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## Section 2 Whole Farm Management Requirements

Section 2 explains the management requirements that you must follow to qualify for the whole farm payment.

### General environmental requirements

#### Good Farming Practice

#### Field boundary management

#### Farm waste management



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### 1. General environmental requirements

Agri-environment scheme participants must adhere to the following requirements for the whole farm, in addition to following specific management requirements for each farm and optional habitat under agreement.

#### You must:

- Follow the requirements of Good Farming Practice;
- Retain and not damage any habitat, landscape or heritage feature;
- Keep all parts of the farm and farmyard(s) free from rubbish and litter;
- Follow a Field Boundary Management Plan for your farm;
- Prepare and follow a Farm Waste Management Plan for your farm.

#### You must not:

- Cultivate or surface seed any land other than land classified as 'improved';
- Apply herbicide or pesticide on any land other than 'improved' (except herbicide by spot treatment or weed wiper on noxious weeds);
- Apply lime to any land other than 'improved' or 'unimproved grassland';
- Permit severe damage to land by poaching or repeated vehicular access;
- Carry out any activity on your farm likely to detract significantly from the landscape quality and character.

You must also follow any further requirements listed in your agri-environment scheme agreement. You should obtain permission from DARD before undertaking any work that may have a detrimental impact on any habitat, landscape or heritage feature on your farm.

Written consent must be obtained from Environment and Heritage Service (EHS), Department of Environment (DOE) before any works are carried out within an ASSI or along an ASSI boundary. It is the responsibility of the agreement holder to obtain this consent. The EHS contact telephone number for further information is (028) 9054 6595.

## 2. Good Farming Practice

All participants in agri-environment schemes must follow Good Farming Practice (GFP). GFP consists of three elements – Legislation, Verifiable Standards and Codes of Good Agricultural Practice.

**Legislation** – you must comply with all relevant environmental protection legislation.

**Verifiable Standards** – you must adhere to the following verifiable standards:

- Overgrazing is not permitted.
- Supplementary feeding is not permitted on moorland, wetland, species-rich grassland, coastal habitats, broad-leaved woodland/scrub habitats or archaeological features or within 10 metres of a watercourse (see Appendix 2 for habitat definitions).
- Removal of field boundaries is not permitted, except by prior written permission from DARD.
- Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI): Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) must be notified and give prior written consent before proceeding with any intended operations that are likely to damage ASSIs. The EHS contact telephone number for further information is (028) 9054 6595.
- Pollution: no pollution or unauthorised waste disposal is permitted.
- Sheep dip disposal requires written authorisation from EHS (Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998).
- Hedgerow management (for example, cutting and restoration) must not be carried out between 1 March and 31 August.
- Damage to Habitats, Archaeological Features and Earth Science Sites is prohibited. In-filling, reclamation or extraction of peat, sand or gravel is not permitted. Compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (Uncultivated land and Semi-Natural Areas) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001.

**Codes** – you must retain a copy of the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Prevention of Pollution of Water, Air and Soil (refer to DARD website for further information on the Codes at [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)).



*Trees improve the wildlife value of hedgerows*

## 3. Field boundary management

'Field boundary management' covers the general management of all on farm field boundaries such as hedges, stone walls, stone banks and earth banks. Managing field boundaries is a compulsory aspect of all agri-environment schemes.

### Background

The landscape of Northern Ireland is characterised by a dense patchwork of fields. Well-managed field boundaries provide

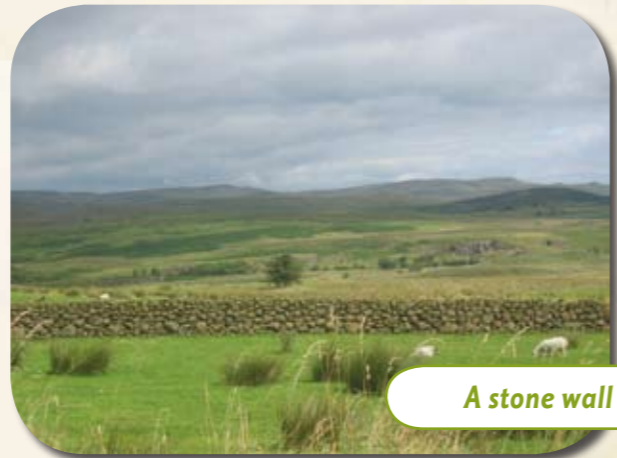
an invaluable habitat for wildlife, including plants, birds, mammals and insects. Field boundaries are important for landscape, shelter for livestock (animal welfare) and disease control by assisting in reducing the spread of Bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis. Field boundaries are culturally and historically important and often retain archaeological features.

**Biodiversity objectives:** field boundary management contributes to the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Action Plan targets for ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows, the Irish hare and yellowhammer. Within Northern Ireland species-rich hedgerows are important for a number of UK Priority Species identified as part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan programme. These include red squirrel, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, linnet, reed bunting, spotted flycatcher, tree sparrow, bullfinch, song thrush and purple rampion. In addition a number of Northern Ireland Priority Species will benefit, such as whitethroat and barn owl.

