

## **CORONA VIRUS**

We are currently working hard to make sure you have the spring seed you need in plenty of time this season. It is possible there will be logistical challenges over the coming weeks, so please do try to get your orders in early. Thank you to everyone who has already done so. Currently the logistics seem to be working and we are still staffing the office and warehouse for seed collections and deliveries.

From our discussions with clients across the UK, there is a huge amount of uncertainty within the shooting sector. Understandably, game farms are asking their customers to make a commitment to the number of birds they are going to take and many shoots are reluctant to make that commitment until they have a financial commitment from the guns. Guns are also hesitant about paying deposits in case there is a lock down in the shooting season and because the financial implications of the current lockdown are potentially catastrophic for many individuals' businesses.

If you do decide you are not shooting this season then please don't leave old game crop plots fallow for the year, as it will be bad for the soil as well as giving you a whole load more weeds next year. Now is a good opportunity to put some fertility and structure back into the soil as well as get on top of weeds. We have come up with a soil health mix comprising forage rye, crimson clover, winter vetch and phacelia, which can be sown up until July. You can then top it through the summer to control weeds and allow the roots to do their job, fixing nitrogen and improving the soil structure. This should help give you a decent seedbed next spring. At a seed cost of £40/ha, this could be a sensible investment.

Please also see our appeal to support our countryside charities at the bottom of this enews. The loss of essential fundraising events means they need our support more than ever.

**Meanwhile, for those in Stewardship, its business as usual.....**



**ELS APRIL – Buffer strips and Field Corners (EC24, EE1-3, EE9, EF1, EJ5 and EJ9) to which wild flowers have been added (EE12)** can still be cut this month if excess vegetation threatens to suppress the flowers, providing no birds are nesting in the flower-rich area.

**Cereal headlands for birds (EF9) and Unharvested cereal headlands (EF10)** – no more broadleaf weed control allowed.

**Supplementary feeding for farmland birds (EF23)** – winter feeding period now finished. Given the cold weather you may want to keep feeding, particularly to help turtle doves which will shortly be arriving after a long journey from Africa.

**Undersown spring cereals (EG1)** – the cereal crop must be established by 20<sup>th</sup> April.

**Low input (EK2) and very low input grassland (EK3)** – DO NOT cut, harrow or roll until 31<sup>st</sup> May (EK2) OR 30<sup>th</sup> June (EK3).

**Mid-Tier CS APRIL – Nectar Flower Mix (AB1)** – 50% of each plot should be cut between 15<sup>th</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> May.

**Nesting plots for lapwing & stone curlew (AB5)** – if natural regen covers more than 70% of the plot by the end of April you are allowed to spray off to restore bare ground.

**Unharvested cereal headland (AB10) and Harvested low input cereal (AB14)** – needs to be established by the end of April (you can use any cereal except maize so millet, barley, triticale are all acceptable for these options).

**Cultivated plots for arable plants (AB11)** – spring plots must be cultivated by the end of April. **Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds (AB12)** – must continue feeding until 30<sup>th</sup> April.

**Wet grassland for breeding waders (GS9,GS11)** – don't forget to shut up sluices or other water structures to retain water in scrapes and pools.

**Miscanthus** – If you want to order any rhizomes please let us know asap.

**Fertiliser** – please remember to put all of your phosphate and potash and at least 50% of your Nitrogen in the seedbed before drilling. The remainder of the Nitrogen to be applied early post-emergence.

**Bionature fertiliser** – for those of you with soils prone to leaching or who struggle to buy the right compound fertilizer for your game crops don't forget NHK Delta, 1-4-ALL & Tip Top liquid fertilizer. We had great results with it last year. It is easy to apply and produced fantastic results on plots which have historically been very challenging. For more information, please contact Tim at the Oakbank office on 01480 890686.



### **Forestry Commission's new Deer Management Team**

Following the decision to take deer management work in house from April 2020, the FC has appointed ex-Deer Initiative personnel Alastair Boston, Jamie Cordery and David Hooton to the Deer Officer posts. All three have a long, strong pedigree with the Deer Initiative, which is now winding up. David Jam, currently their Executive Director, becomes the FC Deer Adviser to provide national oversight to the management work plus the development of policy, regulations and incentives.

### **FC England – working arrangements**

Please [Click Here](#) to find out more about the arrangements at present enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic including an up-to-date Defra statement on Forestry key workers.

### **SSSI Woodlands & Natural England Consent – the basics.**

Consent is necessary to carry out any operations on a SSSI and owners should ensure they have the necessary consents in place before starting any work. Please [click here](#) for our guidance note to inform and assist you. Next month's guidance note is on Tree Risk Management – what you need to know and do to cover your legal duty of care.

### **Please continue to support our countryside charities**

The cancellation of fundraising events and significant reduction in shooting next season will have a big effect on many of our countryside charities, which are reliant on donations to keep them running. Two charities with which we work particularly closely are really in need of your support, The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Country Food Trust.

It is the GWCT that promotes game and wildlife management as an essential part of nature conservation, develops scientifically researched game and wildlife management techniques and supports best practice for field sports that contribute to improving the biodiversity of the countryside. Without the science, it is our rhetoric against the rhetoric of our opponents and sadly their 'spin' has more support than ours. <https://www.gwct.org.uk/donate/>

The Country Food Trust recently delivered its 500,000<sup>th</sup> nutritious, game based meal to people in food poverty. Again, the charity is totally dependent on the support of shoots, which not only provide the raw material for the meals but also fund the preparation, packaging and distribution. Although the supply of game is likely to be significantly reduced next season the CFT hopes that many of you will continue to supply both game and funding for their important work. <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/displayCharityCampaignPage.action?charityCampaignUrl=CFT-Coronavirus>

### **Farming Help**

Farming Help charities are working together support the farming community during the current Coronavirus outbreak. Through the Farming Help helpline and respective organisation networks, they can offer:

- Someone to talk to who understands farming, will listen to your concerns and help you think through options;
- Help drafting a contingency plan to ensure you and your farm are prepared should you be unable to work for a time;
- Help finding local support (e.g. feeding livestock, collecting shopping or prescriptions) if you become ill or are self-isolating.

Call 03000 111999 or visit [www.farminghelp.co.uk](http://www.farminghelp.co.uk)

The Farming Help partnership is a collaboration between the Addington Fund, Farming Community Network, Forage Aid, Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution and RSABI, and is supported by The Prince's Countryside Fund. This initiative is in conjunction with The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs, The National Farmers' Union and the NFU Mutual Charitable Trust

