

Addendum to Entry Level Stewardship Handbook

Important information New and revised options for Entry Level Stewardship

Introduction

In 2008 a review of Environmental Stewardship was completed which proposed the introduction of new and revised options into the scheme. This booklet details the introduction of some of these changes and is important information for anyone considering applying for Environmental Stewardship from the 1st May 2009 onwards.

The management requirements for three existing options in Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) are being changed. The **revised options** described in this booklet will be available to all agreements starting on, or after, 1st May 2009. They will directly replace the previous versions of these options in the 2nd edition of the ELS handbook, which will no longer be available to new applicants. The original versions will, however, continue to apply to existing Entry Level Stewardship agreements with start dates prior to 1st May 2009.

Three **new options** are being introduced into ELS from the 1st May 2009. These will be available to applicants to Environmental Stewardship from this date. They are not available to ELS agreements that started before this date as ELS has been designed to operate with minimal adjustment to established agreements.

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Revised options

C Options for trees and woodland

EC1 Protection of in-field trees on arable land, and EC2 Protection of in-field trees on grassland

Trees are of historic and landscape significance in both arable and grassland situations. They also provide habitat for many invertebrates and birds. To be eligible for these options, trees must have a trunk diameter of over 30 cm at chest height and the trunk must be entirely within the field, that is, not part of a field boundary. A tree in a remnant boundary may be considered as an in-field tree where it is not attached to a current boundary feature.

Individual trees that form a group or line of more than four trees are not eligible for this option if the canopies overlap. If the canopies do not overlap, each individual tree can earn the specified number of points.

Dead trees are eligible for these options, with the requirement that 'a 10 m radius from the base of the tree' must be used as a minimum where the prescription refers to 'the tree canopy'. Trees that die and/or fall during the course of the agreement must remain in position and the prescriptions must continue to be followed.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Do not carry out any cultivations, supplementary feeding of stock, storage of materials or machinery or weed control (apart from spot treatment) under the canopy of the tree and the area extending 2 m beyond the edge of the canopy.
- Leave fallen timber in situ within the protected area.
- Do not spread lime, fertiliser or manure beneath the tree canopy and the area extending 2 m beyond the edge of the canopy.

EC1: 16 points per tree protected on arable land.

EC2: 11 points per tree protected on grassland.

K Option for mixed stocking on grassland

EK5 Mixed stocking

This option, previously only available outside the LFAs, has been extended and is now available on eligible parcels both outside and inside the LFAs.

The decline of mixed stocking is one of the underlying causes of the reduction in numbers of several important farmland bird species. Mixed stocking encourages a diversity of sward structure and plant and invertebrate species, which in turn can be beneficial to a variety of ecological and historic features. It also contributes to the distinctive colour and patterning of local landscapes through mixed grazing systems. This option is only available on land that is grazed by both cattle and sheep, either in the same year or in alternate years, as part of a clean grazing system. Livestock Units (LUs) are calculated over a 2-year period. This option may be co-located with up to 2 other options from the list of permitted combinations at section 3.3 of the ELS Handbook (2nd edition).

For this option you must comply with the following:

- A minimum of 30 per cent of the LUs must be grazing cattle.
- A minimum of 15 per cent of the LUs must be grazing sheep.
- Supplementary feeding is allowed, but move feeders as often as required to avoid poaching. Do not feed on or next to archaeological features, steep slopes, footpaths or watercourses.

You may not wish to graze both types of livestock in the same year. For this reason, the percentage of cattle and sheep LUs grazing the land is calculated over a 2-year period. This allows you either to graze both types of livestock on the land parcel in the same year or to graze each type in alternate years.

If you choose to graze them on the land in alternate years, at least 60 per cent of the livestock units on the land parcel must be cattle in one year and at least 30 per cent must be sheep in the other. The remaining 40/70 per cent of the livestock units can be made up of the same, or other types of livestock, such as horses or domesticated deer. Records are not required but would be useful if you are inspected.

