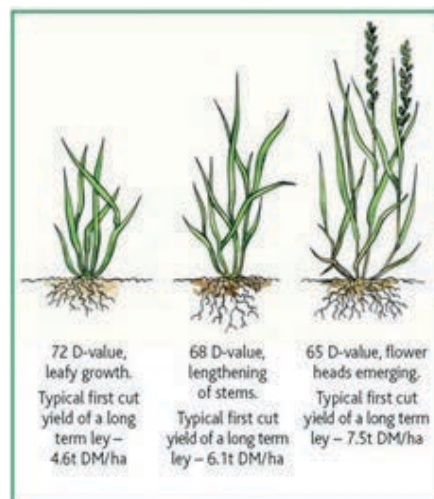
Ley quality and seed mixture selection:

Perennial ryegrass has supremacy in the mixture and responds well to N. As the content of unsown grasses and weeds in a pasture increases, the yield feeding value declines.

Legumes have always been an important inclusion in silage, but are becoming increasingly so due to the escalating cost of purchased protein and nitrogen fertilisers.

Crop stage/maturity at cutting:

Cutting date is always a compromise between yield and quality with the stage of growth at cutting having the greatest influence on the eventual feeding value. Obviously, we are reliant on the weather being on our side to allow us to cut at the optimum time!



The 'D-value' of grasses



Aaron & Charlie talking silage quality

(digestibility which affects ME energy content and voluntary intake) declines as heading approaches.

One point of D-value can amount to the equivalent of 0.3ltrs/milk/head/day, 40g/day LWG in cattle, 20g/day LWG in lambs. Choose a mix with heading dates to suit your system.

Harvesting and ensiling:

A rapid wilt within 48 hours, will increase % DM and minimise losses of nutrients in effluent. Chop length, good, quick, even consolidation of the pit (avoid rolling clamp the following morning!) and the importance of side sheets and overlapping top sheet were identified as factors key to eliminating oxygen at the pit to ensure preservation of nutrients and prevention of spoilage through harmful micro-organisms.

Good baled silage should be wrapped at the stack within 2-3 hours of baling and ensiled using six layers of wrap.

Farming rules for water - getting full value from fertilisers and soil

New 'farming rules for water' will be introduced by DEFRA from 2 April 2018 for all farmers in England.

The rules will:

- Promote good practice in managing fertilisers and manures.
- Encourage land managers to take reasonable precautions to prevent diffuse pollution from run off or soil erosion.
- Require soil tests at least every 5 years.

There are six new rules covering the following areas:

- Planning use of manures and fertilisers.
- Storing organic manures.
- Applying manures or fertilisers.
- Where not to apply organic manures.
- Where not to apply fertiliser.
- Reasonable precautions to prevent soil erosion.
- Protecting against soil erosion by livestock.
- Position of livestock feeders.

Detailed guidance on the rules will be published on GOV.UK before the rules come into force.

How the rules will be enforced

The Environment Agency (EA) will be the regulator for these rules. They will check compliance through their existing programme of work with farmers.

If you don't already comply with the new rules then you should review your farming practice and consider what changes are needed so that you can meet the requirements.

[Read the Farming rules for water policy document >>](#)

Have your say

With Brexit looming, there appears to be a flurry of policy documents and consultations for farmers to try find the time to read and comment on. Groups such as ours can provide a useful mechanism for farmers to have their voices heard.

Only recently, members of the Leith/Lowther group met with DEFRA policy makers on their doorstep during DEFRA's 'farmer engagement' tour.

Leaving the European Union and the Common Agricultural Policy will give us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design a domestic policy that fits the needs of the country. DEFRA want to know your thoughts on the future of England's agricultural policy and have published a short consultation paper, **[Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a green Brexit.](#)**

The consultation closes 8 May 2018. Click on the link below to read the document and have your say!

[Read Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a green Brexit >>](#)





Lie of the land

Each time, we'll bring you a personal view from folk who farm the land - and we've got quite a few at ERT!

This time: Robert Warburton, dairy farmer at Colby Laithes farm and ERT trustee.

'Live as if you are going to die tomorrow; farm as if you will live forever' - I expect you've

heard this well-known saying. Living in a world that only seems to adhere to the first half of it, our generation of farmers gets pulled into the same way of thinking - that of short-term decisions in what is a long-term industry.

As with all businesses, investment in the future of the farm is critical to ensure its long-term viability. However, these are uncertain times.

