

News from the Farm Advisory Service:



Disease Surveillance - Sheep Scab

In Scotland, sheep scab has been a notifiable disease since 2010, but higher notifications have been recorded in the last 12 months following a government-funded project to detect sheep scab in Lewis and Harris.

In this video, we hear from Kirriemuir-based vet Ed Hill who discusses the diagnosis, treatment, and control of sheep scab. Ed also gives an insight into the collaborative efforts of Perthshire and Angus farmers to control sheep scab in their local areas following outbreaks in 2023 that led to the cancellation of some local agricultural shows.

Watch our video by scanning the QR code below, or by searching for Scotland's Farm Advisory Service on YouTube



Farm Advisory Service Newsletters

Sign up to our newsletters to receive the latest information and news in different areas of the industry, sent straight to your email inbox!

Visit
www.fas.scot/newsletters
to find out more

Online tools to help assess habitats

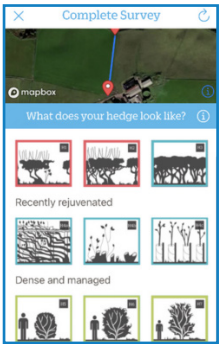
Habitat supports varying levels of biodiversity depending on the condition it is in. Good condition habitats are those which are functioning as close to natural as possible and contain a rich biodiversity of species typical for that habitat. Poor condition habitats with lower biodiversity can be caused by a range of factors, such as pollution, overgrazing, invasive non-native species, nutrient enrichment and climate change. In knowing the condition of a habitat, tailored recommendations to management can be made resulting in a boost in biodiversity on farms across Scotland.



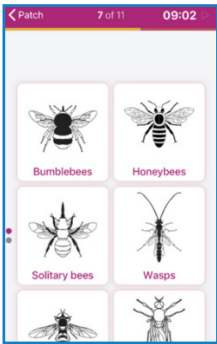
Understanding farm biodiversity and what are indicators of good condition has been made easier with the development of technology and AI. Below is a selection of tools that can be used to help understand the biodiversity across your farm, and track changes with management techniques.

AHDB Soil Health check – Excel spreadsheet that allows you to enter soil data to identify issues with soil that can be addressed.

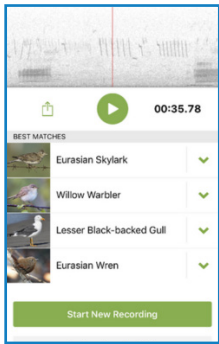
Healthy Hedgerow App – The app allows hedgerows to be mapped and condition assessed answering simple questions. This then provides information on the condition of the hedgerow, issues with it and recommendations on how to improve.



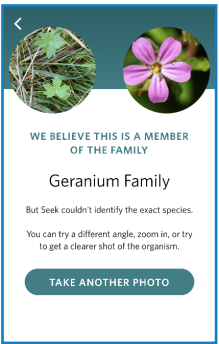
Healthy Hedgerow



Pollinator Monitoring Scheme



Merlin



PlantNet

Pollinator Monitoring Scheme App – This app allows pollinator data to be easily collected for any habitat with flowers. The app is a great way to baseline pollinators on your farm, while also providing useful data for the national dataset.

Merlin – The Merlin app can be used to identify birds by both sound and sight. The app can be used across your farm to find what birds are present on different habitats.

Soil Mentor – Soil mentor app allows farmers to record a variety of metrics relating to soil health including worm counts, root depth and water infiltration rates, to compare results per field over time.

PlantNet App – Allows the user to take a photograph of a plant and uses AI technology to identify a range of possible plant species with a confidence percentage based upon certainty.

iNaturalist App – This can be used to predict the species of plant, insect, birds and fungi using a photograph.

Native Woodland Scotland Survey – Map of all of Scotland's native woodlands, with information on their condition.

For the full article, please visit:
www.fas.scot/article/online-tools-to-help-assess-habitats/

Harry Fisher, SAC Consulting

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.

Common Grazing Developments - Portree Portree, 12th March, 6:30pm - 9:00pm

Whether it's turbines or woodland, all items on a Common Grazing need careful treatment in terms of costs and income. If you are a clerk, committee member or a crofter, come along to this meeting to gain the know-how and confidence that finances on the Common are being properly dealt with.

Preparing for Lambing - Uist Ballivanich, 14th March, 6:30pm - 8:30pm

Lambing is a busy time of year, and whether you are new to lambing or would like a refresher, we have got you covered! This workshop will cover colostrum management, condition scoring, ewe nutrition and diseases. We will also practice intraperitoneal injections (IP) and practice difficult deliveries with a lambing simulator.



Why patience is key to protecting soils this spring



With fieldwork falling behind due to the wet winter there can be a temptation to work wet soils creating further damage in many cases. As a rule of thumb, if a handful of soil can be easily moulded into a ball, it is in a plastic state meaning it is vulnerable to compaction and structural damage.

Good soils are made up 50% mineral and organic matter, 25% air and 25% water, and compaction essentially squeezes the air and water out. Roots can easily work their way through good soils as pore size is often larger than the roots themselves. Pore size is much smaller in compacted soils, meaning roots struggle due to increased mechanical resistance. These soils are also more predisposed to becoming anaerobic, leading to denitrification and are more susceptible to erosion and surface run-off.

Farmers should be prepared to get their spades out – are any problems due to too much rain, topography, soil type or is there something fundamentally wrong? Good soils should be porous with fairly small aggregates, having a good earthy smell. Poor soils will have large, angular aggregates, few pores and be sour smelling.

In addition to working soil at the right time, reducing tyre pressures will increase the footprint, reducing the risk of compaction. Cultivations should only be as deep as necessary - going too deep will only dredge up any cold wet layers to the surface.

While metal may allow some remediation, weathering through natural shrinkage and expanding will make inroads to restructuring a soil. Roots also play an important role, and getting a crop growing and letting it establish good, deep roots can really improve the structure of a soil longer term.

George Chalmers, SAC Consulting

This article is part of the February edition of the Crops & Soils bulletin. To read more, please visit:
www.fas.scot/crops-soils/crops-and-soils-bulletin/

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is funded by the Scottish Government, providing information and resources aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of farms and crofts. Grant support, a full programme of events, a subscription service for crofts and small farms, and a range of articles and publications form the core of this service which is designed to provide integrated advice for farmers and crofters across Scotland.



National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

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 £1,200.

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



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot