



Stock Talk Podcast - The 5-Mile Pig!

In this episode of Stock Talk, Kirsten chats to Ben and Harriet Lowe from HB Farms in Aberdeenshire.

HB Farms is an arable farm with 397ha of crops, and home to 450 breeding sows and a finishing unit. The grain they grow is used as pig feed, and manure is recycled back into the fields.

Listen to our episode by using the QR code below, or visit www.fas.scot/sounds



Agricultural Census
The Scottish Government's 2025 Agricultural Census is open until 29th August. The census provides key information on agriculture in Scotland, enabling tailored support for the sector. Complete the census on the Rural Payments and Services website.

Nature Restoration Fund 2025: Summary

The Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) returns in 2025 to support Scotland's land managers — farmers, crofters, landowners, and community groups — in restoring nature and addressing biodiversity loss. Managed by NatureScot, the competitive fund supports two key streams: Helping Nature for moderate-sized initiatives, and Transforming Nature for ambitious, landscape-scale projects.



Context and Urgency

Scotland's landscapes are globally significant but increasingly degraded due to habitat loss, species decline, and stressed ecosystems. The NRF is a key means of delivering the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy's goal to restore nature by 2045, emphasising practical, science-backed land-use changes that benefit both the environment and rural communities. The NRF is particularly keen to support projects that bring together strong partnerships and have a strong sustainable vision. Individual agricultural land holdings will be considered, but only in limited cases where transformational scale can be strongly demonstrated.

Funding Streams

Helping Nature

Grants: £25,000–£250,000

Targets local-scale restoration, such as peatland, woodland, and wetland recovery, invasive species removal, or biodiversity enhancement on farms, crofts and estates.

Transforming Nature

Grants: Over £250,000

Supports larger, integrated projects across catchments or estates — e.g., rewilding, large-scale rewetting, native woodland expansion, and collaborative efforts across land boundaries.

Eligible Activities and Funding Conditions

Capital-focused funding supports site preparation, planting, habitat creation, infrastructure, feasibility studies, and contractor costs. Projects can receive up to 90% of project costs, with match funding and alignment with other schemes (e.g. Forestry Grant Scheme, AECS, Peatland ACTION) are encouraged.

Applications are assessed on biodiversity impact, climate contribution, feasibility, community involvement, and alignment with national and local land strategies. Projects must be bespoke and not fundable through other schemes.

Opportunities for Land Managers

The NRF empowers land managers to lead nature recovery by integrating restoration into working landscapes. Practical actions—such as restoring wetlands, enhancing habitat connectivity, and restoring riparian zones — can boost farm resilience and unlock potential future ecosystem service income.

Call to Action

Nature conservation has never been higher in the policy agenda, and the 2025 NRF represents a vital opportunity for transformative change. Expressions of Interest are due by 8 September 2025, with projects expected to begin after 1 April 2026.

Alexander Pirie, 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.

Farm Wildlife Walks - Inverness

Tain, 31st July, 10:00am - 2:00pm

Green Covers Workshop - Kelso

Kelso, 6th August, 9:00am - 11:30am

Perthshire Woman in Agriculture - Changes to Greening

Perth, 6th August, 10:30am - 1:00pm

Farm Wildlife Walks - Dumfries

Caerlaverock Estate, 6th August, 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Biodiversity Audit Meeting - Lanark

Lanark, 12th August, 10:00am - 1:00pm

Biodiversity Audit Meeting - Skye

Portree, 12th August, 10:30am - 3:00pm

Management and control of rushes

Rushes are weeds that thrive in waterlogged, acidic soils and every 10% of infestation represents a 10% reduction in your grass yield. They are spread by creeping rhizomes in the soil and a single seed head can produce 8500 seeds per year and can be spread in the wind, remaining viable in the soil for 60 years.



Persistent areas of rushes are associated with underlying issues such as drainage, low pH and low soil phosphate levels.

There is, however, a wildlife value to rushes. Wading birds like rushes at no more than 30cm high and at about 30% ground cover. Leaving strips or shelter boundaries for lambs can be useful as well.

Tips for Managing Rushes

- Topping is intended to control top growth and prevent seed shed. Bear in mind that it may need to be carried out multiple times a year and is costly in time and diesel.
- If you're using chemicals, control with either an MCPA based product and wetting agent or an MCPA/24d. Rushes can be controlled with glyphosate either through a weed wipe to protect grass below or as part of whole field desiccation.
- Recommended to top rushes in April-June and spray 4 weeks later or spray first then top the dead material. Rushes are easier to control earlier in the season when stems are still soft.
- Ensure you have read the label thoroughly and chemical is being applied by a suitably qualified person. MCPA in watercourses can be a common problem and is regularly detected by water companies.
- Cutting in a mosaic pattern to provide a balance between controlling the population and encouraging ground nesting birds. Those ground nesting birds also like to eat worms; worms like neutral soil pH so there are multiple benefits from liming.

Lorna Galloway, SAC Consulting

More information can be found on our **Management and Control of Rushes** page at:

www.fas.scot/grassland/management-and-control-of-rushes/

For further information, articles, videos and more visit our website at www.fas.scot

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.



National Advice Hub

T: 0300 323 0161

E: advice@fas.scot

W: www.fas.scot

If you need advice on any topic, the Farm Advisory Service can help

Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics, including the Whole Farm Plan, cross compliance, water framework directive, and other technical issues, call us on **0300 3232 0161** or email advice@fas.scot. The advice line operates between 9 am–5 pm Monday to Friday.

Funded advice and grants

Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMP).

Up to £2,000 of funding is available for you to commission an adviser to undertake a confidential assessment of your business and develop a step-by-step action plan.

Specialist advice. Get support to take a deeper look at specific issues of concern or interest. You are eligible to receive specialist advice for two topics with £1,600 of funding per topic (see www.fas.scot/specialist-advice/).

Mentoring for new entrants. If you are new to farming, you can receive up to **four days of FREE**, one-to-one Mentoring support from an experienced farmer or crofter.

Online

More information can be found at www.fas.scot/advice-grants/



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot