

FARMING AND PROPERTY BULLETIN – DECEMBER 2014

SPS 2014 Payments

The payment window opened as usual on the 1st December with many receiving payment on that day. As not all of the money levied for Financial Discipline last year was used, claims over €2,000 will receive a small reimbursement with this year's payment.

Registration on CAPIS for Basic Payment Scheme

The new service is still not yet live and you currently have to be invited to register. DEFRA is keen to get agents registered on the system first and therefore it now seems that it will be late December or more likely early January before farmers receive their registration packs. The system is being rolled out to agents this month but it is important to remember that even if you are going to use an agent, all farmers will still need to be registered on the new system too.

Changes to Planning Obligations on Small Housing Sites

DCLG Secretary of State, Eric Pickles, has announced that s.106 obligations will no longer apply on development sites of fewer than 10 units (5 units in some rural areas). The move is aimed at reducing barriers to the development of small housing plots.

NaCTSO Guidance on Storage of Fertiliser

The National Counter Terrorism Security Office has issued revised guidance on the secure storage and use of ammonium nitrate fertilisers. The guidance and further information can be found on www.secureyourfertiliser.gov.uk.

One Year Left Until Sprayer Rules Change – Act Now!

Farmers born before 1965 have one year left before they must obtain a certificate of competence to spray crops. Changes to so-called "Grandfather Rights" – exemptions to pesticide use for anyone born before 31 December 1964 – will no longer apply soon. From 26th November 2015, anyone applying crop protection products must hold a recognised certificate, such as the PA1 and 2A or 6A. With just one year until the rules change, farmers who need to are being urged to act now and obtain a certificate to spray pesticides.

Those currently operating under Grandfather Rights have two alternatives:

1. Take the City & Guilds NPTC Level 2 Award in the Safe Use of Pesticides Replacing Grandfather Rights
2. To apply professional products as a contractor or to land not owned by them or their employer, operators must take the existing Level 2 Safe Use of Pesticides qualification appropriate to the type of equipment used.

After November 26 2015, professional pesticides should not be purchased unless the operator holds an appropriate certificate. The alternative is to delegate the task to a spray contractor with appropriate training and equipment.

Changes to TB Testing

The Animal Plant and Health Agency will manage TB testing through delivery partners from April 2015. In England and Wales keepers must arrange testing with their local delivery partner rather than directly with a Vet as in the past. Delivery partners must offer testing work to veterinary practices within their geographical area and farmers are able to express a preferred vet business to undertake the work. Current testing is performed by 650 approved veterinary businesses that are paid by the Animal Plant and Health Agency to do the work.

Gas Safety Inspections

For those of you who let or rent residential property a reminder that it is the Landlords responsibility to instruct annual gas safety checks of gas boilers and obtain the appropriate certificate. With the onset of colder weather it is recommended you ensure that this has been carried out and your records are up-to-date.

New Countryside Stewardship Scheme

DEFRA formally launched the new agri-environment programme for England at the end of November. The scheme is to be called the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) which replaces the working title of NELMS everyone has been using up until now.

The CSS was launched as part of a new Bee and Pollinator Strategy in which the aim is, over the next ten years, to improve pollinator numbers and their geographical spread across both rural and urban areas.

The new scheme will encompass elements from the existing Environmental Stewardship Schemes such as ELS and HLS, the English Woodland Grant Scheme and capital grants from Catchment Sensitive Farming. The main priority remains as biodiversity but water has moved up the agenda too. There will be Higher Tier focusing on priority sites (like HLS), and a Middle Tier focusing on wider areas. The latter element is open to all but will be competitive so only the best schemes will be accepted. There will also be a small scale capital grants scheme focussing on field boundaries. There will be no direct replacement for ELS.

Most agreements will be for 5 years although longer agreements will be issued in exceptional circumstances e.g. woodland creation agreements. Higher Tier agreements will include more complex options such as habitat creation or tailored measures for priority species. All agreements involving woodland will enter the Higher Tier.

Mid-Tier agreements will be scored against priorities in the national targeting framework (yet to be published). Capital items can also be included in Mid and Higher Tier agreements. Applications can be submitted between June and September; these will be appraised in October with agreements awarded in November and December with a 1st January start date.

The schemes are competitive but to improve chances of getting an agreement, applicants can choose options under the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package. This is a specific group of management options available to farmland areas in lowland England. Under the Mid-Tier options should be applied over 3-5% of the land entered into a scheme, for Higher Tier this rises to 5-10%.

The Hedgerow and Boundaries Capital Grant, of up to £5,000, will be open to those not in a current Environmental Stewardship Scheme, or CSS Higher or Mid-Tier. Capital items include hedges and boundaries, tree health issues, woodland management plans and feasibility studies. The application window for capital grants will be February to April and applications will be appraised in May with agreements issued from June onwards. Feasibility and implementation plans, woodland management plans and woodland tree health applications can be made at any time.

Facilitation funding will also be available to set up 'landscape' scale agreements. The details of this are not yet clear or finalised but it is understood that the area of land involved must cover at least 2,000 hectares and spread over at least 4 adjoining holdings.

In 2015, Water Capital Grants will be available. Funds of up to £10,000 will pay for improving infrastructure aiming to reduce water pollution. Applications will be accepted between 2nd March and 30th April and works must be completed by 19th January 2016.

Woodland Creation Grants will be available from February 2015 (no closing date announced yet).

More information on the grants is expected later this month.

We understand that the new CAPIS system will not be ready for the grant applications in 2015 so application forms will be available to download from Gov.uk in the New Year.

ADKIN 54TH ANNUAL HAY & STRAW AUCTION SALE

TUESDAY 13TH JANUARY 2015

at 2.30pm

**at Ardington Sports Club, Ardington Sports Ground
Ardington, Nr Wantage, Oxon, OX12 8QB**

Entry forms available from the office or www.adkin.co.uk

Deadline for entries is the 11th December

All enquiries to Philip Pocock (01235 862888)