The 'boom and bust' nature of dairying isn't a model that lends itself to making the best decisions to future-proof the business, and then there's the very real prospect that our children will not choose to take on the family farm.

When the cycle is more 'bust' than 'boom' and cash is hard to come by, we are presented with a relatively high tax bill based on the previous year's accounts that bear no relationship at all to the fully-used overdraft staring back at us from the bank statement.

In the better times, we are wary of over-committing to expenditure on investment - unsure as to when the next downturn will arrive.

As a result, (at the last minute) on the advice of our accountant, we make a long overdue, but not

necessarily imperative upgrade to some rusting piece of machinery to not only reduce the tax bill, but to lift our spirits also.

The longer-term decisions are far harder to make. In the past, even if we did not reap the benefit of these investments then the next generation would, but now, (and rightly so) farming may not be the path that they choose to follow.

"These long-term investments are generally more expensive, need more thought, have a longer planning stage and always have a longer-term payback - but they are undoubtedly the ones that will have the greatest benefit to the environment."

Slurry stores that will contain all of the winter's production so that it can be used to its optimum effect in the spring, and roofed silage stores that are compliant with the legislation are the two that spring to mind and are probably the two that would see the greatest environmental improvement from agriculture in the Eden Valley.

Both, I am told by my accountant, are eligible for 100% allowance for tax. These are still a huge commitment for a business when the future can be so uncertain and when all businesses are at different stages of development - especially the vast majority of family ones found in the valley, like my own.

There is no easy solution; more sustainable business models, price

stability, longer-term contracts and availability of external funding to make capital improvements can all make a difference.

In the meantime, we continue to try to make the best decisions with what we've got; balancing short & long-term survival and profitability, whilst improving animal welfare, farm infrastructure and the environment.

Meanwhile, back to more pressing matters. We calved our last cow for 2017 in early December and the next one will not be until early April so all the cows are now going through the parlour - the winter routine of milking, feeding, cleaning and bedding cubicles is well and truly set.

For those farmers reading this it may seem a strange calving pattern but it suits the seasonality payments of our milk contract and allows a small down time for staff to catch up on holidays.

Silage stocks look reasonably healthy, so as long as spring grass growth is not delayed by an unseasonal cold snap all should be well. (This article was written before the Beast from the East struck! - Ed)

We are starting to look towards tackling the annual long list of fencing maintenance and are at present planting a hedge that we had planned to do last year but as with all the best laid plans has been subject to change!



The science behind Natural Flood Management

An opportunity to be part of an exciting, new collaborative research project to investigate the effectiveness of NFM on farmland

Eden Rivers Trust, Lancaster University and the Centre for Global Eco-Innovation are working in collaboration to investigate the effectiveness of existing Natural Flood Risk Management (NFM) features on farmland.

These features include: 'across slope' dry stone-walls and hedgerows, trees, and certain farming practices – rotational grazing, use of aerators and subsoilers on pasture.

Research will investigate how, and to what extent, these interventions affect flooding and water-quality issues within the Leith and Lowther

catchments, with results applicable across many parts of Cumbria and Northern England.

Why you should get involved

The ultimate goal of the project is to develop a strong case that supports environmental payments for a variety of farming systems implementing NFM, as well as increasing the accuracy of flood-prediction and water-quality models.

Results could also directly help you to reduce expenditure, by improving quality of surface run off predictions and resultant loss of fertiliser and productive soil,

helping you to make informed decisions that can improve the quality of your land.

Several farmers have already allowed small plots of their land to be investigated but more are locations are needed to build a stronger case.

For more information/ to offer field-sites, contact lead researcher Ethan Wallace

e.wallace@lancaster.ac.uk or

Alice Robinson, Farming and Conservation Coordinator

alice@edenrt.org

That's all for this issue

Eden Rivers Trust
Dunmail Building,
Newton Rigg college
Penrith CA11 0AH
Tel: 01768 866788

www.edenriverstrust.org.uk

Alice Robinson,
Farming and Conservation
Coordinator
alice@edenrt.org
Mobile: 07484 055481

If you are interested in exploring ways that you can bring water-friendly farming onto your farm, or would like some advice about potential funds and grants that you can apply for then please get in touch with us.



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas. This project has
received European Union funding under the
Countryside Stewardship Scheme's Facilitation Fund



Environment
Agency