### Management requirements

- All field boundaries, including any in derelict condition, must be retained.
- All external farm boundaries adjoining other farms ('march ditches') must be in stock-proof condition to maximise biosecurity.
- A 1 m uncultivated strip must be left as a buffer from farming operations from the edge of the field boundary. Application of organic or inorganic fertiliser, pesticides or herbicides are not permitted in this strip.

- Stone walls and stone banks must be protected from deterioration and all in-situ stone from walls retained.
- Maintain a variety of hedge heights, widths and shapes.
- Allow suitable hedges to grow uncut for five years or longer, trimming sides only as necessary.
- Do not cut any hedge more than once in two years. Hedges along roads may be faced annually for safety reasons.
- Existing mature trees must be retained and some saplings left to grow into hedgerow trees.
- Hedges must not be cut between 1 March and 31 August.
- All sheughs must be kept open; infilling or laying drainage pipes in sheughs is not permitted.
- New or improved drainage systems must not be installed on any land, except for improved land. Existing drainage systems on unimproved grassland and permanent habitats may be repaired if necessary.



A stone wall



A sheugh

#### Further advice

##### Hedge management

Hedge cutting should be left as late in winter as practical so that birds can feed on berries and fruits. Maintain hedges to a minimum height of 1.5m. Hedges along roads and lanes may be trimmed annually for safety reasons. You are expected to attend a training workshop on Field Boundary Management.

##### Stone wall management

Dislodged stones along dry stone walls should be replaced if possible, or retained where they fall.

#### Sheugh Maintenance

The primary function of sheughs (or ditches) is to drain land. However, they are also valuable landscape and wildlife features, important for many plants, animals, birds and insects. Sheughs should therefore be managed, not only as drainage channels, but also as valuable wildlife habitats.

Only carry out sheugh maintenance and cleaning during the autumn to late winter period. Clear away only vegetation and silt from sheughs; deepening or widening is not permitted. Leave the vegetation untouched along one side of the sheugh at cleaning. Retain a balance of trees, shrubs and fringing vegetation to maintain the natural appearance of the sheugh in the landscape. When cleaning out sheughs retain as many water loving plants as possible in the sheugh. Bulrush, water-plantain and water-crowfoot bring benefits such as algae control, providing fish spawning beds and encouraging insects.

#### 4. Farm waste management

All participants must prepare and implement a Farm Waste Management Plan.

##### Background

Responsible farm waste management aims to improve the quality of our watercourses beyond a level that is required by current legislation and Good Farming Practice and will improve the visual appearance of the farm and farmyard.

**Biodiversity objective:** to improve water quality.

##### Management requirements

- Responsibly store, use and dispose of all farm wastes, for example slurry, silage effluent dirty water, plastics and rubbish.
- Remove rubbish and derelict equipment.
- Remove eyesores.
- Produce a Farm Waste Management Plan as outlined in the sections below.
- Implement the Farm Waste Management Plan throughout the duration of the scheme, and update the plan annually.

**Further advice**

Retain, and refer to, a copy of the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Prevention of Pollution of Water, Air and Soil for farm waste management guidance.

**The Farm Waste Management Plan**

The Farm Waste Management Plan must take into account the collection, storage and disposal of all farm wastes. Implementation of the plan will reduce the risk of pollution and prevent the loss of valuable nutrients in slurry and farmyard manure. The plan consists of two parts:

- Part 1 – a completed Farm Waste Checklist for the farm. The checklist completed as part of the scheme audit may be used as an initial Part 1 of the Farm Waste Management Plan, after you have signed it. The purpose of the checklist is to identify remedial works and changes in management practice that are required to ensure a high standard of farm waste management.
- Part 2 – a completed Farm Waste Application Plan. This plan is a copy of your farm map showing areas of the farm that are suitable and unsuitable for spreading agricultural wastes.

**Part 1. Farm Waste Checklist with identified remedial works/changes in management practice**

This is a record of the condition of farm waste facilities and management practices as observed on the date of the farm audit. Completion of the checklist will enable you to audit your farmyard and farm to ensure that farm waste management standards, including disposal of manures, silage effluent, waste plastics, fallen animals and veterinary wastes are managed to a standard beyond current legislation and Good Farming Practice. The checklist must be continually kept under review and updated annually. Keep the whole farm free of rubbish, litter and anything that would detract from the appearance of the countryside.

Note: A pollution incident detected by the enforcing authority (Environment and Heritage Service, Department of Environment) may result in prosecution and lead to a reduction in your agri-environment scheme and/or Less Favoured Areas Compensatory Allowance (LFACA) scheme payments.

Remedial works/changes in management practice required to improve your farm waste management should be listed on the last page of the Farm Waste Checklist

**Part 2. Farm Waste Application Plan**

A farm waste application plan is a copy of your farm map colour coded as follows:

**BLUE** – Waterways, boreholes, springs and wells

**RED** – Do not spread on this land

**ORANGE** – May be used for spreading at certain times

**GREEN** – Can be used when land and weather conditions are suitable

**WHITE MARKED WITH AN X** – Not used for spreading

Further information on the preparation of a Farm Waste Management Plan is available through the 'Dealing with Farm Wastes' training workshop, which you are expected to attend, organised by College of Agriculture and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) or by reference to the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Prevention of Pollution of Water, Air and Soil.

**Figure 5: An example of a Farm Waste Management map**

