News from the Farm Advisory Service:

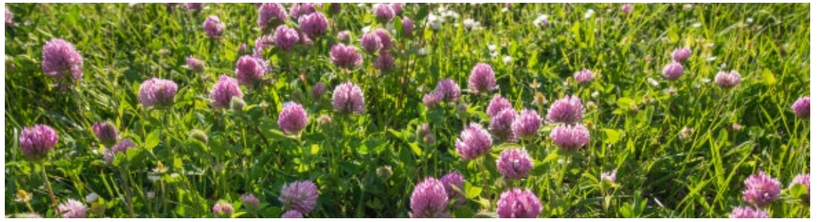
Top tips for Rhododendron control

Rhododendron ponticum **is one of the biggest threats to biodiversity in the West of Scotland. It is slowly covering woodlands, heaths, bogs and grasslands, suffocating our native vegetation. It has no biodiversity value and cannot be grazed. The more rhododendron is ignored, the more it will spread, and it is very efficient at spreading.**

In this video, we describe some control methods that can be used against rhododendron and offers advice on where to start. Please do not ignore this plant and use our top tips in this video to start tackling the problem. If the plant is treated efficiently, it is possible to eliminate it even when it is dense.

Find our video by using QR code below, or visit our YouTube Channel at
www.youtube.com/FASScot

Red clover as home-grown protein in sustainable sheep systems



Increasing the amount of forage-based protein that can be grown on farm is a key way to address the UK's protein deficit and reduce reliance on imported protein sources. Forage legumes such as white and red clover are important species in providing sustainability in the sheep sector. The UK livestock industry is under increasing pressure to reduce reliance on imported protein sources, mainly soya. This is due to the concerns associated with deforestation and conversion of land for soya production in South America. As well as the large carbon footprint associated with feeding soya and price volatility.

Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) is a high quality, high protein crop, used to primarily make silage and for grazing. Studies have shown red clover can increase lambs' liveweight gains and reduce time to slaughter. It is a short-lived perennial herbage legume that typically persists for 2-4 years, depending on management and variety. However, there are newer varieties showing persistence of up to 5 years.

Red clover has a single growing point, the crown which stores nutrients and from which stems and a deep tap root grow from. The growth habit of red clover makes it capable of high yields, with quotes of around 10-12tDM/ha in upland areas and up to 12-15t DM/ha in fertile areas. They also have a high tolerance to drought but are less tolerant to grazing. One of the primary benefits of red clover is the ability to capture nitrogen from the air and feed it into the soil and surrounding plants.

Nutritionally red clover is known for its high protein content, reducing reliance on protein concentrates. Although red clover is not known to be a high energy (digestible) forage, there have been many studies to show the improved performance of ewes in late pregnancy and finishing lambs fed red clover silage. Most of this benefit is due to the higher intake of red clover silage due to its high palatability and structure.

Mary Young, SAC Consulting

For more information on the use of red clover in sheep systems including nutritional value, establishment and management, and challenges with the crop please visit our guide at:
www.fas.scot/article/red-clover-as-a-home-grown-protein-in-sustainable-sheep-systems/

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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.

Grassland Roadshow Ayrshire - Managing Grass for Dairy
Crosshands, 8th May, 11:00am - 2:00pm

Want to catch up on our previous webinars?
Visit www.youtube.com/FASScot for our webinar recordings

Hedges - wanted dead or alive

Hedges are great, performing a trifecta of functions linked to biodiversity enhancement, carbon capture and climate change mitigation. But living hedges present challenges, establishment can be difficult, protections are costly, and long-term maintenance can require specialist input and skillsets. A so called "dead hedge" avoids many of the pitfalls associated with a living hedge, with benefits and opportunities for the businesses willing to explore the alternative.

A dead hedge, sometimes also referred to as a dry hedge, is a natural, sustainable barrier constructed from cut branches, twigs, and other woody debris. Unlike a traditional hedge composed of living plants, a dead hedge consists of deadwood stacked between wooden stakes driven into the ground. This simple yet effective structure has been used for centuries in woodland management, permaculture, and conservation projects. Dead hedges provide multiple benefits, including habitat creation, erosion control, and the recycling of organic materials.

One of the most valuable aspects of a dead hedge is its positive impact on biodiversity. As it provides shelter and nesting sites for a variety of wildlife, it becomes a microhabitat in its own right. Small mammals, such as hedgehogs and field mice, often seek refuge within the protective brushwood, while birds use it for nesting and roosting. Insects, including beetles, bees, and butterflies, thrive within the decomposing wood, contributing to a rich and diverse ecosystem. As the timber and plant material breaks down in can become integrated into the soil, helping boost organic matter levels and promote resilient soils.

Top tips for success

- Use a variety of branch sizes — thicker ones at the base, finer ones at the top.
- Angle some branches diagonally to interlock and reinforce the structure.
- Mix in leafy cuttings for better wildlife cover and aesthetics.
- Position it strategically — a dead hedge can be used to gap up areas, but large-scale use can present challenges.
- Avoid invasive species like blackthorn if you don't want it to sprout.

Alexander Pirie, SAC Consulting

Read our full article at:
www.fas.scot/article/the-benefits-of-dead-hedges-and-how-to-build-them/

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Farm Advisory Service

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 £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**

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