Table 5 Animal numbers converted into Livestock Units (LUs)

Animal numbers are converted into Livestock Units as follows:	LUs
Dairy cow	1.0
Beef cow	1.0
Cattle over 2 years old	0.7
Cattle 6 months to 2 years	0.6
Lowland ewe and lamb	0.12
Hill ewe	0.08
Ram and teg over 6 months	0.15
Ewe follower and/or store lamb	0.08
Horse	1.0
Pony	0.8

These values are for medium-sized breeds. Large breeds will have approximately 20 per cent higher LU values and small breeds will be approximately 20 per cent lower, for each category.

Other grazing ruminants, such as deer or camelids, should be allocated an LU value in proportion to their liveweight, ie 60 kg animal approximately = 0.1 LU.

EK5: 9 points per ha.

New options

J Options to protect soils

EJ9 12m buffer strips for watercourses on cultivated land

This option aims to moderate the delivery to watercourses of potential pollutants, such as sediment, nutrients (principally phosphate) and pesticides, arising from water erosion/run-off. This option will also help buffer sensitive habitats and protect archaeological features at risk from soil erosion and from the direct impact of agricultural activities.

This option is available on arable or rotational land adjacent to ditches, rivers, or streams where it can intercept and remove sediment, organic material, nutrients and chemicals carried in run-off water.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Establish or maintain a grassy strip during the first 12 months of your agreement, either by sowing or, ideally, by natural regeneration. Remove any compaction in the topsoil if you need to prepare a seedbed, except on archaeological features. Regular cutting in the first 12-24 months may be needed to control annual weeds and encourage grasses to tiller. Avoid cutting when the soil is moist to prevent further compaction.
- The width of the strip may vary between 12 - 24 m along its length, but must not be less than 12 m wide at any point.
- Do not apply any fertilisers or manures to these strips.
- Only apply herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- After the first 12-24 months, cut the 6 m next to the crop edge annually after mid-July. Only cut the other 6 m to control woody growth, and no more than once every 2 years (where next to woodland, once every 10 years).
- Do not use buffer strips for regular vehicular access, turning or storage. There should be no tracks, compacted areas or poaching.
- Do not graze the buffer strip. Grazing livestock, pigs and poultry should be excluded from the buffer strip.

EJ9: 400 points per ha.

EJ10 Enhanced management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion and run-off

This option aims to reduce the risk of soil erosion and run-off on fields where maize is grown preceding a spring sown crop. It aims to deliver more than EJ2 by requiring both early harvest and the establishment of a cover crop. The cover crop will provide protection over-winter from soil erosion and run-off on fields that would otherwise be left bare.

This option must not be located on fields at risk of soil erosion or run-off (as identified on your FER). It is only available on other land where you are growing maize. This option is suitable where it precedes a spring sown crop.

This is a 'rotational option'. It can move around the farm with the normal rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Harvest the maize crop by 1 October and remove any areas of soil compaction (ideally within two weeks of harvest). Do not subsoil on features of archaeological interest.
- Establish an autumn-sown cover crop. Drill or broadcast a quick growing cover crop, such as rye, barley, or mustard, at an effective seed rate so as to provide good erosion protection.
- You must not apply more than the recommended amount of slurry or manure for either the maize or the following crop to be grown on this land (see guidance in appendix 2 of the ELS Handbook (2nd edition) for a recognised fertiliser recommendation system). Any such slurry or manure must be applied at appropriate times to minimise the risk of run-off.
- The cover crop must remain until a minimum of 6 weeks before establishment of the following spring sown crop.

EJ10: 94 points per ha.

EJ11 Maintenance of watercourse fencing

The aim of this option is to support the maintenance of existing watercourse fencing where fields are grazed. Watercourse fencing may help to reduce faecal contamination, stream bank damage and have a significant impact upon water quality. It can also help to protect the bankside vegetation and encourage natural regeneration.

It can be used where watercourses form one or more boundaries of the field, or are present within the field, and livestock are grazed for at least three months of the year. Watercourses are defined as all surface waters whether lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, canals and ditches which contain standing or flowing water for at least ten months of the year. The existing fencing must be sufficient to exclude stock. This option can be used in conjunction with buffer strips or margins next to a watercourse.

This is not a payment for new fencing and cannot be placed on new fencing funded under Environmental Stewardship. However, it could be placed on new fencing funded by other means.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Maintain fences in a stock-proof condition to ensure exclusion of livestock from the ditch, river or stream bank and/or buffer strip or margin.

EJ11: 4 points per 100 m.



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