

Velcourt

Some of you may have seen the news that Velcourt Group has bought 50% of the Oakbank business. It's a really exciting development for both companies and the Oakbank team is looking forward to working with Velcourt farms to help deliver their environmental targets.

Further details available [here](#)



Stewardship reminders

ELS – Extended over-winter stubbles (EF22) – Undesirable weed species such as blackgrass, sterile brome and wild oats can be controlled by spraying the affected areas from 15th May.

MID-TIER CS – Nectar Flower Mix (AB1) – rotationally cut 50% of each plot between 15th May and 15th June, taking care to avoid ground nesting birds; **Enhanced overwinter stubble (AB6)** – you can spray problem grass weeds from May 15th **BUT** *please remember this option should not be located on fields where you know you have bad blackgrass issues.*

BPS and CS Claims

Please remember that you have to claim your CS payment each year as per your BPS and that means declaring where your CS options are located on an annual basis, using the correct land use codes.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-payments-land-use-codes-2022>

2022 agreements – even if you have had your agreement offer and signed and returned it, please check your RPA account to make sure your agreement is LIVE. The RPA's advice regarding any agreements that have not been offered or which are not LIVE, is to ring for a paper copy revenue claim. All the revenue options that were applied for must be claimed for but capital options CANNOT be claimed for until the agreement has been made live.

CS DEADLINES 2022 - Friday 20th May is the last day to request CSF help for those water and air quality items/options you may be considering which need CSF Farm Adviser approval.

Friday 27th May is the last day to request your CS Mid-tier application pack.

Game Crops and AB9 winter bird food crops – there definitely seems to be a pattern in our extreme weather, as last April was also incredibly dry and cold. And it means that soils are nowhere near ready for planting game crops or, indeed, the majority of the AB9 winter bird food crops. Hopefully you have made use of the dry conditions to get your seedbeds prepared, so now it's a matter of patience.

Patience to allow your weeds to germinate and patience to allow the soils to warm up significantly (ideally 14°C) before considering drilling. For many of you this won't be until early June so please hold your nerve! Remember to get the majority of the crop's fertilizer requirement in the seedbed before drilling. Game crops have a short growing season and need easily available nutrients to help them grow.

GWCT Partridge mix – unfortunately the perennial rye (*secale multicaule*), which we use in the GWCT mix as one of the cereal components, has been held in Hungary due to the on-going war in Ukraine. The Hungarian government has stopped the export of all cereal seeds from a food security point of view (perhaps our government should take note). Sadly it means there won't be any perennial rye in this year's mixes. We have increased the triticale and kale to compensate but it does mean there won't be any cereal in the second year of the crop, which is a shame. Provided the kale, teasel and chicory all establish well it's not a problem from a CS option point of view.

Catch, Cover and Companion Crops

We are already taking a number of orders for cover and companion crops as we expect some species to run short as harvest approaches, particularly legumes. Please give Ian or Tom a call to discuss your requirements as soon as possible so we have a full range of options available. We are very happy to create a bespoke mix to suit your situation, rotation and budget.

For any of you that normally use Stubble Turnips for grazing, we know these are in very short supply. An excellent alternative is Smart Radish, either on its own or in a mix. It has been bred specifically to provide forage and to improve soil.



Woodland & Trees

Cricket Bat Willows (CBW) – [Here](#) is a link to a Case Study on a very recent and successful CBW project.

Whilst on the theme of CBW – [Here](#) is a link to our CBW guidance note.

New Firewood Retail Requirements for All Businesses

If you retail small quantities of logs in England (under 2m³ per load), from 1 May 2022 you will need to comply with legislation that came into force for larger suppliers last spring. Here are the [The Full Details](#).

Lyme Disease

With the spring now upon us and the weather now warming up, the first ticks are being reported. Read the [full Scottish Woodlands Toolbox Talk](#) on the UK Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA) website for more detail on Lyme Disease and the initial symptoms to watch out for, plus more on prevention of Lyme and other diseases, and prompt and correct tick removal.

New Tree Species Handbook

This new Woodland Trust publication aims to help with decisions about tree species in woodland creation projects. It profiles 50 tree and shrub species and 18 woodland communities. Download the report [Here](#) from the Woodland Trust website.

Sarah's interesting fact – each month one of the Oakbank team will provide you with an interesting fact and this month it's Sarah Brockless who discovered that the wood anemone (pictured) only spreads 6 ft in 100 years which is why, when you see a whole woodland floor carpeted in wood anemone, you can be certain it is an ancient woodland!

