

Addendum to Organic Entry Level Stewardship Handbook

Important information

New and revised options for Organic 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 Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) 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 OELS handbook, which will no longer be available to new applicants. The original versions will, however, continue to apply to existing Organic Entry Level Stewardship agreements with start dates prior to 1st May 2009.

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

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Revised options

C Options for trees and woodland

OC1 Protection of in-field trees on rotational land, and

OC2 Protection of in-field trees on organic grassland

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.

OC1: 16 points per tree protected on rotational land.

OC2: 11 points per tree protected on organic grassland.

EC1: 16 points per tree protected on arable land.

EC2: 11 points per tree protected on grassland.

K Option for mixed stocking on grassland

OK5 Mixed stocking

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 sections 3.3 or 3.4 of the OELS 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.

OK5: 9 points per ha.

EK5: 9 points per ha.

New options

F Options for arable land

OF11 Uncropped, cultivated margins for rare plants on arable land

These margins will provide beneficial management for rare arable plants and insects and foraging sites for seed-eating birds. It is better to avoid locating these margins where you have a grass weed problem. Where run-off is a problem, a grass buffer should be considered. This option will provide greatest benefits on sandy, shallow, chalky or stony soils.

For this option you must comply with the following:

- Cultivate an arable field margin annually in either spring or autumn to a depth of about 15 cm (6 inches). Varying the depth and time of cultivation may help to prevent the build-up of undesirable weeds, but should always be managed according to the requirements of the target species.
- Margins should be 3-6 m wide. They can be relocated within the same field to avoid the build up of pernicious weeds but should be located on the target species site at least one year in three to benefit the target species.
- Do not apply any fertilisers or manures.
- Control 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) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

OF11: 460 points per ha

J Options to protect soils

OJ9 12m buffer strips for watercourses on rotational land

EJ9 12m buffer strips for watercourses on cultivated land

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

These options are 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 these options 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.
- Control 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) by cultivation before establishment, by cutting in the first year and by selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.
- 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.

OJ9: 500 points per ha.

EJ9: 400 points per ha.

OJ11 Maintenance of watercourse fencing

EJ11 Maintenance of watercourse fencing

The aim of these options 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 parcel, or are present within the parcel, 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.

OJ11: 4 points per 100 m.

EJ11: 4 points per 100 m.



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