FARMING & WATER SCOTLAND

Soils and Cultivation - Know the Rules

Don't cultivate land:

- Within 2m from the top of the bank of any ditch, burn, river, loch, wetland or shoreline of coastal water.
- Within 5m of any spring that supplies water for human consumption or uncapped well or borehole.
- That is waterlogged.

Minimise soil erosion:

- After harvest, keep a crop, grass or stubble cover over winter (if this is not possible, soils should be ploughed or left with a coarse surface).
- By not creating fine seedbeds until close to the time of sowing the next crop.
- Where capping is a problem by forming a coarse seedbed or break any cap that forms.
- In areas prone to wind erosion by taking steps to reduce the risk of soil erosion in the spring by maintaining crop cover, using coarse seedbeds, shelterbelts, nurse crops or other appropriate measures with an equivalent effect.

In arable rotations, maintain soil organic matter by by using suitable break crops or by optimising the use of organic materials by basing the rate of application on soil and crop needs. Where you do not use break crops, a record should be kept for 5 years of organic materials and the quantities applied to arable land.

Leaving a rough seedbed until planting can reduce erosion risk.

Don't cultivate too close to watercourses.

Soils and Cultivation

Soils in good health can increase yields and decrease pollution risks. Large quantities of soil can be lost from the farm in a matter of minutes through water or wind erosion.

Good practice to protect water quality

- Identify erosion risks; i.e. lack of crop cover during a rotation, capping of soil surfaces, steep slopes and soil compaction can increase the risk of soil erosion.
- Crop cover, using coarse seedbeds, shelter belts or nurse crops can protect farm soils.
- Reconsider rotations on erosion prone soils.
- Make sure contractors are aware of the rules.
- Adopt management systems which reduce soil compaction from machinery and livestock.
- Improve soil structure by incorporating organic material such as manure.
- Grubbing tramlines can significantly reduce runoff and loss of soil and nutrients from fields.

How can you benefit from these rules?

Good soil management can:

- Improve business profitability; for example, poor soil structure can reduce crop yields and be costly to rectify.
- Keep you on the right side of the regulations and help to protect your farm payment.
- Protect farm soils. Maintaining buffers between in-field practices and watercourses can reduce pollution risk, loss of land through erosion and keep nutrients on the farm.
- Minimise the risk of local water supplies becoming contaminated.
- Protect water quality for fish, wildlife and amenity use.
- Help to reduce your farm carbon footprint.

Need more information?

For additional information about reducing pollution risks and benefitting the farm business, see **www.farmingandwaterscotland.org** Alternatively speak to your local agricultural consultant.

The Scottish Government SRUC NFUScotland SEPA Scottish Environment Protection Agency dpmag

This fact sheet is intended to act as a reminder of the rules. To see the rules in more detail, see www.farmingandwaterscotland.org

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