

Free sheep scab testing for Scottish flocks

Scottish farmers are being reminded that free laboratory testing for sheep scab is available from SAC Consulting Veterinary Services.

Open consultation: Reducing crime at sites handling waste, and introducing fixed penalties for waste duty of care

We want to know what you think about our proposals to reduce crime and poor performance in the waste sector. We are looking to do this by enforcing more appropriate competence standards for permitted waste site operators. We're also proposing to make changes to waste exemptions to prevent them being used to hide illegal activity.

We are also asking your views on best ways to improve householder awareness of their waste duty of care. As part of this, we are proposing the introduction of a fixed penalty for householders failing to pass their waste to authorised waste carriers. This fixed penalty will provide local authorities with a more proportionate and less costly enforcement tool than prosecuting in court.

Consultation outcome: Reducing crime at sites handling waste, and introducing fixed penalties for waste duty of care

Updated: Summary of responses added.

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[News story: New Countryside Stewardship Offers open for applications](#)

The Countryside Stewardship scheme has opened for farmers and land managers to request 2018 application packs today (15 January).

[Four simpler, and quicker to apply for, offers](#) are being introduced this year to complement the existing Higher Tier and Mid Tier offers and open up the scheme to even more farmers and land managers. Unlike existing offers, all landowners who make a valid application for any of the four new packages will be guaranteed funding through the scheme.

This application window is an opportunity for farmers new to Countryside Stewardship (CS), or those coming out of previous stewardship agreements, to sign up for an agreement that will be guaranteed for its lifetime, to protect wildlife, boost biodiversity and deliver environmental benefits for their local communities.

Earlier this month, Environment Secretary Michael Gove outlined government plans to replace existing farm subsidies outside the EU with a new system of public money for public goods. Ahead of this, the new CS offers are an opportunity for even more farmers to establish positive environmental practices on their land and prepare for the future.

The RPA and Natural England have been tasked with simplifying the scheme, to save farmers time and cut down on paperwork. As part of this, farmers applying for the new CS Offers who meet the eligibility requirements will be able to get an agreement to deliver as few as 3 options, or as many as 7 up to 14, depending on the offer applied for. The new CS Offers are a chance for those who've been put off the scheme in the past to look again at what's on offer and what they might be able to achieve on their land.

The government has made clear its intention to go on supporting farmers for many years to come to deliver public goods, in terms of producing high

quality food, boosting biodiversity and making our countryside a safe haven for our iconic wildlife.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

We've seen farmland birds recover in numbers and biodiversity boosted on farms signed up to Countryside Stewardship agreements, however we have listened to those who said the schemes had become too complicated. The new Countryside Stewardship offers available this year are much simpler to apply for and cover a full range of different farm types, so farmers can deliver environmental benefits wherever and whatever they farm.

My message to farmers who've been put off Countryside Stewardship in the last few rounds is to take another look and see what's on offer this year. We've listened to farmers and we've simplified the offering to create a universal scheme to appeal to farmers new to stewardship and those coming out of ELS so they can continue the good work on their farms.

Farmers and land managers have until 31 May to request a paper application pack. Farmers intending to apply online this year will be able to create their Online Arable Offer application pack from 20 February. See further details of the new [Offers for Wildlife](#).

Applicants can request more information on all the Offers available from Natural England Enquiries Team by telephone: 0208 026 1089; email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk; or writing to:

Enquiries,
Natural England,
County Hall, Spetchley Road,
Worcester,
WR5 2NP

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