

ENVIRONMENT

October 2021

Key management dates

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Last date for spreading slurry, as the closed period starts on October 15.



Last date for ploughing grassland until December 1.



Closing date for online submission by derogation farms exporting organic manures and verification by receiver of Record 3. Last date for phosphorus (P) on winter cereals on soils with P index 1 and 2. Last date for spreading farmyard manure (FYM).



Closing date for Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) applications.



Catch crops for Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS) or Greening can be grazed or removed.



Closing date for online submission and verification of Form 3 for farmers not in derogation for exporting organic manures. Closing date for submission of Form 4 (Temporary movement of livestock) and Form 5 (Short-term grazing agreements).



Speak to your contractor about how you want your hedges trimmed.

Shop windows

Our hedges are like our shop window – to have our farm aesthetically pleasing is important, and the consumer is looking for biodiversity and sustainability.

Teagasc advice for farmers on hedge cutting depends on the hedge type. Firstly, for any escaped hedges which have grown up into a line of trees, Teagasc advice is to side trim only and not to top. Secondly, for any hedges that have been topped, Teagasc advice is to let them grow

up to a height of 1.5m or up to the height the hedge cutter can reach. Also, it is advised to leave a thorn sapling in each hedge to grow into a thorn tree. For farmers in derogation, that means one every 300m.

Rather than negatively affecting grass growth, taller hedges break a harsh wind in spring. The shelter effect of a tree is multiplied many times in the field. On southerly-facing hedges, you have a sheltering effect where they are high. Animals like that for shade in the high summer. They'll go there to lie down to get away from the sun.

Have that conversation

Farmers and contractors need to have a conversation in order to change the perception of a well-kept hedge. The contractor is paid to do whatever the farmer wants done. Farmers need to pick up the phone, talk to the contractor and explain what they want, and the contractor will deliver.

What contractors need to do when the farmer rings to ask them to cut hedges, is to ask what way they want the hedges cut. Do they need to have thorn trees left in their hedges or do they want extra height in the hedges? Do they want their hedges to be fit for birds and bees?



Where farmers need or want to leave a whitethorn or blackthorn tree to grow up in the hedge, for example every 300m on derogation farms, the farmer should identify the thorn sapling to be retained. Mark the spot for the hedge-cutting operator. This can be done using a temporary pigtail stake or a more permanent painted fence post. After a few years, there will be no need for any marker, as the thorn tree will stand out by itself. It may be more efficient to retain a small bunch of thorn saplings in the first year, which can be thinned down to a single stem in later years.

Know your derogation commitments

Adopt at least one measure



1. Leave at least one mature whitethorn or blackthorn tree within each 300 metres of hedgerow.



2. Maintain hedgerows on a three-year cycle.

Cutting annually stops flowering and fruiting

EIP UPDATE

Comeragh upland communities



Farmers discuss the future of the Comeragh Mountains.

The Teagasc Comeragh Hill Sheep Discussion Group in Co. Waterford was one of 24 groups chosen to implement their projects over the next year, following a Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) open call for farm and community biodiversity initiatives. The aim of the Comeragh Upland Communities European Innovation Partnership (EIP), worth €118,720, is to:

- grow the discussion group's capacity to deliver high-quality hill lamb and a range of environmental and cultural goods and services;
- better integrate farming and the broader community to achieve a greater 'sense of place'; and,
- develop an overall, integrated agri-environment rural development strategy to fit the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Over the past few weeks, each farmer walked their own upland area with an ecologist, gaining an understanding of different habitat areas such as blanket bog, wet heath, dry heath



Plants were collected for analysis.

and upland grassland. Plants present and habitat condition were recorded. Farmers will discuss their aspirations for the future of the mountains with the ecologist, facilitated by the project manager.

Bogland plants from the Comeragh Mountains were collected to be analysed by NatPro (Centre for Natural Products Research) for potential medicinal and commercial uses. There is anecdotal and documented evidence that several Comeragh Mountain plants have various preventative and therapeutic uses in traditional medicines.

This EIP involves capacity building in habitat management, cultural heritage, and engagement activities with the Co. Waterford community. Engagement with local communities involves a series of tea talks. Selection of "the flower of the Comeraghs" will engage local schools. The new capacity, knowledge and relationships will provide the foundation for the mountains' sustainable management, while contributing to the region's health, and social and economic future.