

## News from the Farm Advisory Service:



### FAS TV - Livestock Showing

On our final FAS TV episode of season 4, we are looking into the world of showing livestock with a visit to the Royal Northern Spring Show.

We hear from the organisers as they gear up for what many consider the first agricultural show of the year.

We met with show enthusiast Michael Robertson, who shares with us how showing cattle has gone from a hobby to a full-time part of his farming business, with a real focus on producing show quality cattle.

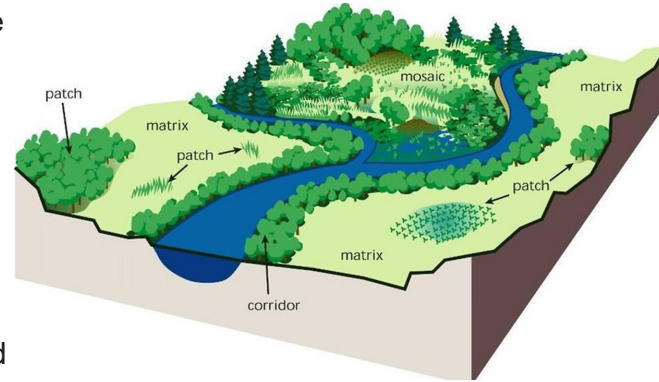
Thank you to all our viewers of FAS TV, we will be back with Season 5 in June.

Find our video by using the QR code or the link below [www.youtube.com/FASScot](http://www.youtube.com/FASScot)



## Why is Habitat Connectivity Important?

Connected habitats allow a range of wildlife to move more freely from place to place. Most species require a mix of several key resources to survive and thrive. This may include food sources, access to water, areas suitable to make their homes, protection from predators or disturbance, and/or areas where they can find mates. Each of these resources may only be available in spatially separated habitats and this availability may change over the course of the seasons, making it necessary for animals to cross the landscape to find what they need.



Farmers can help wildlife by increasing the area or improving the quality of the patches of semi-natural habitats that they manage. However, it is also crucial to achieve better connections between these patches through building nature corridors across landscapes.

Rivers and burns are inherently connected, acting as key nature corridors flowing across different landholdings. Increasing the width of buffer zones and considering riverbank tree planting can make these watercourses more useful to a wider range of species.

Tree corridors and hedgerows create wildlife paths across the landscape, especially when targeted to connect larger areas of woodland.

Removing barriers to movement such as fences, walls, weirs and culverts, where these are not necessary, will make land and watercourses more accessible for wildlife. There are many ways to build gaps into these barriers and/or make them less dangerous to certain species, such as fences which are low enough to jump over, high enough to crawl under, or more visible (so animals do not run into them).

Farmers who are looking to increase their land's value for nature can consider the following steps:

1. Take stock of existing habitat types and their condition to determine which areas of a farm which have the potential to deliver more for nature. A FAS Specialist Advice biodiversity, habitat and landscape management survey can help with this.
2. Look more widely at neighbouring landholdings, local habitat networks, and the wider landscape. Discuss opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring farms to deliver larger and more ambitious projects.

*Brady Stevens, SAC Consulting*

Further information can be found in our full article at: [www.fas.scot/article/biodiversity-why-is-habitat-connectivity-important](http://www.fas.scot/article/biodiversity-why-is-habitat-connectivity-important)

## Funding for Organic Farming Support

In recent years, the Scottish Government has made a series of high-level political commitments to organic farming, including doubling the amount of organic agricultural land in Scotland by 2026. If you are interested in joining this movement, keen to eliminate the use of synthetic pesticides and enhance animal welfare and biodiversity on your farm or croft, converting to or maintaining an organic farming system might be for you.



Organic farmers and crofters work to a high set of standards to produce high-quality food using methods that benefit our environment. Before conversion, you must consider your soil management, crop rotation, livestock management, the infrastructure of your farm and future marketing strategy. The Farm Advisory Service can support you with targeted guidance on best practices, access to the organic market and business efficiency advice for organic production.

Up to £3,200 of funding is available through FAS for two areas of specialist advice, including organics. To find out more and apply for funding, visit our Specialist Advice page. For support choosing the best grant options and help finding an advisor, contact FAS at [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot) or 0300 323 0161.

## Farming in Water Scarcity



**From flooding events to extended dry spells, we are seeing our weather patterns changing. A dry winter and spring increase the risk of water scarcity issues in the summer months.**

Here we highlight some ideas that could reduce your water demand:

**Monitor** – Metering helps you measure water use: an unexplained jump in water demand could suggest leaks and/or water wastage. Estimating demand via a water calculator can help you to understand business needs.

**Soil quality and crop choice** - Increasing soil organic matter can improve water retention, soil health and functionality. Drought resistant crop varieties and seed mixes with varying root depth can also help reduce vulnerability.

**Irrigation management** – From soil moisture sensors to maintaining equipment and staggering abstractions with neighbours, making better use of water could help reduce pressure on surrounding watercourses.

**Water collection and storage** – Collecting rainwater from farm buildings can offer a source of washdown water. On a larger scale, irrigation lagoons provide access to water at times of scarcity. Irrigation lagoon funding support is available under the Scottish Government Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS), either as a standalone measure (until 22.04.25) or as part of a wider application (until 12.06.25).

**Be prepared** - Check SEPA's weekly Water Situation Report ([www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk)) for current water availability and areas moving towards drier conditions. Abstraction, even with a licence, may be put on hold.

See the FAS website for more information on improving farm water use efficiency, from larger catchment-based projects to farm level mitigation options.

*Fiona Salter and Rebecca Audsley, SAC Consulting*

To read the full article, please visit: [www.fas.scot/news/farming-in-water-scarcity](http://www.fas.scot/news/farming-in-water-scarcity)

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.

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](mailto: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](http://www.fas.scot)