

News from the Farm Advisory Service:



Get funded guidance on farm woodland creation and maintenance

Traditionally, farm woodlands were planted for shelter, timber production, amenity, game cover, or a combination of these. More recently, wildlife conservation and biosecurity have become important objectives, and there has been a rise in the understanding and appreciation of woodlands' ability to store carbon dioxide and mitigate climate change.

Trees offer numerous advantages for your farm or croft and for your local community. Farm woodlands can diversify income streams, boost productivity and resilience, improve soil health, and enhance the local landscape, air and water quality. Trees on farms also help prevent livestock heat stress, serve as windbreaks to reduce evaporation, increase water use

efficiency, and mitigate erosion caused by wind and runoff.

By selecting either the Woodland Management and Conservation or Biodiversity, Habitat and Landscape Management specialist advice options through the Farm Advisory Service (FAS), an expert adviser can offer guidance on how best to fund, achieve and monetise woodland creation and maintenance.

Up to £3,200 of funding is available for two specialist advice options through FAS. To find out more and apply for funding, visit www.fas.scot/specialist-advice. For support choosing the best grant options and help finding an advisor contact FAS at advice@fas.scot or **0300 323 0161**.

Risk of Schmallenberg in lambing flocks and spring calving herds

Schmallenberg virus (SBV) is transmitted by the biting insects of the Culicoides family (midge) and can cross the placenta to infect foetuses. Foetal deformities can occur if an animal is infected between day 28-40 of pregnancy (sheep) and 3-6 months of pregnancy (cattle). Affected lambs and calves may be born with fused joints, twisted necks or spines, shortened lower jaws and domed skulls. These malformations may lead to lambing or calving difficulties and stillbirth. Some lambs or calves may be born alive but are weak, unable to suckle, and have abnormal neurological signs. Early infection before the above critical stages in pregnancy can result in early embryonic death, seen as a high barren rate at scanning, or abortion. Infection outside these risk periods and in non-pregnant animals can result in a relatively mild illness lasting only a few days.



So far this year SBV has been confirmed by SRUC vet services in early lambing flocks in Dumfries & Galloway, Ayrshire, and Stirlingshire. This suggests these sheep were infected in July – September 2024. However, mild weather into November 2024 could have allowed midges to continue biting sheep late into the season and potentially impacting March lambing flocks and spring calving herds.

Any herd or flock reporting poor scanning results, abortions, or the birth of malformed lambs or calves should contact their vet to arrange investigation and assist in any difficult births. Similar presentations may be seen with other infectious diseases, toxic insults, nutritional deficiencies, or genetic abnormalities.

*Laura Henderson, SAC Consulting
Megan Fergusson, SRUC Veterinary Services*

Find our full article on Schmallenberg (SBV) by visiting our News page at: www.fas.scot/news/

Free Events

At the Farm Advisory Service we run a range of events both online and in-person.

Visit www.fas.scot/events to sign up or contact the advice line and we'll help you get booked on.

Dairy Benchmarking - The Cost of Production
Castle Kennedy, 6th March, 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Whole Farm Plan & Troubleshooting Early Corncrake Cover
Isle of Mull, 7th March, 12:00pm - 2:00pm

Lairg Crofting Discussion Group - Habitat Identification

Lairg, 22nd March, 10:30am - 2:30pm

Biodiversity Audits - Help with Habitat Mapping
Online, 26th March, 7:30pm - 8:30pm

Keeping and maintaining ewe condition



Managing a ewe's body condition score (BCS) is an essential tool to ensure performance and productivity of the ewe.

One condition score is equivalent to 10-13% of body weight, which for a 70kg ewe is 7-9kg of bodyweight. If a BCS score decreases, the weight takes time to regain, around 8 weeks on good quality pasture.

During pregnancy the lamb gains its nutrients from the placenta, this can grow to ~1kg of weight during mid pregnancy, with the key stage for placental development from day 50 – 90 after conception. If the development of the placenta is compromised, through poor condition or nutrition of the mother, then it can result in poor growth of the foetus, low lamb birth weights and low survivability of lambs. In mid pregnancy the foetus only grows ~20% of its final birth weight, while the placenta grows considerably at this stage.

In the last 6 weeks of pregnancy, the foetus grows quickly (around 75% of its birth weight), while the ewe's udder is developing. Meaning late pregnancy nutrition has a huge effect on the vigour and survivability of the lambs, as well as preventing the ewes from metabolic disorders. Late pregnancy nutrition is vitally important, as this can also affect the lifetime performance of the lamb.

A breeding ewe requires more energy to gain one body condition score than she does to lose one condition score.

It is important to manage body condition changes gradually to minimise any production losses in ewes, with fertility closely linked to body condition. Ideally ewe condition is managed and maintained throughout the year.

Kirsten Williams, SAC Consulting

To read our article in full, visit: www.fas.scot/article/keeping-and-maintaining-ewe-condition/

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service is funded by the Scottish Government. It is delivered by SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College, and Ricardo Energy and Environment.



Cow of the Future webinar series

The Sustainable Beef Systems series returned for a second season in winter to focus on 'The Cow of the Future'.

Over the course of four webinars, we engaged with farmers and industry specialists to cover the stigma around the emissions associated with beef enterprises and discuss what attributes are essential to develop a highly efficient, sustainable, and profitable suckler cow to fit your system.

Watch our series by using the QR code or use the link below for our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/FASScot



SAF window opens Friday 14th March

Please remember to check your details are up to date on Rural Payments & Services

visit www.ruralpayments.org for more info

If you need more advice on any topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on **0300 323 0161** or email advice@fas.scot. The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £2,000.

The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at www.fas.scot