

Species Rich Grassland Management Calendar




Enhancing the biodiversity on your farm is a year-round job, and this calendar has been designed to help you with annual tasks related to managing different habitats on your farm. You can print it off, put it on the wall and refer to it throughout the year.

With so much record keeping and form filling to do already, a quick look at this calendar will hopefully remind you of jobs which need to be carried out in order to maintain and enhance some of the biodiversity on your farm.

To help you with biodiversity efforts, we recommend:



Visiting the Biodiversity section on the FAS website



Subscribing to the Natural Capital Podcast

If you have any further questions, you can also contact the FAS advice line for support by calling 0300 323 0161 or emailing advice@fas.scot



Orchids in species rich grassland in June. Why not download one of the many plant I.D apps for your phone and take a minute to familiarise yourself with some of the species you have in your grassland?



If mowing, leave generous margins along the field edge as a refuge and cover for wildlife now that the cover has gone from the main part of the field.



Species rich grassland in late summer in full flower. Grazing has been excluded since April and now the flowers can set seed and proliferate for future years.

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess grassland condition. If grazing–check that thatch is being adequately grazed. Check that no poaching is taking place. If ground is too wet for cattle and more grazing is required–consider replacing with sheep if possible. Undertake scrub control if required. In bad weather, if stock require supplementary feeding, remove from species rich area and feed elsewhere. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess grassland condition. If grazing–check that thatch is being adequately grazed. Check that no poaching is taking place. If ground is too wet for cattle and more grazing is required–consider replacing with sheep if possible. Undertake scrub control if required. In bad weather, if stock require supplementary feeding, remove from species rich area and feed elsewhere. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for summer management. Are stock being excluded or removed? Check grazing rates and dates stated in your AECS agreement (if applicable). Limited grazing or stock exclusion will have to be implemented from late April/early May and persist ideally through to the middle of August at the earliest. Typical stocking rates will be site specific but as a guide, 0.2–1.0 LU/ha/yr is the general range.
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check the field for injurious weeds and plan management strategy. Spot–treatment or pulling? Spot treatment can be very dependent on growth stage of weed e.g. Dock –check growth stage. If spraying under AECS spot treatment will require written notification or approval. Bare patches? Is there an opportunity to improve diversity by sowing wildflower seed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact summer management regime. Either grazing at low stocking rate or preferably, total stock exclusion. Refer to AECS agreement stocking rates and dates (if applicable). Monitor injurious weed situation. Select control method and begin planning or spraying if weeds at correct growth stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor growth in the sward looking for signs of wildflower regrowth. Consider downloading one of the many available apps to help you with plant identification. Monitor injurious weeds. First cut for individual plants or groups of creeping thistle. Leave small areas of thistles/nettles on field edges and corners for wildlife.
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor growth in the sward looking for signs of wildflower regrowth. Can you identify any wildflower species present? Note different species, is there anything new? Prepare for re-introduction of grazing or mowing. Appropriate stock ready to be introduced? Grazier contacted if applicable? Machinery or contractor ready for mowing/baling? Leave small areas of thistles/nettles on field edges and corners for wildlife. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor wildflowers to assess growth stage. Are many still in flower or not yet flowered? Plan grazing/mowing accordingly. Only graze or mow after the majority of wildflowers have set seed. Contact with grazing tenant or contractor to discuss dates for grazing commencement or mowing. Follow-up cut of individual plants or groups of creeping thistle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce grazing or mowing if not already done. Check stocking rates if in AECS. If ground too wet, mowing can be deferred for a few weeks until ground suitable. If material has been baled, what are options for use? Good quality – feed to stock or spread dry material elsewhere to encourage new species–rich areas. Poor quality – dispose of at field edge or in woodland (unwrap bales) and allow small mammals and birds to forage for seeds.
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce grazing or mowing if not already done. Check stocking rates if in AECS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If grazing – monitor ground conditions and assess poaching. If poaching occurs – remove stock at least temporarily. Monitor scrub growth (if relevant) and plan any scrub removal for December/January/February. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If grazing – monitor ground conditions and assess poaching. If poaching occurs – remove stock at least temporarily. Undertake scrub control if required.