

Set-aside was introduced in 1992 as a production control measure. In 2005 8% of arable land must be set aside in order to qualify for the Single Farm Payment (SFP). The definition of arable for set-aside purposes has changed to include temporary grass (down for < 5 years) and set-aside is no longer just for those farmers returning IACS forms. These recent changes mean that some farms that have previously not needed set-aside will now have to meet that requirement.

For specific set-aside regulations consult Defra's Set-aside Handbook and Guidance for England 2005.



Naturally re-generated set-aside after cereals can provide over-wintering shelter, food and nectar sources for many animals

Key set-aside management dates

15 Jan	Start of set-aside period
15 April	Earliest date for non-selective herbicides
15 July	Earliest date allowed for sowing next years crop
15 July – 15 August	Compulsory cutting period for set-aside

Set-aside can provide many wildlife and environmental benefits. Plan your set-aside regime to suit your farming system and complement your existing habitats to benefit the environment.

There are two main categories of set-aside – rotational and non-rotational. Rotational set-aside tends to produce more annual plants, seeds, pollen, nectar and food for insects, small mammals and birds, whereas non-rotational set-aside can be used to provide a more stable habitat. Try to include a mixture of both types of set-aside to increase the wildlife potential of your farm.

Rotational Set-aside

Rotational set-aside can provide an excellent over-wintering habitat for insects, birds and small mammals. Natural regeneration, especially after cereals, is usually sufficient to create the required green cover and produce enough plant varieties to benefit a range of wildlife. In some cases sown mixtures will be needed to establish a good green cover, especially when creating habitat for specific species such as game birds. Seek advice from FWAG or The Game Conservancy Trust.

Management advice for rotational set-aside to benefit wildlife

- ? Try to destroy the green cover as late as possible.
- ? Spraying is preferable to cutting as it is less damaging to ground nesting birds. If cutting is required, try not to cut before August.
- ? Delay cultivations for as long as possible.
- ? Consider leaving a 2 metre strip around the headlands unsprayed or uncut. This is currently allowable under set-aside rules.
- ? If sowing a seed mixture try to use native species unless very specific nectar or seed sources are required.

Non-rotational Set-aside

Well-sited non-rotational set-aside can be a very important habitat on the farm providing permanent habitat for many species.

Siting advice

- ? Use those fields and part fields that are the least productive across the farm.
- ? Use set-aside as a means of extending existing areas of wildlife importance
- ? Aim to link together areas of wildlife importance.
- ? Use set-aside to protect ancient monuments and historical features.
- ? Use as buffer strips to protect sensitive habitats (see below)



Non-rotational set-aside can be an important habitat for wildlife on less-productive areas of the farm

Set-aside as buffer strips

The new set-aside rules now allow smaller strips (6 metre minimum) of set-aside to be situated alongside sensitive habitats (watercourses, hedgerows, woods, SSSIs).

Benefits of set-aside buffer strips:

- ? Protects sensitive habitats from fertilisers and pesticides. Also removes the need for LERAPs assessment
- ? Provides excellent links and corridors for wildlife.
- ? Removes the need for 2 metre buffer strips required alongside hedges and watercourses under Cross Compliance. Set-aside buffer strips meet this requirement.

Management advice for non-rotational set-aside to benefit wildlife

- ? Natural regeneration will often be sufficient to generate green cover, however sowing a seed mixture may be beneficial in some circumstances. If you are hoping to attract particular animals, such as butterflies, game birds, or bumblebees, seek advice on which species mix to sow. Note - from 2006 set-aside buffer strips will need sown green cover if insufficient is already established
- ? Up to 25% of each non-rotational set-aside area can remain uncut in each year. Seek advice as to which areas will benefit most from this strategy.
- ? As with rotational set-aside, try to leave the permitted 2metre uncut strip around the field edges.
- ? Use targeted spot spraying or weed wiping to treat pernicious weed problems, such as ragwort, thistle and docks.
- ? If using a seed mixture try to include wild flowers – they are a good source of nectar and pollen. Use native seeds where possible and plants that flower at different times of the year.
- ? Wild Bird Seed and Pollen & Nectar Flower Mixtures on set-aside are options for Entry Level Environmental Stewardship (ELS). For further information see the ELS Handbook.



Wild flowers provide nectar and pollen sources

Make full use of derogations. You can apply to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) for exemptions to any of the set-aside rules for environmental or archaeological reasons. Seek advice from your local FWAG Adviser.

Further Information

For further information including possible grant aid contact your local FWAG Adviser and visit www.fwag.org.uk
Set-aside Handbook and Guidance for England 2005 Edition – Defra www.defra.gov.uk www.rpa.gov.uk

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Archaeology on Farmland

Archaeology is the study of our past through the physical remains left behind. This includes everyday objects, monuments, landscape features and sites buried under ground. These physical remains can provide great insight to previous generations lifestyles. Archaeological sites need to be considered on a farm, as they can be vulnerable to modern agricultural methods and the development of the countryside. Unlike some conservation features, once destroyed, are not replaceable.

Some archaeological features are very obvious such as the ruins in this photograph (right) however, some less obvious features (such as the ridge and furrow in the background) can have great historical value and it is important that these historical features are retained wherever possible. Some archaeological sites can be easily damaged by ploughing or sub-soiling and their value lost. This is especially so on uncultivated or semi-natural land where an Environmental Impact Assessment may be needed before cultivation or intensification.



Old ruins in the foreground with a good example of ridge and furrow in the background

The presence of archaeological sites and historical features on farms can generate income. They are valued as part of the UK's agri-environment schemes both to facilitate entry and to potentially trigger payment for their retention and appropriate management.

Farming tips to look after ancient monuments



Old farm buildings may be of historical importance

For all farms

- ? Note all historical features on the farm with the help of your local FWAG Adviser and with reference to local records from your local authority. Most local authorities have an archaeology service.

In arable

- ? Where possible use minimum cultivation techniques such as flexi-tine harrows or rotary cultivators. Probably the best technique is the use of direct drilling, particularly for winter cereals grown on heavy soils. Soil compaction can be lessened if tractors are fitted with low ground pressure tyres.
- ? Ploughing should be avoided where an ancient monument lies on a sloping site as this will gradually move topsoil downhill, uncovering remains hitherto safely buried. Much the same applies to ploughing on very light land where wind blow will uncover buried sites
- ? Avoid growing root crops on ancient monument sites.

In grassland

- ? If possible, avoid grazing cattle on such sites, especially on steep sites.
- ? If the site cannot be grazed, prevent the encroachment of scrub by occasional cutting.
- ? Control rabbits, which are capable of causing considerable damage by burrowing.
- ? Site water troughs and feeding areas away from earthworks.



Hadrian's Wall

Treasure Hunting

This activity damages archaeological sites, is illegal on all scheduled monuments (without permission from the Secretary of State for the Environment) and should be actively discouraged on all archaeological sites. Farmers should check that any treasure hunters belong to a recognised club and remember that any material removed without the knowledge or permission of the landowner constitutes theft.

Landowners should of course remember that finds of gold and silver may be deemed Treasure Trove, which is the property of the Crown. Such finds should be reported to the police.

Environmental Stewardship Opportunities

The new Environmental Stewardship scheme offers opportunities for land with archaeological features. ELS (Entry Level Stewardship) contains options for taking archaeological features out of production and employing sensitive management practices and HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) contains opportunities for funding restoration and protection plans.

For further information see the ELS and HLS Handbooks at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/els/default.htm

Relevant legislation

Scheduled Monuments (SM) are protected by law and require owners to obtain permission from the Secretary of State for the Environment before undertaking certain activities. This law is reinforced by Cross Compliance regulations for the Single Payment Scheme (SPS). Ensure that SMs are identified on your land and managed sensitively to avoid damage. For further details refer to the Defra Cross Compliance Handbook for England 2005 or see www.crosscompliance.org.uk

Where uncultivated or semi-natural land is to be brought into intensive agriculture, there may be a need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that will take into account historical and archaeological features. All farmers should have received an explanatory leaflet early in 2002. A more comprehensive guide (*Guidelines – Environmental Impact Assessment for use of uncultivated land or semi-natural areas for intensive agricultural purposes*) is available free of charge from DEFRA

Further Information

Contact your local FWAG Adviser and visit the FWAG website: www.fwag.org.uk

Veteran Trees



Veteran trees form an important part of our cultural and historical heritage, greatly contributing to the landscape in many areas. They are often several hundred years old and have a unique style and form. Many veteran trees have inadvertently been cut down as they were thought to be diseased or dying, however old trees with some dead wood will survive several hundred years. Each tree can support a very wide range of species, including plants, insects, lichens, fungi and micro organisms, many of which only survive in these specialised conditions and are therefore amongst our rarest.

Veteran trees can support a wide range of wildlife

Rotten timber within veteran trees is an ideal habitat for many insects and hence beneficial to insect-eating birds, bats etc. Hollows and holes provide nesting and roosting sites for birds, bats, other small mammals and insects. Veteran trees can be the host for climbing plants such as ivy, providing nectar sources when no others are available.

Veteran trees are a UK National Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat.

Management to benefit wildlife

- ? Leave climbing plants, such as ivy or mistletoe on the tree. They do little or no harm to the tree and provide a great source of nectar and berries.
- ? Where possible try to leave dead wood on the tree as this is hugely beneficial to a wide range of species. However be aware of the potential hazard of veteran trees, some dead wood may need to be removed for safety reasons.
- ? Always seek expert advice before undertaking any restoration work.
- ? In some cases partial or full pollarding of a veteran tree might be beneficial. This should only take place after an individual assessment has been carried out.
- ? If a tree has to be felled for safety reasons, try to leave the trunk and some of the dead wood remaining as it can support a wide range of organisms.



An upland veteran tree – an excellent habitat for many species on moorland

Potential problem issues



Veteran pollard willow tree

Avoid:

- ? Cultivating underneath the crown of the tree can cause soil compaction and root damage.
- ? Allowing livestock access to veteran trees. Cattle especially, can cause physical damage and contribute to compaction problems and soil erosion, often exposing and damaging roots.
- ? Spreading fertiliser, pesticides and lime close to trees. These can cause great damage to veteran trees and their associated organisms.
- ? Siting a muckheap near the base of a tree.

Recommendations

- ? Where possible exclude stock and refrain from cultivations close to veteran trees.
- ? In-field veteran trees should be considered priorities for protection buffer zones. These can be included in Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) and are worth 12 points per tree in arable fields and 8 points per tree in grassland. See the ELS Handbook from Defra for the full details.
- ? Alternatively you can use a block of set aside to create a protection zone. Ideally this should extend out from the canopy by 5m, or a distance from the trunk 15 times the diameter at chest height – whichever is the greater.



Veteran oak tree

Relevant legislation

Under the Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) requirements for Cross Compliance you must comply with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Felling trees for safety reasons may require a felling licence from the Forestry Commission www.forestry.gov.uk

Further Information

For further information including possible grant aid contact your local FWAG Adviser and visit the: Environmentally Responsible Farming and Farmland Biodiversity areas on www.fwag.org.uk

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in the information sheet. However, FWAG cannot accept liability for any errors or omission. Photographs courtesy of English Nature, Richard Knight, Marian Wilby 6.3June 2005

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